

English Education Program for Japanese Soccer Players and Coaches Seeking Career Opportunities Overseas

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Abstract In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of Japanese people wishing to pursue a career as a professional athlete or sports coach. In this research, we describe how an English teaching technique involving genre-based activities enhanced the football training instruction foreign language communication skills of six student-athletes who want to be international football players or coaches. Two types of qualitative research (learning log records, semi-structured interviews) were used to analyze the changes in the participants' English utterances during two task performance tests (football training instruction in English) during the 15-week study (mid-term and second semester) in terms of lexico-grammar and generic structure. The English teaching method using genre-based tasks was found to enhance the participants' understanding of football coaching-specific lexico-grammar and generic structure, which they were able to apply to performance tests.

Keywords ESP, task-based language learning, SFL

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), the number of Japanese who have studied at overseas higher education institutions reached 84,456 in 2015^[1]. Additionally, support programs for those who aspire to study abroad have been created, and their effects on students' academic achievements have been investigated^{[2], [3]}.

Japanese people travel overseas for a variety of purposes. For example, as of 2012, the number of Japanese football players, coaches, and trainers who pursued careers outside Japan reached 400 per year^[4]. The CIES Football Observatory, a research organization specializing in football, released a ranking of the number of football players who played overseas in 2019 by country of origin and reported that Japan produced the largest number of expatriate football players (128) in Asia^[5]. Amidst this trend, however, the limited foreign language proficiency of such Japanese has been pointed out as

a factor that prevents some of them from performing successfully^[4]. According to a Nishijo survey^[6], most Japanese expatriate football players and coaches struggle with communicating in foreign languages while overseas. As an increasing number of Japanese people move overseas, support programs and educational materials to help them develop language proficiency have been created, mainly by private companies in Japan. For example, in 2016, the Japan Ice Hockey Federation collaborated with companies engaged in language education projects to provide online English conversation training for women's national team members seeking to attend universities or join professional teams overseas. For children aiming to play overseas in the future, football academies that teach in English have also been established, and textbooks, glossaries, applications, and other media that describe football-related technical terms and conversations have been developed. To meet the needs of the globalization of the sports industry, the Sports English Department at Riseisha College of Medicine and Sports Sciences was established in 2020 based on the idea that learning English is essential for athletes, instructors, trainers, and referees in all positions^[7].

Although each organization has developed its own teaching methods and materials, the effects of these resources on learners' language development have

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not been fully evaluated. It remains to be determined whether and to what extent existing materials and resources can help to develop learners' abilities and eventually support their performance in the foreign language context. To better meet the demands of Japanese people traveling abroad in the realm of sports, the quality and effectiveness of methods and curriculum design must be scientifically studied.

1.2 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

In the area of English for specific purposes (ESP), teaching methods that enable students to use English in specific situations have been widely studied^[8]. ESP is divided into two categories: English for academic purposes (EAP), which targets learners who want to use English to write reports and give oral presentations at educational institutions, and English for occupational purposes (EOP), which targets learners who want to perform specific tasks in English in specific occupational fields^[9]. Both aim to provide efficient instruction that meets learners' needs using purpose-specific texts, content, form, and context^[10]. For example, it has been pointed out that the use of written language materials is inappropriate for learners aiming to learn spoken language because there are significant differences between written and spoken language in terms of linguistic characteristics, including lexical density, grammatical complexity, and degree of situational dependence^{[11]-[13]}. Few studies have been conducted on ESP in the sports domain, and those who wish to travel abroad for sports purposes are now learning target languages independently using teaching materials that do not incorporate the abovementioned ESP perspective, such as textbooks for daily conversation or online lessons with native speakers. However, according to the aforementioned notions of ESP, sports students may not be able to access the language variations with which they need to familiarize if they choose a textbook merely because it constitutes English learning materials, as the language used on the sports scene is significantly different from that used in daily life.

Thus, it is important to consider the types of foreign language communication skills learners need to acquire in the target context. For instance, if a learner's goal is to become a player, the first thing they should do is submit their CV to the target club, and if they make the team, they will then be required to have the speak-

ing skills to communicate with their coach and teammates. If they want to be a coach, they must be able to endorse players' transfers in writing and must also be able to deliver spoken instructions during training and games. Thus, to achieve a particular goal, one must specify the appropriate language mode, that is, written or spoken, as well as the lexical items that are suitable for each situation. As the impetus for foreign language instruction in the domain of sports rises, it is critical to determine the composition of the target audience, ascertain the nature of the situations, and specify the purpose.

The author developed and implemented a genre-based task^{[14], [15]} to improve the foreign language communication abilities of football players and coaches who want to work overseas in the future. A longitudinal study was conducted to investigate how the participants' perceptions and performance of the target language changed after engaging with the genre-based task as an English learning program for a period of time. The purpose of this practical research is to demonstrate how ESP education might assist the growing number of sports students going abroad with improving their English proficiency before pursuing their careers overseas.

2. Genre-Based Task (GBT)

In this study, we used a genre-based task (GBT) as a means of developing foreign language communication skills among students and adults aspiring to become football players and coaches overseas. This section explains the theoretical basis and significance of the GBT, focusing on the concepts of task and genre.

2.1 Task

In the domain of foreign language education, a task is an activity that always has a clear communicative goal and encourages students to choose the vocabulary and grammar necessary to achieve that goal^[16]. Tasks are additionally defined as real-world activities that people perform in their daily lives, and the act of coaching football training, which is the subject of this study, is one such task^[17].

Tasks can be broadly classified into two categories: target tasks, which are the outcomes of learning over a certain period of time, and pedagogical tasks, which include the educational activities (e.g., exercises,

activities, etc.) necessary to achieve the target tasks. The important point here is that a learner is given a task as a goal and must use the target language as a tool to achieve it. Theoretically, this is known as task-based language teaching (TBLT)^{[17], [18]}.

There are four stages in TBLT implementation: (1) task input to observe the model in which the target task is performed, (2) pedagogic tasks to raise learners' awareness of domain-specific grammar and vocabulary, (3) performance of the target task using the vocabulary and grammar the learner has acquired, and (4) task follow-up so that the learner can receive feedback from the teacher about common error patterns and analyze their own and their classmates' performance^[18].

It is critical to emphasize that if this practical study serves as preparation for learners' future football activities abroad, it is crucial to evaluate not only the quality of language education but also the practicality of the learning content. In other words, language proficiency does not always imply learners' advanced occupational skills^[19], and we must not lose sight of the fact that occupational skills are ultimately what learners are required to acquire.

Although TBLT explicitly teaches specific linguistic forms in the learning process, it is merely a tool to help learners accomplish tasks set as goals. Therefore, TBLT does not overemphasize linguistic forms, which is in line with the learners' needs in this study.

2.2 Genre

There is a phase in TBLT where learners are explicitly taught a specific set of linguistic items that may play an essential role in assisting with a target task. In this study, we extracted the linguistic features specific to football training sessions and taught them to learners. For this purpose, this study used the linguistic theory of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), which focuses on the relationship between the text and the surrounding context. It defines vocabulary and grammar not as a fixed set of rules but rather as meaning-making resources that the writer or speaker selects to form a particular meaning in a particular social context^[20].

Such vocabulary and grammar, lexico-grammatical items in SFL terms, are influenced by social contexts called genres. There are three aspects of a genre that affect human language production, namely field (the occasion on which the language activity takes place),

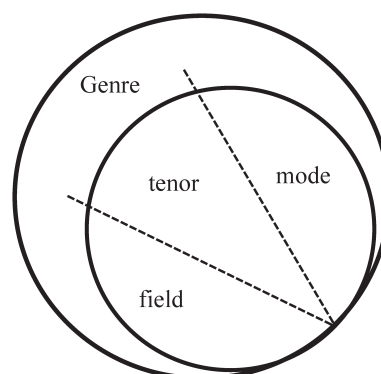


Figure 1. Genre, register, and metafunctions (created by the author on the basis of Martin^[21])

tenor (the relationship between the speaker or writer and listener or reader), and mode (the medium of the language activity), each of which has a separate semantic function called a metafunction (Fig. 1)^[21].

Since this study's target genre is a football training session, the field is football training, the tenor is the relationship between the instructor and the players, and the mode is the spoken language register. By analyzing authentic linguistic resources from these three perspectives, we aimed to extract linguistic expressions that are more specific to the target genre and present them to learners, rather than simply using conventional language forms and rules.

Furthermore, presenting these linguistic items in a certain manner enables learners to engage in more context-appropriate language activities^[22]. For example, in a shopping situation, the clerk's linguistic activities have a certain communicative pattern: talking to the customer, explaining the product, and exchanging money at the cash register. This interaction between a clerk and customers is common in all shopping situations, and the vocabulary and grammar used in each scene are, to some extent, predetermined. The particular communication pattern that emerges when people meet and interact with each other is called the generic structure^[20]. Based on this idea, we can say that in football training, the following coaching pattern is the generic structure common across all training scenes: the instructor explains the training content → the player performs the training activities → the player receives feedback from the instructor.

The goal of this study was to investigate how com-

pleting a GBT incorporating TBLT and SFL enhanced perceptions of football coaching-related meaning-making resources among participants who were about to travel abroad to work as an athlete or coach.

3. Methods

The English learning program was conducted outside regular university classes for adults and students aspiring to become football coaches or players overseas. The program lasted for 15 weeks, and 90-min classes were held once a week.

3.1 Participants

The study participants were six adult students who aspired to become football players or coaches overseas. Their mean age was 22.83 (*SD*=0.98). All six received at least 7 years of English education at Japanese institutions prior to the study, but their English proficiency varied (Table 1). The program was conducted in the sports science faculty of a private university.

Three teachers delivered the program: the author and two model coaches with experience as professional football players overseas who are now coaching Japanese children’s football teams in English. None of the teachers had experience conducting football training in English. The research participants were recruited in university classes and on Internet bulletin boards, and the program was advertised as an English language program for those aiming to become a football player or

coach overseas. Subjects with a strong desire to participate were selected. Once confirmed as participants, we explained that participation in this study was voluntary and that all personal information obtained would be used for research purposes only. All participants signed a consent form.

We also obtained the data providers’ written permission to use their linguistic data to conduct the research and disseminate the findings.

3.2 A GBT-Based Teaching Method

The desired outcomes of the 15-week GBT were to understand football training in English and be able to provide coaching instruction in English during football training sessions, given the participants’ aspirations to become football players or coaches overseas.

In GBT, learners are explicitly taught lexico-grammatical items via pedagogic tasks considered necessary to perform the target tasks^[14]. In this study, we designed the program course schedule based on this framework (see Table 2).

By the time the participants undertook the target tasks in Weeks 9 and 13/14 of the program, they had

Table 1. Profile of participants

Participant (Age)	Objective	Affiliation	English proficiency
Daisuke (24)	To play football overseas	Kansai Division 2	N/A
Issei (21)	To play football overseas	University football team	EIKEN pre-2 grade
Kayo (21)	To play football overseas	University football team	TOEFL iBT 28 pts
Taro (21)	To start a sports-related business overseas	Faculty of Sports and Health Science	TOEIC 550 pts
Shinji (22)	To play and coach football overseas	University football coach	TOEIC 335 pts
Yohei (24)	To play football overseas	English instructor	TOEIC 550 pts

Table 2. Course schedule

Week	Place	Content/Theme	Task type
1	Classroom	Orientation	N/A
2	Field	Icebreaker ①	Task input
3	Classroom	Icebreaker ②/Introduction to English sports coaching	Pedagogic tasks
4	Field	Dribbling ①	Task input
5	Classroom	Dribbling ②	Pedagogic tasks
6	Field	Passing ①	Task input
7	Classroom	Seminar on overseas sports	A lecture by a former international player
8	Classroom	Passing ②	Pedagogic tasks
9	Field	First task performance test	Target tasks
10	Classroom	Self-study	Pedagogic tasks
11	Classroom	Feedback and error correction	Task follow-up
12	Field	Combination ①	Task input
13	Classroom	Combination ② Second task performance test 1	Pedagogic and target tasks
14	Field	Second task performance test 2	Target tasks
15	Classroom	Feedback and error correction	Task follow-up

learned what lexico-grammatical items and generic structure the model coaches used under different training themes such as breaking the ice, dribbling, passing, and combination. Table 3 summarizes the genre structure and lexico-grammar of football instruction.

For each theme, a study unit was created that included task inputs, in which students engaged in model coach demonstrations, and pedagogic tasks, in which they examined the linguistic aspects of the model coaches' instructional language and practiced applying those items to their own practice.

Increasing the number of pedagogical tasks is a common method of enhancing learners' awareness of lexico-grammar. However, in the case of football training instruction, the number of task inputs was increased

Table 3. Content of genre-based materials developed based on SFL theory

Learning content	
Generic structure	<p>Opening stage (the coach explaining the training to the athletes)</p> <p>→Action stage (the actual training)</p> <p>→Freezing (the coach pausing the training to comment and give advice)</p> <p>→Closing stage (the coach giving the athletes feedback after the training)</p>
Register	
Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give tips and key points on training content. • Use verbs (e.g., action verbs and <i>be</i> verbs) appropriately to accurately indicate the intended action or state. • Proceed spontaneously by connecting sentences with coordinate conjunctions (e.g., <i>and</i>, <i>but</i>, <i>so</i>, etc.), and use subordinating conjunctions (e.g., <i>if</i>, <i>where</i>, <i>when</i>, etc.) to make explicit the sequential relationships between action events, if necessary.
Tenor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use encouragement (e.g., <i>well done</i>, <i>good job</i>, <i>excellent</i>, etc.) to motivate the players. • Use modalities (e.g., <i>must</i>, <i>have to</i>, <i>can</i>, <i>could</i>, etc.) to nuance your instructions. • Call the players' names and instruct them interactively.
Mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use personal pronouns (e.g., <i>I</i>, <i>you</i>, <i>we</i>, etc.) and anaphoric referents (e.g., <i>this</i>, <i>it</i>, <i>that</i>, etc.) to enhance cohesion. • Use discourse markers (e.g., <i>now</i>, <i>first</i>, <i>second</i>, <i>at last</i>, etc.) to guide your point of view. • Avoid redundant expressions and proceed at a brisk pace without duplicating information.

because demonstrations by skilled football coaches improved participants' recognition of words and phrases expressing various football training-specific actions and situations^[6].

To compare and analyze the participants' performance, the first target tasks should have been conducted early in the course, but since the participants had never experienced football coaching in English before, the first target tasks were set for the ninth week of the course.

In Week 3, the participants were exposed to the instructional language data the model coaches produced in the previous task input (Week 2) to gain an awareness of the two main analytical viewpoints: (i) generic structure (a basic procedure for conducting football training) and (ii) register (a language use pattern in football coaching). From Week 4 onward, after the students had experienced outdoor task input, they analyzed the instructional language the model coaches used from the perspectives of (i) and (ii). With the lexico-grammatical items used here, the students created phrases they planned to use in their coaching practice with their teachers' help and practiced vocalizing them (pedagogic tasks).

To complete the target tasks scheduled for Weeks 9, 13, and 14, the participants were required to practice coaching in English using the lexico-grammatical items they learned (task performance test). The researcher observed them in action and provided feedback in the following week, based on which the participants modified their instructional language (task follow-up).

3.3 Research Questions

- (1) How did the study participants perceive the lexico-grammatical items and generic structures unique to football training instruction?
- (2) How did the study participants' use of those lexico-grammatical items and generic structures in task performance change?

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

3.4.1 Learning Logs

After each class, the participants were asked to free write in their learning log about what they learned that day. The learning logs were introduced as a place for each student to record their learning progress.

Participants were told to feel free to write their impressions of the day's learning after each class, for example, what you enjoyed, what you learned, your impressions of football training and English learning, emotional changes you experienced during learning, things you noticed, what you learned from other students, what you wondered about, etc.

Participants produced and organized the content of their log themselves, which allowed them to track their learning trajectory. To examine their overall learning tendencies, we performed inductive coding analysis using the log data and then labelled each segment and summarized the results by theme. Categories were then created for each theme, and patterns evident in all participants' self-learning records were examined. Among the categories that emerged, this study focused on those related to lexico-grammar and generic structure. One of the model coaches reviewed the coding analysis results to increase inter-rater reliability.

3.4.2 Task Performance Test (Target Task)

The participants delivered 15 min of football training instruction in English as a task performance test (target task) in Weeks 9, 13, and 14. Eight individuals, including five other participants, the author, and two model coaches, acted as players in the two task performance tests (Target Tasks 1 and 2). The training content was entirely at each participant's discretion, as long as it did not require more than eight players.

To facilitate comparison of the lexico-grammatical items used in the participants' two task performance tests in terms of the SFL analytical framework, the register was fixed as "football training" (field), the tenor as "coaches and players," and the language mode as "spoken language." The prompt for both task performance tests was "For one football training scene that you would like to coach, consider a 15-minute training session for eight participants." However, Target Tasks 1 (Week 9) and 2 (Weeks 13 and 14) had different training content. The study examined the instructional language produced by participants who demonstrated significant improvements in terms of lexico-grammar and generic structure.

3.4.3 Interviews

To supplement the learning logs and task performance tests, we conducted interviews after program completion. Given that some participants went abroad immediately upon completion of the program, the interviews

were conducted individually online. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour.

After a preliminary analysis of how the participants' language use changed in terms of lexico-grammar and generic structure between the two task performance tests as time points, the participants were individually questioned about these changes in the interviews. The following questions were posed: "What did you try to keep in mind during the second practice (task performance)?" "What specific preparations did you make for the second practice?" "What was your attentional focus during actual coaching?" "What do you think you did well compared to your first practice?" and "What do you think could be improved a little more?" Participants were also asked to identify aspects of the second target task that differed from the first in terms of lexico-grammar and generic structure, as well as the reasons for these discrepancies.

4. Results

4.1 Learning Logs

After completion of the 15-week program, the participants' learning log comments referring to lexico-grammar and generic structure were summarized in Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, the participants most frequently mentioned how specific football-related actions and situations during football training were realized in the target language, such as "I learned various English expressions commonly used in football training, such as 'bring it in' for gathering players" and "I was surprised to learn that 'have' has the same nuance as 'shot,' although I thought it meant 'keep.'" These comments are concerned with lexico-grammatical items with an ideational (experiential) meaning in the football training context, which, in register analysis, are governed by the contextual elements of "field"^[20]. In all these cases, participants derived useful knowledge from the model coaches' demonstrations (Task Input).

Generic structure was also mentioned often, as evidenced by comments such as "In the model coach's English, I noticed that he used declaratives, imperatives, etc., at different stages" and "I found that the opening stage was dominated by declaratives, while the action stage was dominated by imperatives and encouragement" (Table 4). Furthermore, by linguistically analyzing the model coaches in the classroom (pedagogic

Table 4. Participants' learning log comments on language learning

Coding category	Major comments
Awareness of the semantic function of "field" during task input (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are still parts of what the coach is talking about that I don't understand at the word level. • I was surprised at the difference in the meaning of shouting during the game between Japan and other countries. • I was able to learn a lot of English expressions that are often used in relation to football, such as "bring it in." • I caught "have" in the sense of "keep," but I was surprised to know that it was the same nuance as "shot." • I realized that the words that I had seen in my vocabulary book had different nuances when used during football. I thought the expression "unlucky" meant something like "you're not lucky," but now I know that it is more like "don't worry." • What surprised me the most today is that "lifting" is called "juggling" in English. When the coach used the word, I did not know what to do at first.
Awareness of generic structure during task input and pedagogic and target tasks (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During training, the coach appropriately stopped the training and explained points to be careful about. I felt this was no different from Japan (task input). • In this training, the timing was the same as in Japan, where I stopped the training and gave some feedback. • I think I was able to do the second test better than I thought I would today, but I was disappointed that I couldn't wrap it up well at the closing stage (target task). • By looking at the coach's English-language coaching transcript text, I found that he used declaratives and imperatives suitable for the stage (pedagogic task). • I found that the opening stage contained declaratives, and the action stage contained imperatives and encouragement (pedagogic task). • I was listening carefully to the coach's coaching. I was also paying attention to the order of speaking and timing of encouragement (pedagogic task).
Awareness of the semantic function of "mode" during task input and pedagogic tasks (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the game, I noticed that there were surprisingly many simply worded instructions ("Keep going," "Press," "Behind") (task input). • I learned the importance of simple words while players are in motion (pedagogic task). • I learned how to convey points in natural English by watching the video of the model coach (pedagogic task).
Awareness of the semantic function of "tenor" during target and pedagogic tasks (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I learned how to explain and encourage from other students' coaching (target task). • I was surprised that "would" was more common than "should" (pedagogic task).

task), the participants demonstrated awareness that each phase (stage) of the generic structure of football training instruction has a certain function and language form. The comment "In this training, the timing was the same as in Japan, when I stopped and cautioned the players" indicates that the model coach's demonstration (task input), rather than the class or teaching materials, triggered the participants' awareness of their schema knowledge from their own past football experiences^[16].

Regarding the semantic function of "mode," the participants mentioned "omission of information," such as "I noticed that during the game, there were surprisingly many simply worded instructions ('Keep going,' 'Press,' 'Behind,' etc.)" and "I learned the importance of simple words while players are in motion." Information omission is a linguistic feature of spoken language in particular, where information the recipient is assumed to know is omitted during communication in a situation where

the sender and receiver experience the same actions and events in real time in the same context^[22]. In both cases, the participants gained awareness through the model coaches' demonstrations (task input) including video recordings of the demonstrations (pedagogic task).

Regarding the semantic function of "tenor," the participants commented on lexico-grammatical items (encouragement)^[23] used to evaluate players as the recipients of information through other participants' task performances (target task), as evidenced by the following comment: "I learned how to explain and encourage from other students' coaching." Additionally, by analyzing the language the model coaches used in the classroom (pedagogic task), participants became aware of lexico-grammatical items (modal assessment)^[1] for adjusting the nuance and intensity of the message, as evidenced by the comment "I was surprised that 'would' was more common than 'should.'"

As described above, over the course of the program, the participants developed an understanding of the language use patterns of football training instruction in terms of lexico-grammar and generic structure. In particular, they showed a strong interest in the semantic function of “field” and in generic structure.

4.2 Task Performance and Interviews

In this section, we discuss actual changes observed in the participants’ instructional language during the task performance tests in terms of their choice of lexico-grammar and their construction of a generic structure. These observations are based on analysis of Daisuke, Issei, and Yohei’s language data as well as their interview and learning log content.

【Changes in lexico-grammar from the “field” point of view 1】

A speaker’s “experience” is realized as a semantic function of “field” in register elements. The participants gradually developed an awareness of the semantic functions associated with “particular actions and mannerisms in football training,” which relate to actual experiences and recurring events encountered during the training sessions. Participants were able to use them appropriately in the task performance tests. We will begin with how Daisuke, who had the lowest English proficiency among all the participants, learned expressions to describe certain acts performed and mannerisms used during football training and was able to apply them to his task performance.

Of the lexico-grammatical items that Daisuke was explicitly taught during the study program, he used five in his second task performance (i.e., “switch,” “unlimited,” “unlucky,” “fantastic,” and “bring it in”). Daisuke’s initial use of “switch” (take turns) was in an interaction with the instructor during the first task performance, as follows:

Daisuke’s First Task Performance Test

(Passing game in which you try not to let the player designated as “It” catch the ball)

Good. Good. Good. Oh, change, Oni. Change, oni. Change, defender. [I: Defender, switch]. Defender, switch. Okay, uh, no, no, no. (I: Instructor)

When Daisuke said, “Change defender,” the instructor immediately corrected it to “Defender, switch.” Daisuke continued his demonstration using the expression the instructor provided. In the second task performance, Daisuke used “switch” in the following situation:

Daisuke’s Second Task Performance Test

(Four offenses vs. two defenses in a passing game)

Good. Nice defense. Ah, good ball. Go, Oliver. Good. Change. Change... switch, switch. Good. Good. Yeah, good, Masaki, and go. Okay.

Here, as in the first task performance, he initially used the word “change,” but in the second task performance, he self-corrected to “switch” based on his recollection of what the instructor had pointed out last time.

Daisuke used another unfamiliar term, “fantastic,” in the following situation:

Daisuke’s Second Task Performance Test

Yeah, good transition. Good. Good. Yeah. *Subarashi*. *Subarashi tte nonesuch?* (How do you say “subarashii” (fantastic) in English?) [MC: Fantastic.] Fantastic! (MC: Model coach)

In this scene, Daisuke did not know how to say *subarashii* (fantastic) in English and, during the task performance, asked a model coach directly “What is *subarashii* in English?” The model coach answered “Fantastic” on the spot.

Additionally, Daisuke learned to use some lexico-grammatical items that were not taught during the program. During the second task performance test, he used the word “transition” when telling the players to move into attack mode. During the interview, I asked him where he learned the term “transition,” and he replied:

When we played international football with foreigners at Shimotoba (Shimotoba Ground) in May or June, a foreign player would not switch. So, I asked Mr. O (a model coach) about the English word for “switch,” and he said, “In the sense of switching, we use ‘transition,’ ” or something like that. I remember that, and because it was the same

scene, I used it.

(Interview with Daisuke)

Outside the program, Daisuke was required to instruct his foreign teammates during a football game. While performing that task, he received on-the-spot instruction from a person who was also a model coach in the present study. On that occasion, he learned how to express his “go into attack mode” instruction in English, and he later employed it in his task performance. Although he did not revisit the items mentioned, Daisuke was able to incorporate them into his own task performance whenever he encountered comparable situations in which their use would be appropriate. This was facilitated by the model coaches’ or instructor’s one-time lesson. In his final interview, Daisuke noticed some improvement in his second task performance: “In the second task performance, I was able to use a few more English words than before.”

Daisuke’s enlightenment process, from the moment he became aware of the semantic functions associated with “field” to the time when he began incorporating them into his task performance, can be represented as follows: a communication breakdown occurred → he wanted to solve the problem but did not know how to communicate → he asked for/received spontaneous guidance from a nearby instructor or model coach → he conveyed the desired meaning. This learning process differs from that of PPP (presentation, practice, produce) -type education^[24], which progresses according to the following sequence commonly used in formal education programs: presentation of grammar and language → conversation practice using previously learned items → expressive activities using learned items (produce). Compared to the PPP approach to learning, Daisuke began the learning process asymmetrically in that he first directed his attention to linguistic forms in authentic football coaching interactions and then used each lexical item appropriately. Additionally, the model coach’s presence during the learning process activated Daisuke’s awareness of the lexico-grammatical items. This is precisely where TBLT’s core teaching tenet, the “focus on form” method, was activated. It maintains that “Language instruction is [the] most effective when a teacher provides spontaneous corrective feedback in response to learners’ utterances”^[17]. This indicates that Daisuke learned to choose and use contextually appropriate field-type lexico-grammatical items through

meaningful tasks in intact football coaching situations rather than in a classroom setting.

【Changes in lexico-grammar from the “field” point of view 2】

The meaning of a speaker’s “experience” is extended when it is conveyed by combining clauses^[20]. In spoken language, including interactions in sports, clauses are often in paratactic relations because they need to express ever-changing situations and interactions with listeners. Hypotactic relational clauses are more commonly employed in written language because of the lack of contextual information and the need to indicate a logical link between clauses^[22].

In Yohei’s language, significantly fewer hypotactic relational clauses were used in Target Task 2 compared to Target Task 1 in the opening stage alone. In Task 1, clauses were used 62 times, with 12 (19%) of those being hypotactic relational clauses. However, 4 weeks later, in Task 2, clauses were utilized 51 times in total, and only one (0.02%) was a hypotactic relational clause. Paratactic relational clauses were employed seven times (0.1%) in both the first and second task performance tests. The following is an example of one of these situations.

Yohei’s First Task Performance Test

(Juggling relay game between teams)

After... after you get to the goal area, you can bound, and you can drop the ball anytime to shot. Okay. So, while carrying... while carrying the ball, you do not have to fall the ball. But you if, after arriving at the goal area, you can fall the ball at any time to shoot... to shoot the ball.

Yohei’s Second Task Performance Test

(Mini game with three offense players vs. one defense player)

You have to go, doing anything, okay. [You can do] dribbling, passing, shooting, and anything, okay. [You can] change your position. [You can do] movements and free movements. [It is] unlimited [movement]. Thus, [you do] just any way; [you] just get the goal. For example, please begin with. And guard and shoot... shoot this. If the ball passes through this line, it is considered complete. Okay?

Omitted speech in parentheses.

In Task Performance Test 1, he used a lot of subordinating conjunctions such as “after,” “while,” and “if,” whereas in Task Performance Test 2, he rarely chose to use these words (only once) and instead used “so” and “and” or simply connected single clauses to explain the training procedure. In his interview, Yohei commented on this change as follows:

In terms of English learning, in the first task performance, I thought I would have to think very carefully about the English sentences and use the conjunctive adverbs “where” and “which” and things like that. However, in the second attempt, I tried to use simple and easy English that other students could understand without all those things.

(Interview with Yohei)

The comments indicate that Yohei developed awareness of an aspect of the spoken variety of the target language and applied this enhanced recognition to his task performance.

【Changes in lexico-grammar from the “tenor” point of view】

A speaker’s judgments of and attitudes toward communication content are embodied in semantic functions associated with “tenor”^[20]. In football training, whether the coach leaves the play to the players’ discretion or decides it themselves is expressed through modalities such as auxiliary verbs or adverbs^[23]. Issei did not use these at all while instructing the players in his task performance in Week 9, although he did use them once during the second test, when he said, “Next you must use your outside only.” In his interview, Issei explained this as follows:

I incorporated auxiliary verbs to describe when to give players a choice. In the feedback portion after the first coaching session, I learned that using auxiliary verbs like “must” when specifying the location of a trap is a means of enforcement, so I decided to try it myself.

(Interview with Issei)

This comment shows that Issei was using the obligatory auxiliary adverb “must” as a means of

enforcement. He also used the phrase “outside only” rather than asking the players to decide. This is an example of how a participant selected lexico-grammatical items related to the register’s tenor based on their contextual needs.

【Changes in lexico-grammar from the “mode” point of view】

Differences in language mode, such as spoken or written, are embodied in the semantic function of the mode elements^[20]. In the sports genre in particular, because the speaker’s utterances often occur concurrently with the actions of the other individuals on the scene, their meaning is easily deducible from the context, even if the events are not explicitly verbalized^[12]. Additionally, the speaker’s frequent use of ellipses increases tempo, which is one of the aspects that contribute to the rhythmic progression of the training^[23].

Yohei used many ellipses, for example, “[You can do] dribbling, passing, shooting, anything, okay,” “[You can] change the [you can] change the position,” “[You can do] movement, free movement,” and “[It’s] Unlimited [movement].” (The ellipses parts are indicated by the symbol [].) He commented on this as follows in the interview:

When I was preparing for the task performance, I thought it was too long, so I looked at the sentences the model coaches who were doing a good job used and noticed that they omitted such things, and I thought, “I do not need this word.”

(Interview with Yohei)

Based on the model coaches’ demonstrations (task input) and subsequent analysis of their instructional language (pedagogic tasks), Yohei gained an understanding of language usage appropriate for football training instruction from the perspective of the mode of the register framework and improved his task performance accordingly.

【Changes in the construction of generic structures】

Yohei constructed the following generic structure during the first task performance: opening stage →action stage. However, during the second test, he included a freezing stage, where he gave the players training tips and points: opening stage →action stage (1) →freezing →action stage (2) →closing stage.

During his interview, we asked him to share the points he kept in mind during the second task performance. His response was as follows:

In the second task performance test, I paused the training to explain my intentions to the players. I noticed in the model coach demonstrations I watched that they stopped the training when the players did not understand, and I decided to do the same in my next coaching session.

(Interview with Yohei)

In response to feedback after the first task performance, Yohei wrote the following comment in his learning log:

I want to prepare for the next task performance more thoroughly. Next, I would like to prepare for the closing stage.

(Learning log by with Yohei)

Yohei improved his performance on the second test by enhancing his awareness of how to construct a generic structure based on the model coaches' demonstrations and the feedback he received after the first task performance.

5. Discussion

In summary, incorporating SFL, which divides human language into three semantic layers, into TBLT, which employs four distinct types of learning processes (task input, pedagogic tasks, target tasks, and follow-up), demonstrated that each semantic function is acquired through multiple processes and that the learning process varies by semantic function. Daisuke, for example, was able to use new lexico-grammatical items such as “switch,” “transition,” and “fantastic” (all of which function as the “field” semantically) because he paid attention to linguistic form during his task performance tests (target task), the feedback he received from his instructors, and the other participants' linguistic form error correction. This confirms the superior effectiveness of learning the semantic functions of “field” in real-life settings such as task input or target tasks. In other words, language teaching that focuses exclusively on the meanings of words in isolation of their real context is inadequate for producing the learning effect

with respect to the semantic functions of “field.” In contrast, some participants used the semantic functions of both “tenor” (e.g., auxiliary verbs, encouragement) and “mode” (e.g., ellipsis) after a single classroom pedagogic task. These findings may be used as a guide for determining the most efficient learning method for each learning item.

The learning log (Table 4) content shows that the participants were highly interested in the semantic functions of “field.”

Although other participants also exhibited enhanced awareness of generic structure (see Table 4), they did not self-correct in this regard during the second task performance test, partly because they could not immediately verbalize the intended actions or mannerisms. Since players are in motion during the action stage of training, the coaches' intentions may have effectively been inferred from the context, even if the events were not verbalized. Therefore, the participants may have been able to navigate the situations by communicating in simple English or using gestures. The closing stage, however, is much more challenging because it requires that the coach provide tips and feedback on players' performance. In this study, the participants were required to articulate events or circumstances that were displaced in time and space from the points when they happened (mainly related to the players' physical movements), which significantly increased the difficulty due to a lack of contextual or background information^[17]. This was a major factor that affected most participants' failure to construct a generic structure in the closing stage. As an English teacher, Yohei was able to construct a generic structure in the closing stage because he had adequate English language ability. One of the major reasons none of the other participants showed improvement in terms of generic structure in the second task performance test despite the fact that they had all gained an awareness of the generic structure of football coaching is that they (with the exception of Yohei) lacked the lexico-grammatical knowledge necessary to express the actions and mannerisms instantaneously, indicating that one of the principal learning objectives should be to assist students with acquiring lexico-grammatical items related to the “field” elements of football coaching language.

6. Conclusion

After administering a 14-week SFL-informed GBT,

this study examined enhanced awareness of the characteristics of language usage unique to football training instruction among Japanese student-athletes interested in working overseas as English-speaking football players or coaches as well as how the subjects applied this knowledge to task performance. The results of this study have two main educational implications.

First, presenting linguistic features extracted from SFL-based analysis of authentic language data enables gradual increases in learners' awareness of the lexico-grammatical items and generic structure required to undertake target tasks in target contexts.

Second, incorporating the three types of linguistic features extracted via SFL into TBLT as learning items encourages learners to engage in multiple learning processes (task input, pedagogic tasks, target tasks, and follow-up), which facilitates the identification of effective teaching methods for each learning item.

There is one limitation to be considered when interpreting the findings of this study: The sample size was very small (6 persons). Hence, the findings of this study regarding instructional effectiveness cannot be generally applied to football players and coaches who want to work abroad. In the future, it is necessary to investigate changes in participants' language use from a more multifaceted perspective, that is, using quantitative methods in addition to qualitative data.

After completion of the study program, the participants left for the United States, Germany, Australia, Cyprus, and Cambodia. A follow-up survey should be conducted to investigate how they applied what they learned in this program to their activities abroad, as this will inform refinement of the program's pedagogical content.

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