

Grammatical Characteristics of Good 50-Word Essays by Japanese Students of English: Optimal Relevance through the Formation of Explicatures

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The aim of this paper to analyze some characteristic grammatical constructions and usages in ESSC works written by L2 Japanese university students and senior high school students in the framework of Relevance Theory. First, we will give an outline of theoretical framework and will refer to some crucial notions of Relevance Theory. Second, we will consider some characteristics in ESSC works affected by the author's L1, the Japanese language. Then, we will discuss some effective elaborations with an emphasis both on the notion of *explicature* and on the four pragmatic processes contributing to the formation of explicatures.

In this paper, we will examine ESSC works, that is, 50-word essays written by Japanese university and senior high school students in the framework of Relevance Theory. ESSC is the abbreviation for the Extremely Short Story Competition, which was originally devised by Professor Peter Hassall at Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates in order to improve English writing abilities of his students. "Extremely Short Stories" have one distinguishing feature; they must be composed of exactly 50 words excluding the title and its author's name.

Focusing on the merits of the ESSC, Professor Nobuyuki Honna, president of the International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies (IAICS), imported its idea into Japan. The First ESSC in Japan was held in 2006, and the International ESSC has been administered since 2007 by the JAF AE (Hassall, 2006; Takeshita, 2006).

In our analysis of the 50-word essays written by Japanese university and senior high school students, we will suggest that Relevance Theory contributes to the understanding of 50-word essays and is crucial to their analysis. In other words, we will demonstrate that *optimal relevance* is achieved in good 50-word essays by Japanese university and senior high school students through the four pragmatic processes contributing to the formation of explicatures.

Theoretical Framework

This section will outline some crucial notions of Relevance Theory, and will demonstrate that Relevance Theory can be applied to 50-word essays written by Japanese university and senior high school students to explain the processes in which they can achieve optimal relevance through four pragmatic processes to form explicatures.

Relevance

Relevance Theory is an approach to the field of pragmatics originated by Sperber and Wilson (1995)¹. First, we will discuss the main concept of Relevance Theory *relevance*. *Relevance* depends on two factors: *cognitive effect* and *processing effort*. A person has a set of assumptions in his/her mind, which is called *cognitive environment*. In Relevance Theory, a communicator's intention in communication is taken as a catalyst to modify and improve the cognitive environment for the addressee. Such modification and improvement of the cognitive environment by manipulating the logical form and so forth is called *cognitive effect*. In contrast, another important factor, *processing effort* is required on the part of an addressee in processing utterances. The aim in information processing is to recover as many contextual effects as possible for the least cost in processing (Blakemore, 1992). If we apply the definitions of *cognitive effect* and *processing effort* to 50-word essays by Japanese university and senior high school students, they will be construed as follows:

- (1) An author's intention in a 50-word essay is taken as a catalyst to modify and improve the cognitive environment of the reader, and such modification and improvement of the cognitive environment by manipulating the logical form and so forth is called cognitive effect.
- (2) Processing effort is required on the part of a reader in processing 50-word essays.
(Okaura, 2008, 2009)

Processing 50-word essays requires time and mental effort, so our minds will process them in the way that less time and mental effort is required. Other things being equal, the greater the cognitive effect of the 50-word essay is and the less processing effort is required, the more relevant it is.

Moreover, a stimulus which explicitly shows the intentions to communicate something, in other words, which has both *informative intention* and *communicative intention* is called the *ostensive stimulus*, which is defined in *the presumption of optimal relevance*:

- (3) *The presumption of optimal relevance*

The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's effort to process it. The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences. (Sperber & Wilson, 1995)

Such communications as takes place on the basis of the ostensive stimulus is called *ostensive communication*. It is obvious that 50-word essays are regarded as ostensive communication, because they have both informative and communicative intention. If we apply *the presumption of optimal relevance* in (3) to 50-word essays, "addressee" and "communicators" correspond to "readers" and "authors" respectively. Thus, the presumption of optimal relevance applied to 50-word essays is as follows:

(4) *The presumption of optimal relevance in 50-word essays*

The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough for it to be worth the reader's effort to process it.

The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the writer's abilities and preferences.

According to *the presumption of optimal relevance in 50-word essays* in (4), the reader is entitled to expect a level of relevance high enough to warrant his/her attending to the stimulus, and which is, moreover, the highest level of relevance that the author was capable of achieving given his/her means and goals (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). Therefore, 50-word essays in which readers can obtain the maximum cognitive effects with minimum processing effort can achieve an optimal relevance.

Four Pragmatic Processes Contributing to the Formation of Explicatures

According to Sperber and Wilson (1995) and Carston (2002), the assumptions communicated by a speaker are divided into two classes: *explicature* and *implicature*. *Explicature* and *implicature* are defined as follows:

- (5) An assumption communicated by an utterance U is an *explicature* if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by U.
- (6) An assumption communicated by U which is not explicit is an *implicature*.

Let us consider the conversation in (7):

- (7) Mary: Would you like to go to the amusement park?
John: I'm exhausted.

In this conversation, the explicature of John's utterance is that John is exhausted. If we apply the definition of *explicature* in (5) to 50-word essays, it will be construed as follows:

- (8) An assumption communicated by a 50-word essay is an *explicature* if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by the 50-word essay.

As Carston (2002) suggests, the four pragmatic processes contribute to the formation of explicatures in Relevance Theory: *disambiguation*, *saturation*, *free enrichment* and *ad hoc concept construction*. The crucial notions here are especially those of *saturation*², *disambiguation* and *ad hoc concept construction*, so let us refer to these three notions.

First, Recanati (2004) defines *saturation* as follows:

- (9) *Saturation* is the process whereby the meaning of the sentence is completed and made propositional through the contextual assignment of semantic values to the constituents of

the sentence whose interpretation is context-dependent.

As Recanati suggests, the process of saturation takes place whenever the meaning of the sentence includes something like “slot” requiring completion or a “free variable” requiring contextual instantiation.

Blass (1990) refers to the notion of *disambiguation* as follows:

(10) It is generally assumed that both senses of an ambiguous word are automatically recovered by the linguistic input system.

(11) is an example of disambiguation.

(11) The meal at Taj Mahal last night was too hot.

In (11), the word *hot* is ambiguous in that two interpretations are assigned to the sentence; one interpretation is that *the meal was boiling hot*, and the other is that *the meal was too spicy*. However, in the context where *Taj Mahal* means an Indian restaurant, disambiguation takes place to recover the only interpretation, i.e., *too spicy* is consistent with the principle of relevance, yielding adequate contextual effects.

Moreover, Carston (2002) defines the notion of *ad hoc concept* as follows:

(12) The term *ad hoc concept* is used to refer to concepts that are constructed pragmatically by a hearer in the process of utterance comprehension. (Carston, 2002)

In the following part of this paper, we will examine some characteristic grammatical constructions and usages in 50-word essays by Japanese university and senior high school students on the basis of the Relevance-theoretic notions cited above, especially emphasizing on the presumption of *optimal relevance* and *explicature*.

Discussion

In this section, we will consider two types of characteristic grammatical construction and usage in 50-word essays by Japanese university and senior high school students. More specifically, we will take some examples to illustrate that optimal relevance is achieved in 50-word essays which is a kind of ostensive communication, and to make the process clear in which optimal relevance is achieved. First, we will observe that sentences including characteristic grammatical patterns and usages affected by the Japanese language can get optimal relevance in the same way and in the same degree as “grammatical” sentences in spite of their syntactical ambiguity. Second, we will discuss some effective elaborations contributing to the formation of explicatures; that is to say, we will argue that personification, reiteration of the same expressions, and using color terms help to form explicatures in 50-word essays to achieve optimal relevance.

Characteristic Grammar and Usage Affected by the Japanese Language

This section will deal with the conjunctions of *but* and *because* followed by a comma, the insertion of unnecessary words and reduction of the indefinite articles *a* or *an*. 50-word essays by Japanese university and senior high school students show such characteristics affected by their first language. According to Thomson and Martinet (1986), Swan (2005) and Carter and McCarthy (2006), these may be regarded as “ungrammatical”; that is to say, such characteristics do not meet the standard of a native speaker model. However, as Kirkpatrick (2006) insists, a native speaker model is disadvantageous, not only because it is unattainable, but because it is also inappropriate for all but a minority of students. Moreover, it is very difficult to clarify the borders between acceptability and unacceptability or between grammaticality and ungrammaticality. As Honna (2008) points out, standards of acceptability and correctness are not absolute but variable and negotiable, and the bottom line is mutual intelligibility and communicability. So we will propose that such characteristics affected by the Japanese language or features of Japanese English³ are acceptable as English of L2 learners from the point of view of optimal relevance and explicature, on the grounds that the characteristics in 50-word essays cited below cannot influence the explicatures of the expressed proposition in the essays in the framework of Relevance Theory.

Conjunctions of But and Because Followed by a Comma

A very common grammatical construction and usage affected by the Japanese language (L1) is related to the use of conjunctions “because” and “but” in (13), which is peculiar:

- (13) a. I love summer! But, I love the each four seasons too.
 b. But, one day, I will come face to face and say “Thank you so much.”
 c. But we can’t find the answer. Because, it has no answer.
 d. But, I think that meeting you.
 e. Because, I think the size of the foot does not change.

In these examples, the conjunctions *because* and *but* are followed by a comma as *because, ...* and *but, ...*. These sentences are influenced by the Japanese conjunctions *nazenaraba* or *node* equivalent to *because*, and *sikasi* or *ga* to *but*, respectively. The sentence in (14) shows a usage of *nazenaraba* or *node* from Kuno (1973):

- (14) Mary wa, John ga nagusameta (*node* / . *Nazenaraba*), [nak]-anakatta.
 consoled *because* cry did not
 ‘Mary, because John consoled her, did not cry.’ (Kuno, 1973, p. 204)

On the other hand, the sentence in (15) shows a usage of *sikasi* or *ga*:

- (15) Ame wa hutte imasu (*ga* / . *Sikasi*), taisita koto wa arimasen.

rain falling is *but* serious matter not exist
 'It is raining, but it is not much.' (ibid., 1973, p. 46)

In (14), a comma is used just after the Japanese conjunction *node*, / . *Nazenaraba*, and a comma is similarly used just after the Japanese conjunction *ga*, / . *Sikasi*, in (15). No doubt the usage of these Japanese conjunctions followed by a comma seems to influence characteristic usage of *because* and *but* followed by a comma in 50-word essays by Japanese students. Note that the comma suggests a juncture with a fall in pitch. Such a usage is regarded as “ungrammatical” from the point of view of Standard English but acceptable as English of L2 learners in the framework of Relevance Theory, because all the sentences in (13) can form the same explicature as their “grammatical” sentences. For example, let us compare the sentence in (13e) in which *because* is followed by a comma and that in which it is not:

- (16) a. Because, I think the size of the foot does not change. (=13e)
 b. Because I think the size of the foot does not change.

A comma in (16a) cannot influence the formation of an explicature; that is, the sentences in (16a) and (16b) forms the same explicature⁴ shown in (17):

- (17) Because the author thinks the size of the foot does not change.

As a result, the former sentence which is affected by the Japanese language can achieve optimal relevance, just as the latter one does. The same is true of not only another example of *because* in (13c) but also those of *but* in (13a-d). So it can be concluded that the conjunctions *because* and *but* followed by a comma can form an explicature to get optimal relevance.

Insertion of Unnecessary Words after Transitive Verbs

It is also difficult for Japanese university and senior high school students to make a clear distinction between intransitive verbs and transitive verbs, so they frequently use prepositions after transitive verbs as in (18):

- (18) a. I didn't enjoy to this summer vacation.
 b. I want to enjoy to this autumn.
 c. But I have to begin to job hunting.
 d. We visit to shrines on New Year's Day.

The sentences in (18) would be regarded as “ungrammatical” in Standard English, because unnecessary prepositions are inserted between transitive verbs and their objects⁵. However, these sentences which are parts of 50-word essays are sufficiently acceptable as utterances of L2 learners of English from the point of view of *optimal relevance* and

explicature. Let us consider the sentence in (18a) which is cited again as (19a) and its “grammatical” counterpart in (19b):

- (19) a. I didn’t enjoy to this summer vacation. (=18a)
 b. I didn’t enjoy this summer vacation.

Both sentences are characteristic of Japanese L2 learners. Both (19a) and (19b) can form the same *base-level explicature* in (20a) and *higher-level explicature* in (20b):

- (20) a. The author of this 50-word essay didn’t enjoy this summer vacation.
 b. The author of this 50-word essay says that he/she didn’t enjoy this summer vacation.

The formation of the same base-level and higher-level explicatures suggests that both sentences can equally achieve optimal relevance⁶. As with conjunctions of *but* or *because* followed by a comma, the insertion of unnecessary words after transitive verbs does not affect the relevance of the sentences, so we can state that such characteristic grammatical constructions in the English of L2 learners can be assigned optimal relevance.

Omission of Indefinite Articles

It is difficult for Japanese learners of English to appropriately use definite articles and indefinite articles⁷, because the Japanese language does not have the notion of articles. Japanese speakers of English often omit a definite or an indefinite article when it is necessary, while they often use one when it is unnecessary. However, it does not influence the explicature of a sentence in that such omission of a definite or an indefinite article does not prevent the readers from catching what the author of the 50-word essay intends to say. The sentences in (21) are examples of the omission of indefinite articles:

- (21) a. I work in cram school.
 b. When I was elementary school student, ...
 c. I met her at elementary school.
 d. It is special telescope.

The syntactical ambiguity of the sentences above may be due to the absence of an article system in the L1, the Japanese language. However, this characteristic does not influence the formation of the explicatures of 50-word essays, because readers can predict the explicatures of the sentences from the context to reconstruct the meaning which deserves their attention. For example, let us consider the sentence in (21a) which appears at the beginning of a 50-word essay and its “grammatical” counterpart:

- (22) a. I work in cram school. (=21a)
 b. I work in a cram school.

The sentence in (22a) does not require the readers to exert more processing effort than that in (22b) in forming the explicature. In fact, the former sentence can form the same explicature in (23) as the latter one does without the readers requiring more processing effort, though it is syntactically ambiguous:

(23) The author of this 50-word essay says that he/she works in a cram school.

Thus, the omission of indefinite articles, though syntactically ambiguous, can properly form the explicature which the authors of 50-word essays intend.

As we have proposed above, the characteristic grammatical constructions and usages by Japanese L2 learners need not impair the logical meaning of the sentences, so it can be concluded that they can achieve optimal relevance in the same degree and in the same way as those regarded as “grammatical” in Standard English.

Effective Elaborations Contributing to the Formation of Explicatures

In this subsection we will discuss three types of effective elaborations used in 50-word essays characteristic of Japanese university and senior high school students to get optimal relevance.

Personification. Personification is a kind of metaphor, one of the rhetorical elaborations to give human-like qualities to abstract concepts and inanimate things. Most of the examples of personification in 50-word essays can be characterized as the personification of “self-introduction type” (Okaura, 2008), in which stories are told from the point of view of the first singular person *I*.

Personification of the same type can be seen at the beginning of the English translation of *I AM A CAT* written by Soseki Natsume:

(24) I AM A CAT

I AM A CAT. As yet I have no name. I’ve no idea where I was born. All I remember is that I was miaowing in a dampish dark place when, for the first time, I saw a human being. This human being, I heard afterwards, was a member of the most ferocious human species; a *shosei*, one of those students who, in return for board lodging, perform small chores about the house. (Ito & Wilson, 1998, p. 7)

In this masterpiece, the point of view of the first singular person is adopted; that is to say, the story is told from the point of view of the protagonist *A CAT*, “who” is regarded as a human being in this story. So the first sentence *I AM A CAT* is an example of a metaphor. Pilkington (2000) argues that the metaphors provide a new and ad hoc concept for the proposition expressed by the utterance. A lexicalized notion, i.e., an encyclopaedic entry is *loosened* or *strengthened* to construct ad hoc concepts. Therefore it stands to reason that ad hoc concepts for *A CAT* are constructed through the use of the first singular person. An

encyclopaedic entry for *A CAT* and ad hoc concepts provided by the metaphorical expression are as follows:

- (25) an encyclopaedic entry for *A CAT*
 I am a small furry animal kept as a cat.
- (26) ad hoc concepts for *A CAT*
- a. I am a cat who has a human-like quality.
 - b. I am a cat who is able to talk.
 - c. I am a cat who is able to describe a situation and a man verbally,
 - d. I am a cat who is a protagonist of this story.

The assumption in (25), which is an encyclopaedic entry for *A CAT*, is not relevant to the utterance in this context, because the utterance does not have an interpretive resemblance to this assumption. On the other hand, the communicated assumptions in (26a-d) are relevant to the utterances, because the utterances contribute new and ad hoc concepts to the propositions expressed by (26a-d), which consequently become explicatures (Carston, 2002). The more processing effort is required on the part of an addressee in processing an utterance, the more cognitive effects it can produce (Pilkington, 2000). So the passage in (24) requires the readers to employ more processing effort, and as a result it can produce more cognitive effects to make a contribution to the effective formation of explicatures. Thus, it can be stated that the rhetorical elaboration of personification contributes to the construction of ad hoc concepts for *A CAT*, leading to the construction of an explicature which satisfies *the presumption of optimal relevance*.

In a similar way, we can explain one outstanding 50-word essay written by a Japanese senior high school student in (27):

- (27) SOAP BUBBLES
 My name is soap bubbles. I disappear in about 10 seconds after my birth. So my life is the shortest in the world. This is my destiny. But I like myself. Because people often tell me, "You are exciting," or "You are beautiful." Oh, it's about time to go. Goodbye.

In (27), the point of view is fixed to the first singular person *soap bubbles* through personification. An encyclopaedic entry for *soap bubbles* and ad hoc concepts provided by the metaphorical expression are as follows:

- (28) an encyclopaedic entry for *SOAP BUBBLES*
 My name is soap bubbles which are small balls of air made from soap.
- (29) ad hoc concepts for *SOAP BUBBLES*
- a. My name is soap bubbles which have a human-like quality.
 - b. My name is soap bubbles which disappear in about 10 seconds after my birth.
 - c. My name is soap bubbles whose lives are the shortest in the world.
 - d. My name is soap bubbles which likes themselves.

- e. My name is soap bubbles which are often told by people, “You are exciting,” or “You are beautiful.”

The assumption in (28) is the encyclopaedic entry for *SOAP BUBBLES*, which is not relevant to the propositions expressed in the 50-word essay. On the other hand, the expressed assumptions in (29a-e) are relevant to the propositions, because they contribute new and ad hoc concepts to the propositions expressed by (29a-e). Furthermore, *disambiguation* is applied to the 50-word essay described in (27) to form such explicatures as shown in (30):

(30) The explicatures of (27)

The protagonist of this 50-word essay calls herself soap bubbles which have a human-like quality. Soap bubbles disappear in about 10 seconds after their birth. So the lives of soap bubbles are the shortest in the world. This is their destiny. But soap bubbles like themselves. Because people often tell them, “You are exciting,” or “You are beautiful.”

In the same way as in (24), the more processing effort readers are required to pay in processing this 50-word essay and forming the explicatures in (30), the more cognitive effects it can produce, which consequently leads to the effective formation of explicatures to satisfy *the presumption of optimal relevance in 50-word essays* in (4).

The example in (31) is a little different from the examples of personification mentioned above:

(31) The melody of a summer fairy

You appeared in the beginning of a summer. And you left in the end of the summer. Then I understood that you are a fairy of summer. I remember the melody you hummed and only sing it. All I wish is just to listen to the melody you hummed again.

In (31), the relation between *you* and *I* is told from the viewpoint of *I*, and its protagonist is *you, a summer fairy*. The example in (31) can be explained in a slightly different way from (24) and (27). Let us consider the process in which explicatures are formed to satisfy *the presumption of optimal relevance*. An encyclopaedic entry for *a summer fairy* and ad hoc concepts provided by the metaphor are as follows:

(32) An encyclopaedic entry for *A SUMMER FAIRY*

You are called a summer fairy which is actually a cicada.

(33) A hoc concepts for *A SUMMER FAIRY*

- a. You are called a summer fairy which has a human-like quality.
- b. You are called a summer fairy which appeared in the beginning of a summer.
- c. You are called a summer fairy which left in the end of the summer.
- d. You are called a summer fairy which hummed the melody.

- e. You are called a summer fairy which I wish just to hum the melody again.

The assumption in (32) is an encyclopaedic entry for *a summer fairy*, but it is not relevant to the propositions expressed in the 50-word essay. On the other hand, the expressed assumptions in (33a-e) are relevant to the propositions. Furthermore, *disambiguation* is applied to *a summer fairy* in the 50-word essay in (31), and as a result, readers can identify the only interpretation intended by the author of this 50-word essay, in which both *you* and *a summer fairy* refer to *a cicada*. Thus, readers exert more processing effort before recognizing that *you* and *a summer fairy* is coreferential with *a cicada* and enjoy more cognitive effects. As stated above, the more the processing effort required on the part of an addressee in processing an utterance is, the more cognitive effects it can produce. Therefore such a processing effort leads to the effective formation of explicatures to satisfy *the presumption of optimal relevance*.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that personification in 50-word essays effectively contributes to the formation of explicatures through ad hoc concept construction, though readers have to input more processing effort because of ad hoc concept construction through personification, and therefore that 50-word essays can satisfy *the presumption of optimal relevance* in (4).

Reiteration of the same expression. One of the characteristic grammatical devices and usages in 50-word essays by Japanese students is the reiteration of the same expression. Reiteration of the same expression often contributes to reference assignment in 50-word essays. Let us consider the example in (34):

- (34) I love ...⁸

Someone says “It_i is a paradise_i.” Someone says “It_i is a peaceful island_i.” Someone says “It_i is a warm island_i.” Someone says “It_i is a longevity island_i.” Someone says “It_i has an original culture.” Someone says “It_i is a sorrowful island_i.” Someone says “It_i is a Keystone_i.” I love Okinawa_i.

The same expression *Someone says “It is...”* is reiterated throughout this 50-word essay, which helps to assign co-indices to the pronominal *It* and to the coreferential expression with them, *Okinawa* which appears at the end of the essay. Readers have to exert more processing effort to restore the explicatures of the 50-word essay which the author intends in (35) and to yield more cognitive effects before identifying *It* and *Okinawa*:

- (35) the explicatures of (34)

Someone says “Okinawa is a paradise.” Someone says “Okinawa is a peaceful island.” Someone says “Okinawa is a warm island.” Someone says “Okinawa is a longevity island.” Someone says “Okinawa has an original culture.” Someone says “Okinawa is a sorrowful island.” Someone says “Okinawa is a Keystone.” That is why I love Okinawa.

However, in the same manner as personification, the reiteration of the same expression requires the readers to pay more processing effort to form explicatures, and as a result, the essay yields more cognitive effects leading to achievement of optimal relevance. Thus we can suggest that the pragmatic process of saturation successfully forms explicatures, satisfying *the presumption of optimal relevance in 50-word essays* described in (4).

Another example of the reiteration of the same expression is shown in (36):

(36) The Road to Dream

The road_i is very long and meandering
 The road_i leads us to our dreams
 Sometimes it_i gives us challenges
 But many people are still walking now
 And the road_i gives us big dreams
 The road_i supports our dreams
 Now I am stepping onto a new road
 To my undefeated dream

In (36), the same expression *The Road* is reiterated throughout this 50-word essay, which helps to assign co-indices to the pronominal *It* in the middle of the essay and to the coreferential expression with it, *The Road*. It is easier for readers to get the explicatures of (36) than those of (34), because the pragmatic process of saturation makes it possible for readers to identify the coreferential expressions. Hence it can be observed that readers will use less processing effort in getting the explicatures of (36) than those of (34) to satisfy *the presumption of optimal relevance in 50-word essays* described in (4), because of saturation.

It follows from the above examples that the reiteration of the same expression through 50-word essays will make it possible to form explicatures of the whole 50-word essays and as a result to achieve optimal relevance.

Color terms. A characteristic usage of color terms in 50-word essays can also satisfy the presumption of optimal relevance in 50-word essays described in (4), because they can form explicatures to achieve optimal relevance through co-indices. Using color terms is an effective way to achieve optimal relevance, because color terms help to assign coreference, which leads to the formation of explicatures. The example of (37) shows an effective use of color terms:

(37) HARMONY OF WATER AND SAND

Water_i and sand_j in beach are sad because if they_{i, j} meet, these_{i, j} are separated right away. Blue_i cannot blend with beige_j. Beige_j cannot cling to blue_i. So these_{i, j} cannot play together. The liquid_i and solid_j cannot get along with each other_{i, j}. But song of water_i and sand_j is beautiful.

In this example, two color terms of *blue* and *beige* are used in a very effective way. The pragmatic process of saturation makes *Water* coreferential with *blue* and *the liquid*, and *sand* coreferential with *beige* and *the solid*. In addition, *these* is coreferential with both *water* and *sand*. So the color terms in (37) make it possible for co-indices to be assigned through the pragmatic process of saturation and for the explicatures in (38) to emerge:

(38) the explicatures of (37)

Water and sand in beach are sad because if water and sand meet, water and sand are separated right away. Water whose color is blue to our eyes cannot blend with sand whose color is beige to our eyes. Sand cannot cling to water. So water and sand cannot play together. Water whose state is liquid and sand whose state is solid cannot get along with each other. But song of water and sand is beautiful.

Thus, readers can restore the explicatures of the (37) which satisfy *the presumption of optimal relevance in 50-word essays* described in (4).

As we have discussed above, the use of color terms in 50-word essays is an effective way to achieve optimal relevance. Through color terms, co-indices are assigned to the coreferential expressions, leading to the formation of explicatures which the author intends, and consequently to the achievement of optimal relevance.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined some characteristic grammatical constructions and usages in the 50-word essays written by Japanese university and senior high school students (L2) mainly from the viewpoint of explicature in Relevance Theory. First, we analyzed some “ungrammatical but acceptable” constructions and usages affected by the Japanese language: the conjunctions of *but* and *because* followed by a comma, the insertion of unnecessary words after transitive verbs and the omission of the indefinite articles *a* or *an*. We observe that these characteristics may be regarded as “ungrammatical” in Standard English, but that they are definitely acceptable as English of L2 learners in the framework of Relevance Theory, because the characteristics cited in this section do not impair the formation of explicatures of 50-word-essays nor prevent the 50-word essays from achieving optimal relevance. Second, we discussed some characteristic grammatical constructions and usages effectively contributing to the formation of explicatures: personification, the reiteration of the same expression and color terms. These characteristics can contribute to the formation of explicatures through the four pragmatic processes of *disambiguation*, *saturation*, *free enrichment* and *ad hoc concept construction*, and thus the 50-word essays can satisfy *the presumption of optimal relevance in 50-word essays* described in (4), whether they are prescriptively “ungrammatical” and syntactically ambiguous or not.

From the relevance-theoretic approach to the grammatical characteristics of good 50-word essays by Japanese university and senior high school students, it can be concluded that we have to place more importance on the international intelligibility than on the strict

grammaticality in writing English essays. It is true that we have to teach our students how to write strictly grammatical sentences and how to organize strictly grammatical essays, which has been mainly a traditional English teaching method employed in Japan so far. However, it is essential that we promote the English of Japanese as one of the internationally intelligible and possible linguistic models in the language classroom. Some characteristic grammatical constructions and usages effectively contributing the formation of explicatures are considered as prescriptively “ungrammatical” and syntactically ambiguous, in other words, “acceptably ungrammatical,” but in fact they help make 50-word essays by Japanese university and senior high school students one of the internationally intelligible and possible linguistic models of English.

Notes

1. Sperber and Wilson (1995) come up with the two Principles of Relevance, The First (or Cognitive) Principle of Relevance and The Second (or Communicative) Principle of Relevance:

(a) The First (or Cognitive) Principle of Relevance

Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance.

(b) The Second (or Communicative) Principle of Relevance

Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

All ostensive communication is governed by the Second (or Communicative) Principle of Relevance.

2. In Sperber and Wilson (1995), *saturation* is equal to *reference assignment*.

3. According to Kirkpatrick, Deterding and Wong (2008), many non-native varieties are more intelligible throughout the world than is often believed, being more intelligible than certain native speaker varieties.

4. The explicature in (16) is called *base-level explicature* or *lower-level explicature*. Moreover, the explicatures embedded in the form of *I believe ...* and the like are called *higher-level explicature*.

5. Unnecessary prepositions after transitive verbs in 50-word essays are probably ascribed to Japanese particles before transitive verbs:

(a) *Watashi-wa anata-no jimusho-wo otozureru tumoridesu.*

I your office visit am going to

“I am going to visit your office.”

6. However, some 50-word essays cannot form explicatures properly. Such onomatopoeia as *Hey* or such expressions of thanks as *Thank you* and *Thanks* used at the end of the essays and in an irrelevant context prevent a 50-word essay from achieving optimal relevance, because they are used in order to make an essay composed of exactly 50 words and because they cannot contribute to the formation of explicature in the 50-word essay. So use of these unnecessary words prevents its 50-words essay from forming an appropriate explicature and getting optimal relevance.

7. As for the acquisition of *the* in the framework of Relevance Theory, see Žegarac (2004).
 8. Co-indices in (34), (36), (37) and (40) are assigned by the author of this paper

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