



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

System

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/system

Contrastive analysis of adolescent learner interlanguage in asynchronous online communication: A keyness approach



Yen-Liang Lin

National Taipei University of Technology, Taiwan, ROC

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 February 2015

Received in revised form 13 August 2015

Accepted 20 August 2015

Available online 30 September 2015

Keywords:

Keyness

Part-of-speech analysis

Computer-mediated communication

Adolescent EFL learners

Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis

ABSTRACT

Online communication provides learners of English with opportunities to interact with native speakers across geographical boundaries. While there is a burgeoning field of research which looks at computer-mediated communication (CMC), few studies have employed a keyness approach to the analysis of interlanguage of adolescent learners. This study reports on a corpus analysis of samples of asynchronous online discourse between a group of British and Taiwanese adolescents, with the aim of exploring the significant differences in the use of grammatical categories between the two groups of participants. Keyness analysis (Rayson, 2008) at the part-of-speech level highlights the linguistic features which deserve particular attention. Specifically, it reveals the grammatical categories that occur unusually frequently or unusually infrequently in the English learners' discourse when compared with the language used by the native speakers of English in the same sample. The research findings demonstrate the pedagogical merit of keyness analysis and thus help in the design of courses for adolescent online interaction.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In light of the rapid development of technology, intercultural exchange via Internet-based computer-mediated communication (CMC) has been promoted to English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers as a means of providing pupils with opportunities to communicate with people from different countries (Ackerley, 2013; Belz & Vyatkina, 2005; Dooly & O'Dowd, 2012; Liaw & Master, 2010; Lin, 2013; Warschauer, 1997). In this way, it provides learners with authentic input and opportunities to participate in the target social and cultural contexts. Second language acquisition (SLA) theories drawn from the interactionist perspective emphasise EFL learning through the process of interacting. CMC, which permits users to engage in real-life and purposeful exchanges, is believed to promote such interaction and a certain level of attention to linguistic input, both of which are critical to promoting SLA. Asynchronous CMC, in particular, entails "threaded discussions" in which participants post messages at their own pace, making contributions to a specific topic of an ongoing dialogue. Participants therefore are not restricted to real-time interactions, and this allows learners more time for careful and thought out contributions (Montero, Watts, & Garcia-Carbonell, 2007). In this regard, CMC in text-based form provides authentic interaction to be easily transmitted, stored, archived, re-evaluated and edited, all of which encourage interaction and acquisition (Warschauer, 1997).

Empirical analyses of text-based asynchronous CMC have also shown to greatly enrich interlanguage research (Ackerley, 2013; Liaw, 2006; O'Dowd, 2007; Sasaki, 2010; Vyatkina, 2012). The CANDLE project (Liaw, 2006), for example, established a

E-mail addresses: eric00831@gmail.com, ericlin@ntut.edu.tw.

web-based forum in which EFL students in Taiwan read articles on American culture offered by the researchers and then shared their responses to the articles with their English-speaking partners from the US. The analysis of the students' forum entries found increases in the length and complexity of sentences in their writings and reductions in grammatical errors. Moreover, Ackerley (2013) investigated online self-presentations by Italian university students and English native speaking students and highlighted the divergence of linguistic choices made by each group when presenting themselves to peers in an online community. In addition, a certain amount of research has also looked at vocabulary (Li, 2009; Sasaki, 2010), grammar (Sauro, 2009), reading (Izquierdo & Reyes, 2009) and writing (Liang, 2010), and further identified a wide range of linguistic features distinctive of learner language in CMC settings. As a result, the evaluation of CMC in the text-based form can be a valuable resource for teachers and researchers to obtain a deeper insight into the process of language acquisition and language use, and can be considered particularly suitable for interlanguage analysis.

2. Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (CIA) and CMC

The approach based on the comparisons of learner interlanguage with the target NS discourse of a similar type can be referred to as "Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis" (CIA) (Granger, 1996). Such a comparative design of native versus nonnative analysis has made it possible to uncover qualitative differences (misuse) and quantitative differences (over- and underuse) of learner interlanguage as compared with native speaker (NS) discourse (Granger, 2003). As such, this methodology has been widely used to analyse learner corpora (e.g., Aijmer, 2002; Chen, 2010; Nesselhauf, 2005; Paquot, 2010; Vyatkina, 2012) and to establish distinctive features of particular interlanguage and assess their degree of generalisability across learner populations (Granger, 2015). Although CIA has been proven as a useful approach to better understanding learner grammar, the native versus nonnative dichotomy has been questioned, particularly from the perspective of world Englishes or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (e.g., Jenkins, 2009; Rajagopalan, 2004), which denies any need for specifically native-speaker norms as learners who use them may well risk adopting a false identity. Larsen-Freeman (2014) also observes that "[b]y continuing to equate identity with idealized native speaker production as a definition of success, it is difficult to avoid seeing the learner's IL [interlanguage] as anything but deficient" (p. 217). Although there has been considerable debate on whether to use native-speaker models in the EFL classroom, learners still need models of some kind as a point of reference (Cullen & Kuo, 2007). Research on students' perspectives (e.g., Timmis, 2002) shows that learners across both a diverse range of countries and contexts of language use have a strong desire to conform to native speakers' norms of English. From a pedagogical point of view, in particular, the benefit of such comparisons is even more obvious. They provide precious information on what learners do right or wrong, or partly wrong, in a particular skill or task, which can then be used to inform a wide range of pedagogical applications (Granger, 2015, p. 14).

A number of previous studies have employed CIA to investigate text-based CMC by native and nonnative speakers. For example, MacDonald, García-Carbonell, and Carot-Sierra (2013) carried out a CIA analysis on the language errors in the written production of learners from five European universities. Their comparison and contrast of native–nonnative discourse revealed differences in the amount and types of learner errors in both synchronous and asynchronous modes of online communication by different first language (L1) groups. Lin (2013) also reported differences in NS and learner use of multi-word expressions in asynchronous CMC. Some expressions frequently used by NS participants can only be found in a very few instances in the learner corpus, such as expressions serving linking functions (e.g., *and I love*), expressions with *would* for responding to requests (e.g., *it would be*), vague exemplifiers (e.g., *sort of thing*), vague quantifiers (e.g., *a couple of*) and hedges for downtoning their utterances (e.g., *a bit of*). Although the learner use of multi-word expressions was not considered grammatically inaccurate, it presents differences in style and idiomaticity. Such research has the potential to reveal different distributional patterns between NS and learner discourse.

Moreover, previous studies on CMC have presented episodes of CMC correspondence that demonstrate the interlanguage patterns, such as the use of modal verbs (Montero et al., 2007), modification devices (Lee, 2002), the presence of expressive speech acts (Carretero, Maíz-Arévalo, & Martínez, 2014) and the development of linguistic and intercultural competence (Belz, 2003; Liaw, 2006). It seems that the majority of the studies select particular linguistic features to study prior to the start of research. In this paper, however, decisions on the linguistic features to be studied are not made on the basis of the researchers' intuitions; rather, they are derived from frequency information extracted from the corpus data itself. This is referred to as *keyness* analysis, which allows

macroscopic analysis (the study of the characteristics of whole texts or varieties of language) to inform the microscopic level (focusing on the use of a particular linguistic feature) and thereby suggesting those linguistic features which should be investigated further (Rayson, 2008, p. 39).

That is, the specific linguistic features (microscopic level) highlighted for further investigation are informed by macroscopic analysis. This macroscopic analysis is based on identifying significant differences between the usage frequencies of grammatical features in two groups of texts. This study evaluated these parts-of-speech components used by Taiwanese learners and native English speakers in the present research. Once identified, these differences are then subjected to further (microscopic) analysis. For example, a *keyness* comparison of parts-of-speech might identify a statistically significant difference in the use of grammatical categories by different groups of participants. Such a "data-driven" procedure of analysis starts from frequencies in the language data rather than the researcher's assumptions about language features.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/373068>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/373068>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)