A sketch of how to teach and learn a foreign language from a functional linguistic viewpoint : With special reference to Chinese and Korean education in Japan

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A sketch of how to teach and learn a foreign language from a functional linguistic viewpoint [1)]

—With special reference to Chinese and Korean education in Japan—

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1. Introduction

What people call "language" is enormously hard to explain. The fact is that the definition can differ from expert to expert and these definitions may be different from the recognition of people in general.

Although linguistics is the study of language, what formalists such as Chomskians call "language" is different from that of functionalists; formalists emphasise the importance of the knowledge of language (what you know), on the other hand, functionalists emphasise the importance of language use (what you do). Furthermore, neuroscientists are investigating what is occurring in the human brain, while sociologists are concerned with what is taking place in real society. They both observe language, but see things from alternative perspectives.

It is not the intention here to go in detail into the discussion of what language is. Despite all of the aforementioned factors, no experts would deny that human languages existing in the world now are used as a means of communication without exception. This is a totally undeniable fact and this instrumental function of language is also an important factor when functional linguists observe a language.

This paper is concerned with foreign language education and learning, where practical skills are trained for cross-cultural communication. Learners need to master two-way conversation; i.e. they must not only express their intent, but also understand their speaking partner's intentions. Needless to say, this is a matter of meaning or message. Grammatical correctness may be important, but it turns out that how to convey what you

mean is more prioritised.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the system of human communication first. From here, the paper will make some suggestions to improve foreign language education at the university level in Japan, particularly Chinese and Korean education for Japanese students.

2. What is human communication?

2.1. Communication as a semiotic system [2)]

In this section, human communication will be outlined for the foundation of later discussion.

First and foremost, it should be noted that language is not the only way of human communication. Normally, humans communicate verbally and nonverbally simultaneously, which is called multimodal interaction. In fact, a language is only one of many other semiotic systems.

Seen from a more general angle than that of linguistics, human communication can be regarded as a semiotic process. Semiotic process refers to an active meaning-making process, where a hearer (receiver) takes out a message by interpreting possible signs which may bear a meaning. In some cases, however, an interpreter may even recognise something as a sign and voluntarily make meaning. For example, there may be someone who finds a strange stain on the wall of an old house and then thinks that this house is haunted. Thus, a human is a meaning-making animal in all situations.

Generally speaking, not only humans but also other living things which convey information utilise sign systems as a means of communication. A sign is a perceivable entity which consists of semiotic expression (signifier or form) and semiotic content (signified or substance). A message-sender normally replace information with a sign and gives it to a message-receiver, because information itself is not perceivable and cannot be directly given.

Needless to say, human language, which is one variety of semiotic system, is clearly distinguished from those of other living things such as bees, birds and dolphins. It is far

more complicated and elaborate in such a way that it can transmit not only what is happening now but also what happened in the past and what will happen in the future. The information which a language can convey can be highly complex.

Finally, it may be worth pointing out that what is actually said in a language is normally more or less ambiguous. This is because all of what a speaker intends to convey cannot be actualised with words. Human communication needs to depend on extralinguistic manners to some extent. This issue will be mentioned in 3.2.

To sum up, any communication including human verbal and nonverbal communication is a semiotic process, where a message-sender encodes a message into signs and then gives them to a message-receiver, who decodes the signs in order to communicate or exchange messages. The communication is only successful when both a sender and a receiver have the same social code in common. This is how communication works.

2.2. Elements of human communication

In this section, we will paraphrase the communication system just mentioned in the previous section through the use of Halliday's social semiotic terminology for further discussion in the later sections.

Halliday (1978, pp.108-114) maintains that there are six essential elements in a sociosemiotic theory of language, which are (a) situation, (b) text, (c) linguistic system, (d) code, (e) social structure and (f) register.

According to Halliday's framework, human communication occurs approximately in the following way; at least two participants with similar or different social backgrounds whose relation is either close or distant (a) exchange meanings and/or intentions through texts (b) which they produce in a specific situation (a). In order for the communication to be successful, all the participants use the same linguistic system (c) to produce or interpret texts (b) and they have the same code (d) in common for the socially and culturally correct understanding of each other. The status and role relationships of the participants are determined by social structure (e). Furthermore, the situation (a) and the social structure (e) determine a register (f) which means a text variety selected intentionally by the speaker.

Text can be defined as what is produced by participants to communicate. It does not matter how it is produced whether it be spoken or written. The length is also not important. If more than one person participates in communication, one common text can be produced cooperatively for mutual understanding. It should also be noted that text is different from that of grammatically defined unit such as word, phrase and sentence. In other words, it is a vague concept.

One further comment to be made is that texts basically consist of either dialogues or monologues in normal communication. Monologues can sometimes be embedded in dialogues if a speaker needs to, for example, explain, instruct or tell a story. Daily conversations mostly consist of dialogues whereas one-way communication such as public speeches and written texts normally only consist of monologues.

2.3. Structures of conversations

The final remark on human communication is about structures of conversations in daily life.

Before launching into the main points, it is necessary to bear in mind that a conversation is a speech event in which all the participants cooperatively contribute. Each participant has a role ranging from a speaker, a hearer to an audience member. They work together in harmony to continue talking. Therefore, the text which is produced is what all the participants have in common and every fragment of the text, regardless of who said what, is connected with each other to create the whole picture of communication, i.e. text and context.

Let us now turn to the main topic. The findings of *conversation analysis* in sociology show that a conversation is organised in specific ways. As just mentioned above, in a conversation, a speaker says something, then a hearer responds to that. Often this hearer adds comments and continues. Note that the original hearer attains a speaker's role at this moment. Next, the first speaker responds as a hearer this time. In this way a conversation is going on taking turns repeatedly. Indeed, humans take turns systematically in a conversation (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). However, this is not the issue of concern here, because we are only concerned with plain and simple conversations for

beginners where only a speaker and a hearer participate.

What is more important here is the fact that a conversation which consists of several serial verbal actions, is structured in specific ways. First, it has, indispensably, both an opening and a closing. In other words, people must begin a conversation in a specific way and close it in another way. You can begin a conversation with saying "hello" and close it by waving good-bye. You can also start a conversation nonverbally such as eye contact and tapping on your friend's shoulder. What is most important is to attract the other person's attention to begin talking. When you want to end one topic, you can just say, "I see," or "I understand," and so on.

Second, between an opening and a closing there also arise conventional patterns of sequential verbal actions. If one asks a question, then the other gives an answer to it. This question and answer occur one after the other, i.e. a question is normally adjacent to an answer in a conversation. Pairs like this are called adjacency pairs and form a minimum unit of a conversation. Other examples of adjacency pairs are: greeting-greeting, request-accept/decline, offer-accept/decline, invitation- accept/decline, suggestion- accept/decline, statement-agree/disagree etc [3].

What should be emphasised is one phrase or sentence in a conversation must not be explained individually when it comes to human communication. Learners of a foreign language should be also aware of what speech act and what speech function is being used in that situation. Otherwise, learners of a foreign language may not follow what the conversation is all about.

3. Communication and context

3.1. Classification of human communication

This section gives an overview of communication types and roles of context in communication. Let us begin with communication types.

Using these criteria, i.e. media (verbal/nonverbal, vocal/nonvocal), simultaneousness (direct/indirect, with or without time-lag), direction (one-way/two-way), coexistence (in

Table 1

Verbal communication

				Type	Example situations
vocal	face-to face	two-way	in person	A	normal conversation
			remotely	B	online meeting
		one-way	in person	C	speech, lecture
			remotely	D	online speech
	non face-to-face	two-way	in person	E	The two cannot see each other but can hear each other's voice in the dark room.
			remotely	F	talking on the phone
		one-way	in person	G	One is talking, but the other cannot talk for some reason in the dark room.
			remotely	H	announcement, voice message

nonvocal	face-to-face			I	conversation with writing
	non face-to-face	simultaneous		J	texting on the smartphone4)
		with time-lag	two-way	K	letters, e-mails
			one-way	L	writing newspaper articles, books and other papers

Table 2

Sign language

		Type	
sign language	face-to-face	M	normal conversation
	non face-to-face	N	online conversation

Table 3

Nonverbal communication

	Example situations
vocal	clearing one's throat, sigh, whistle language
nonvocal	facial expression, gesture, body touch, body movement, space, time, fashion, art

person/remotely), human communication can be classified as in Table 1, 2 and 3:

One important fact to be pointed out is that the degree of dependence on context varies according to types of communication and for that reason language styles also vary from type to type. Generally, verbal, face-to face communication in person depends heavily on context, but verbal, nonvocal, unsimultaneous, one-way communication (approximately written language) depends relatively less on context. Note that face-to-face verbal conversation usually more or less accompanies nonverbal communication such as facial expression and gestures.

Another point is that a distinction between spoken language and written language is only made for practical reasons. Spoken language can be more like written language in some situations such as official speech, and vice versa.

The final issue is that so called "written language" is, indeed, a highly prescriptive version of verbal but nonvocal language which is used in one-way, non face-to face communication. It is not a problem of types of language, rather that of a different register of one language.

3.2. Context

This section will deal with roles of context in communication.

As mentioned in 2.1., communication is conducted only indirectly in the sense that a sender does not provide a receiver with messages themselves; it is signs that people exchange. Unlike handing directly something concrete to the other, misunderstanding may occur in human communication if a sender is careless and passes badly-structured signs, or a receiver mistakes a sign for another, i.e. something irregular can lead to unsuccessful communication. This fact clearly shows that human communication is a defective system to some extent.

On the contrary, in ideal communication, what is intended by a sender is exactly the same as what is interpreted by a receiver in terms of quality and quantity. Morse code and computer languages are prime examples. One very important characteristic of these sign systems is that they have a strictly regulated code which does not allow code-users to interpret signs freely. Unlike computer languages, sign systems which humans utilise for

mutual communication have far more elastic codes at the cost of ideal and accurate exchange of messages.

Let us now turn to the main point. Indeed, possibilities of misunderstanding can be reduced and efficiencies of communication can also be increased by using context in human communication.

Context generally covers, for example, linguistic context (previous and subsequent text), physical context (any perceivable entities on the communication spot), general-knowledge context (common knowledge shared by both a speaker and a hearer), social/cultural context (what people in a region normally know about their society and/or culture).

Although signs sent by one is basically interpreted by using codes, the interpreter, at the same time, needs to refer to any possible contexts. Imagine that someone goes to a fast-food shop and says at an order counter, “one coffee”. The staff member will probably immediately offer this person a cup of coffee. The reason is simple. If a person looking like a customer comes up to the counter and says the name of a food or beverage which is on sale, it is highly rational for the staff to think that this person is ordering. Only using the linguistic code, the utterance will not lead to the above-mentioned interpretation, because this person just said the name of a beverage. Referring to context only enables the staff to understand what is meant in this situation. Seen from another angle, this case can be regarded as a case where a speaker does not need to give all the necessary information verbally, because both a message-sender and a message-receiver automatically make use of context while communicating. In this way, context guarantees efficient and economical communication. To put it simply, the more you use context, the less you speak.

The final remark to be made is the relationship between types of communication and dependence on context. Basically, in situations where the utilisation of many various contexts is possible, people speak less. Therefore, in face-to-face mutual conversation, people depend heavily on context. Notice that the availability of context varies from situation to situation. A conversation in a small, blank room cannot take advantage of physical context. With regard to written language, Table 1 shown in 3.1. shows us that it is one-way indirect communication with time lag between the writer and the reader (Type L).

In such cases it is imaginable that the writer cannot help but depend heavily on linguistic context, which means that he or she needs to produce necessary context in person. This is because the assumed readers are not in front of the writer and they are maybe not the people with whom he or she has direct relations.

3.3. Intentional and unintentional information

Finally, this section will be devoted to supplementary comments on what is conveyed in human communication.

It is often said that communication is the exchange of information. However, as far as human communication is concerned, information conveyed to others needs to be divided into two types: intentional information and unintentional information. The former is the one which most people are conscious of what they are conveying by themselves. The latter, contrarily, is what one is unconscious of in most cases and what one might sometimes want to conceal.

The intentional information is mostly transmitted by what is actually said by a speaker, which normally corresponds to the content (what you say or literal meaning) and the intention (for what purpose you say that or nonliteral meaning). It should be noted that what a speaker says is not always exactly what a hearer understands. The hearer interprets what is conveyed by the code referring to context, and/or sometimes by using imagination in such a way that the content and intention makes sense. In this way, the receiver (hearer) may sometimes understand more than the sender (speaker) intends, or sometimes may understand less than the sender intends. There is almost always room for misunderstanding between the speaker and the listener.

What you say can also convey interpersonal relation and attitude. You can control not only physical but also psychological distance through your intentional choice of words. Or you can be polite or rude by selecting specific words. Likewise, how you say, for example, word choice, speed, pausing, loudness, intonation can transmit your emotion, attitude, personality, intelligence, interpersonal relation, social class etc.

The unintentional information is, regardless of intention, almost automatically revealed due to uncontrollable factors. The moment a speaker starts to speak, a hearer can know his

or her gender/sex (male or female), approximate age (child or adult), health condition etc. The way one speaks (mainly from prosodic features and word choice) may also reveals facts such as birthplace, profession and social class. As most people already know, voice quality and handwriting are utilised as a means of individual identification. Both spoken and written language can send unintentional information, and this also applies to nonverbal communication.

4. Functions of language

This section will discuss main functions of language mainly from a practical viewpoint.

Most people would easily come up with a communicative function of language, because people use a language in daily lives to communicate messages. Another important function is interpersonal one, which is used basically in order to be nice to others in verbal ways. These two functions are regarded as practical.

Language has an extra function known as the aesthetic, which is more concerned with how to say rather than what to say. It is a creative and imaginative use of language for higher possibilities of expressive forces such as those used in literature, particularly in poetry. This function is, however, beyond the scope of practical uses of language. Therefore, it will not be dealt with.

As early as the middle of the 20th. century, the renowned linguist Jakobson showed the following six functions of language from a communicative point of view: emotive, phatic, referential, poetic, conative, metalingual (Jakobson, 1960). Among these, referential function which is called transactional function here, and phatic function which is called interactional function will be discussed. These two functions may cover parts of the other functions that Jakobson mentioned. For practical purposes of foreign language learning, it may suffice to distinguish between transactional function and interactional function.

The transactional function of language is that of the transmission of factual or propositional information. This can also be described as exchanging of information. While speaking, what people exchange is not only information, but also actions. This is the case

where you ask someone to do something, or you offer to do something for someone. In transactional situations, what is most important is to convey information clearly and correctly. If a hearer is not sure of what a speaker said, he or she must attempt to clarify the information so as to avoid misunderstanding. Furthermore, when one asks a question, he is asking for the information that he really wants to know. The other needs to give as accurate and as correct answer as possible, because the information itself is the concern. Simply, the transactional function is message-oriented (Brown & Yule, 1983b, p.13).

The main purpose of interactional communication is, on the other hand, distinctively different. That is conducted to establish or maintain social relationships, or sometimes terminate the relation through verbal means. In order to achieve this goal, what is actually said is not very important. Rather, saying something nice or appropriate for the occasion takes priority. Let us take greetings as an example. People exchange greetings to maintain a good relationship with their neighbours. You may say "Good morning" to one of your neighbours even when it is raining or it is too hot. This is only because it does not matter what the phrase originally or literally means. Your saying something as a greeting is far more important.

Another example of an interactional situation is that you want to make friends with someone. You can maybe begin a conversation with asking about their hobby to find common ground. Needless to say, there are many other optional questions to ask to accomplish this purpose. This implies that what topic to choose or how to act is more important than what to say. One more important factor is that a speaker should not offend the other in any way. This kind of communication may necessarily involve problems caused by differences of cultures; A good topic in one culture may be taboo in others.

In summary, two functions of language need to be distinguished in communication. Whereas the transactional function is more concerned with what is said, the interactional function focuses on strategies of verbal actions rather than what is really said.

5. Discussion

5.1. The present state of foreign language education at university

Before going on to the main discussion, the present state of foreign language education at university in Japan will be briefly outlined. Here, those who major in foreign languages or affairs and learn the languages until their graduation are not the subjects of interest.

In Japan, university students are supposed to learn two foreign languages (first foreign language and second foreign language) in the first and second academic years. As the first foreign language, most of them select English, which they have already learned before entering university. As the second foreign language, they can choose in most cases from Chinese, Korean, Spanish, German, French or Russian [5]. Chinese is the most popular, and Korean and Spanish are relatively popular among Japanese students. International students mostly select Japanese and English. Normally they start to learn other foreign languages than English on the beginners' level with no prerequisite knowledge.

Students take 90-minute or 100-minute lessons, in most cases, only once a week in every semester for each language. A semester consists of 14 weeks if a period is 100 minutes, or 15 weeks if a period is 90 minutes. This means that they take 100-minute lessons 56 times or 90-minute lessons 60 times for each language within 4 semesters for two years (corresponding to approximately 90 hours learning time excluding for self-study time).

5.2. Problematic issues in Chinese education in Japan

Now that we have considered essential issues on human communication from 2. to 4., let us now explore how to teach and learn a foreign language.

Most problems seem to arise from the presently used textbooks, which are based on structural and grammatical syllabus. This sort of syllabus is a list of the basic structures and sentence patterns of a target language, which implies that learners are basically taught how a sentence is grammatically structured and how that sentence can be translated into their mother tongue, in most cases, independently of context. It may be a good way to know of various sentence patterns used in a target language, and also good to learn how a

grammatically correct sentence should be made. Therefore, we cannot immediately deny this approach. Whether it is good or not depends on the purposes of education or the needs of learners.

However, if the purpose is to be able to communicate well in a target language, the approach will cause many problems, some of which are described below. Model sentences from beginners' level Chinese textbooks will be given to clarify the possible problems to be addressed [6].

The first issue is that textbooks based on the structural and grammatical syllabus often neglect the situations, settings and participants on which communication relies. Naturally, who speaks to whom in what situation will determine a register of the target language and will affect the selection of words and phrases. It is also crucial when a speaker decides speech formality. Moreover, neglecting context will mislead the interpretation of text produced.

(1) ni qu, wo ye qu.（你去，我也去。）
(literally: You go, I go, too.)

(2) a. If you go, then I'll go, too.
b. Because you go, I'll go, too.

(1) is a Chinese sentence commonly used in a daily conversation. Since Chinese is characterised by its syntactic simplicity due to high-context language and parataxis, (1) cannot be properly interpreted without referring to context. In (1), there are at least two possibilities of interpretation, i.e. (2a.) and (2b.), depending on context. In addition, how you express your ideas (with or without omission, simply or complicatedly) will be also determined by communication types shown in 3.1.

Another example is the one which requires the information on the relationship between a speaker and a hearer to reach a pragmatically correct interpretation. Consider (3).

(3) wo xiang he kafei.（我想喝咖啡。）
(I want to drink some coffee.)

If the speaker is senior to the hearer, it may sound like a command. If the participants are close friends, it may sound more like an invitation to go out for a coffee. The interpretation totally depends on the relationship between them.

The second point to be made is that the structural and grammatical approach frequently does not pay much attention to purposes of speaking and the intention of a speaker in a specific situation. Consider the following sentence in (4a.) and its Japanese translation in (4b.).

(4) a. wo shi ribenren.（我是日本人。）
b. watashi wa nihonjin desu.（私は日本人です。）
(I'm Japanese.)

In (4a.) the "shi（是）" construction is used. This structurally simple construction (A shi B or in English, "A is B") is quite often introduced somewhere in the first chapters in a textbook. Most Japanese learners think that they understand the meaning when the translation in (1b.) has been presented. Imagine, however, in what situation this sentence can be used naturally. The purpose of this utterance may be to inform the other of the speaker's nationality. Even so, the speaker cannot begin a conversation with this sentence, because it sounds obviously weird and unnatural in a situation where he or she abruptly proclaims his or her nationality without being asked. This example clearly shows that it does not help learners if they do not learn when to use a specific sentence pattern for what purpose (speech function). Next, consider the conversation of (5).

(5) A: ni shi naguoren?（你是哪國人 ?）
(Where are you from? / literally: Which country's person are you?)
B: wo shi ribenren.（我是日本人。）
(I'm from Japan. / I'm Japanese.)

As an answer to the question of (5A), (5B)/(4a.) sounds far more natural. Thus, learners

should be aware that context allows a sentence to display the meanings and intentions of a speaker.

An additional comment is that a grammar-oriented approach does not provide learners with ways of "call and response". In other words, many students are not certain how to initiate a conversation or how to respond to what has just been said by an initiator. This is only because most students at university do not learn how to exchange conversations. In a conversation, one plays a speaker's role and the other hearer's role first and then take turns. The first speaker introduces a topic and a partner needs to respond to this. Therefore, there should be sentences as "call" and sentences as "response", which must be distinguished and recognised. Learners should be definitely conscious of which role they are playing while speaking and should also be conscious that conversations mainly consist of dialogues.

(6) wo you yi ge jie jie.（我有一個姊姊。）
(I have an elder sister.)

In (6), it is not wrong to say that the purpose of the utterance is only to inform that the speaker has an elder sister. Even if it is possible, it sounds unnatural again here to say something new suddenly without being asked. It is true that "you（有）" construction is used to describe that someone or something exists on a certain spot, because "you（有）" is an existential verb. However, a sentence like (6) is more commonly used for another purpose. In fact, Li & Thompson (1981, p.509) point out from a functional viewpoint that presentative sentences, those of which are sentences with the verb "you（有）" , perform the function of introducing into a discourse a noun phrase naming a entity. This indication is truly important, because it may help learners use the construction in a specific situation. Imagine, having been presented in isolation in a textbook, who would think that a sentence like (6) introduces a new topic and a story about her follows it?

Consider now the sentence in (7).

(7) zhe fujin you yi jia bian li shang dian.（這附近有一家便利商店。）
(There is a convenience store near here.)

Whereas (7) can function as a suggestion to a friend who wants a drink, (7) can also have a function of the response to a question such as “Where can I withdraw some money?”. The former is regarded as the first part (suggestion) of the adjacency pair “suggestion- accept/decline”, and the latter is regarded as the last part (answer) of the adjacency pair “question and answer”. The propositional meaning of both interpretation in (7) may be identical. However, if a learner is not aware of its function, he would not produce such a sentence as (7) in an appropriate situation.

Regarding the above-mentioned issue, one supplementary comment needs to be made. Most example sentences appearing in textbooks are presented in a declarative. Even though a sentence structure can be presented more clearly in a declarative sentence, some constructions may be used more in an interrogative in daily life.

Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the importance of taking context into consideration and the consciousness of functions cannot be exaggerated.

We shall now turn to the third problem, which is the fact that attention to the distinction between transaction and interaction of communication is rarely drawn in foreign language education in Japan. Although these two functions do not exclude each other and sometimes are not sharply distinguished, each of them is used for a totally different verbal behavior.

As mentioned in 4., the interactional function of language is primarily concerned with establishment and maintenance of social relationships. In order to achieve this goal, how to act verbally is more important than what to say, which turns out that it is not a matter of the structure of language, but a matter of verbal behaviors. Brown & Yule (1983a, p.3) remarks that a great deal of everyday human interaction is characterised by the primarily interpersonal (interactional) rather than the primarily transactional use of language. Although daily chatting is mainly interactional, transactional talks are sometimes embedded in interactional ones. People need to exchange information while chatting for no particular purpose.

Let us take exchanging greetings in Chinese as an example of interaction.

(8) ni hao.（你好。）
(Hello/Nice to meet you.)

(8) is a greeting used at any time of the day. It is introduced in almost all textbooks for beginners with the Japanese translation "Kon-nichiwa（こんにちは）". Since daily greetings like this are introduced at the beginning of a language course, textbooks give no detailed explanation for them, but give their Japanese equivalent, instead. However, giving only one translation without considering context does not help learners in many ways. This is only because a greeting in Chinese cannot be used in the exactly the same situations where its Japanese equivalent is used. Both "Ni hao.（你 好。）"and "Kon-nichiwa（こんにちは）" are rarely used among close friends and family members. But these greetings are different at least on two points; one is that "Kon-nichiwa（こんにちは）" can be used as a formal greeting among people whom one sometimes meets, but "Ni hao.（你好。）" is rarely used in this way, the other is that "Ni hao.（你好。）" can be spoken to a person whom one meets for the first time, but "Kon-nichiwa（こんにちは）" is normally not used in this way. Another fact is that Japanese people tend to use fixed expressions for daily matters, but Chinese people are more flexible in this aspect.

(9) Shang ban a?（上班啊？）
(literally: Are you off to work?)
(10) Chi fan le ma?（吃飯了嗎？）
(literally: Have you eaten?)

(9) and (10) are used as a greeting when neighbours meet in the morning (9) and around noon (10) respectively. The Japanese may say "ohayogozaimasu（おはようございます / Good morning.) in (9) case and "Kon-nichiwa（こんにちは）" in (10) case which are both fixed expressions used when people meet at a specific time of the day. Naturally, (9) and (10) are not questions in a real sense of the word. Therefore, you do not need to give a

correct answer, but just responding to that is enough. What is most important is being able to put a specific conventional expression in an appropriate situation in order to maintain a good relationship.

Likewise, it often occurs in daily interaction that the literal meaning of the words and phrases does not work. When you communicate with each other, you sometimes tell jokes or make cynical remarks or try to entertain people. These are the cases. Native speakers understand easily, but foreigners would have difficulties with going beyond cultural barriers.

Two more cross-cultural examples will to be given as an illustration of interaction. It is known that Chinese people rarely thank or apologise for trivial matters among close friends and family members. A Japanese person, on the other hand, would express thanks even when his or her best friend has passed him or her the salt on the table. This difference of verbal behaviour is, of course, a matter of culture. Another example is this. Imagine that you want to cheer up your friend who has just had their heart broken. In this case, it would be enormously difficult for a learner to come up with conventionally and culturally correct ways of cheering up someone in the target language. Grammar and vocabulary will definitely not tell you how.

To put it briefly, interactional communication necessarily involves cross-cultural matters which are beyond those of structures and grammar of language. Rather, cross-cultural training is necessary to acquire this aspect of communication.

On the contrary, transactional communication is, as mentioned in 4., more concerned with the literal meanings of words and phrases, because the main purpose is to exchange information or to achieve a goal such as shopping and making a reservation through messages conveyed. This kind of relatively direct verbal behaviours will match better with structural and grammatical syllabus whose focus is on the grammatical structure of sentences and literal meanings. In this sense, transaction and interaction need to be distinguished in communication for practical reasons.

Finally, a few more remarks need to be added.

Most educated people including university students are aware that a typical spoken language and a typical written language are two different registers of one language.

However, we should also be aware of many more continuums between the two extremes. As we can easily imagine, we speak very simply with less words and less complicated sentence structures in daily conversations. But when we need to discuss a little more complicated matters with friends, we immediately switch to another register which uses slightly more sophisticated words and complicated sentence structures. Thus, we normally adjust formality and complexity of language according to communication types shown in 3.1. and other contexts mentioned in 3.2. Thinking in this way, foreign language educators and textbook authors should be more cautious when they select sentence patterns to be introduced in textbooks. It seems that communication types are not taken into consideration in most textbooks. Structural patterns which students really need to communicate on a level matching their ability should be prioritised.

In conclusion, grammar-oriented language education will not enable learners to communicate well in a target language. How we make ourselves understood depends on more than just learning grammar and vocabulary. Basically, this argument applies to all foreign languages including English. Attention, however, should be drawn to the fact that how to best teach and learn a foreign language actually relies on the similarity in structural forms and culture between a source language and a target language. A case of Korean education for Japanese learners will be taken in 6.4.

6. Some suggestions for teaching and learning

6.1. The need for simplification and idealisation for education

As mentioned in 2., communication among native speakers in real life is enormously complicated. Therefore, it is almost impossible for learners to acquire all of what native speakers can do in their language. Actually, learners do not even need to be a native speaker or near-native speaker, because their purpose is only to communicate to get things done practically. Professional skills are not necessary at all on the practical level. Considering these facts, simplification and idealisation to some extent are necessary for acquiring empirical skills from a practical viewpoint.

In the next three sections, some ideas based on the discussion in 5. will be given briefly as suggestions for improvement of foreign language education in Japan.

6.2. Option 1

Only simple, transactional and goal-oriented conversations with an opening and a closing are introduced and practiced. Frequently used adjacency pairs are practiced. Settings such as a short trip abroad are assumed. Therefore, exchanging information with a staff member at a hotel, a restaurant, a café, a shop are practiced to get things done. A formal register for communication type A in Table 1 is prioritised. Functional, situational and structural syllabus is desirable, but class lessons based on structural and grammatical syllabus are also possible if many functional and communicative practices are conducted. (11) is a conversation example.

(11) You: bu hao yi si, qing wen,（不好意思 , 請問 ,） : opening
(Excuse me.)
xishoujian zai nali?（洗手間在哪裡 ?） : question
(Where is the toilet?)
Staff: zai qian mian.（在前面。） : answer
(Over there.)
You: xie xie.（謝謝。） : closing
(Thank you.)

Due to very limited class time, simplified Chinese characters are not taught.

6.3. Option 2

Interactional conversations with many alternative model sentences and fixed expressions are introduced. Grammar is minimally taught. Students mostly practice using a given phrase or sentence in an appropriate situation. Students are also encouraged to memorise many sentences with an appropriate situation where they are used. A functional and situational syllabus is desirable, with a relatively casual register for communication

type A in Table 1 being prioritised. Due to limited class time, simplified Chinese characters are not taught.

6.4. Option 3

Experience shows that Japanese students learn Korean relatively fast, and, likewise, Korean students learn Japanese relatively fast, due to the similarity of the two languages. Korean can be learnt by Japanese learners in the same way the other second foreign languages are learnt. However, learners can choose another option.

Written language, which is communication type L in Table 1, is taught first by grammar-translation method. This style is relatively harmless due to the similarity between Japanese and Korean. Since written language is normally transactional and depends less on context, it is relatively easy to learn through translation. Among the two languages, word-to-word translation works on most occasions. However, teachers should teach how to read between the lines, otherwise, students may sometimes get lost due to the cultural differences.

7. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, it is worth illustrating the necessity of teaching grammar in foreign language education for communicative skills.

It may be desirable for learners to make as many grammatically correct sentences as possible while communicating. But this is not always essential to make oneself understood in a target language. Grammar is not the top priority. As discussed above, communication is more than just grammar.

Textbooks for second foreign languages based on syllabi other than structural and grammatical one are rarely published, whereas most university students want to acquire practical and communicative skills in their target language. One of the reasons may be that such textbooks are easier for non-native teachers to handle. Even so, students' needs should be met in and outside the classroom in some way.

Considering all the issues discussed in this paper it will be concluded that present foreign language education in Japan must be improved in the direction of practicality [7].

Notes

1) The functional viewpoint in this paper is mainly based on Halliday (2004).
2) The author owes the overall discussion in 2.1. to *Semiology* of Saussure (1964) and *Semiotics* of Peirce (1931-1958). See also Ikegami (1984) for fundamental issues of semiotics.
3) For openings, closings and adjacency pairs, see Schegloff (1968) and Schegloff & Sacks (1973).
4) Texting on the smartphone can be a nonvocal version of a telephone conversation.
5) Some universities can only offer less options of the second foreign languages. In this case, Russian is often excluded.
6) Chinese sentences are transcribed in Pinyin used in Mainland China. For convenience, sentences in traditional Chinese character are also given in parentheses.
7) This paper is a revised, extended English version of Chapter 1 and 4 in Mimatsu (2021)

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