

Problems in Teaching English Syntax:

The Five Patterns of English Sentences

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要 旨

本研究ノートにおいては、昨今日本の英語教育が以前の教育内容と異なってきており、英文法、英語の歴史について大学で教えられなくなってきたことを前提に、これまでは伝統文法の学習がされてきたが、今では大学の教育において英会話、各種英語検定対策を重点的に教えているが、実は本来の伝統文法の学習の大切さとその学習による基本的な文法の基礎固めが必要不可欠であることを述べたい。学生は、5文型で何がわからないのかを知らない。学生が、5文型で分からないことは、以下の3点である。1. CとOの違いがわからない。2. IOとDOの違いがわからない（IOとDOの順序を忘れる）。3. SVOCの順序を忘れる。本ノートでは、5文型はオニオンズではなくシュナセンが本来考案した文法解釈で、そのことは元専修大学教授宮脇教授によって既にご指摘がある。私は、その5文型の「学生が自覚しないで理解できない5文型の学習における問題点」を授業担当者がわかりやすく教授することで、学生の英語学習における根本的な基礎を固める事が出来ると確信をしている。

キーワード：英語5文型、不覚問題点、5文型の起源、英語教育、
伝統文法

Introduction

In these days, the education of English language in Japan has been changing, and therefore English grammar and history of English language are not fully taught even at higher education in Japan. What had they been focused on in the study of English language before? It was, in a word, the study of traditional grammar. The students had been learning English, based on the traditional grammar, with its revision and further exercises of what they had already learned at schools. However, what is the present English education like in these days? It is not too much to say that both English instructors and the students would rather acquire speaking skill, or prepare for English proficiency exams, like the TOEIC Test. Frankly speaking, I will be completing my teaching experience in my fourteenth year on March 2019, but in my career, I have never been asked any questions concerning explanations on the five sentence patterns. In my opinion, this must be because my students were not sure of what they do not understand, the traditional grammar. Hence, I would like to publish this research notes with a purpose of pointing out the lack of consciousness in teaching five sentence patterns for the students' better understandings of English language. The targets of the students to be taught in my way of teaching are mainly students aged around twenty at an undergraduate course.

Keywords: The Five Patterns of English Sentences, Unconscious Problems, the Roots of the Five Sentence Patterns, English Education in Japan, Traditional grammar

The roots of the five sentence patterns

As mentioned above, English education in Japan used to be focused on the study of the five sentence patterns. Then, who proposed the idea of the five sentence patterns originally? Generally speaking, it was C. T. Onions, who compiled a volume of syntax, entitled as *Advanced English Syntax based on the principles and requirements of the*

Grammatical Society: Part II, Syntax (London: Swan Sonnenschein 1904). However, the traditional view that the coinage of the five sentence patterns was done by C. T. Onions became obsolete on an appearance of a new theory that it was not by Onions but by another grammarian called Sonnenschein. He had published “The parallel study of grammar” *Educational Review* 3: 450–461, subordinated by his *A Latin Grammar for Schools based on the principles and requirements of the Grammatical Society: Part II, Syntax* (London: Swan Sonnenschein 1892). The noteworthy amendment for the origin of the English five sentence patterns was proposed by Prof. Dr. Masataka Miyawaki, (2012), “5 文型の源流を辿る— C. T. Onions, *An Advanced English Syntax* (1904) を超えて—”¹⁾ Accordingly, in 2012, the origin of the five sentence patterns, attributed to C. T. Onions was rectified by Prof. Dr. Miyawaki.

Understanding of five sentence patterns

Talking back to the original topic of the present paper as is stated in the final remarks in the first section, I would like to embody the syntax problem of English education in Japan today: It concerns the better understanding of the five sentence patterns. That is to say, what I would like to mention on the present paper is that the Japanese students may feel hesitant in learning five sentence patterns these days by having the following problems of comprehension: (1) They do not understand the difference between SVC and SVO, (2) They do not understand the difference between SVIO and SVDO, and also (3) They do not know the order of SVOC (O comes first). Accordingly, in the present papers, I would like to attest the grammatical problems of English education by means of the following questionnaires for my classes, as will be proved in the following section, in advance to the conviction of the solutions for the problems mentioned above in (1)-(3). Then afterwards, by showing the outcomes of the questionnaire, I would like to mention the problems we are facing, and then clarify how I could solve the problems. Overall, I would like to draw a conclusive summary of my ideas in the present paper.

The results of the questioners concerning the five sentence patterns

The following content of the questionnaires are the results of several questions concerning the five sentence patterns, targeted at the undergraduates, aged around twenty

in the class, enrolled as “Practical English” in spring semester 2017, Aichi University, Toyohashi campus. The questionnaires were handed out for fifty-seven students. The questions on the sheets of the questionnaires read as follows:

- Q1. Until you take the present lecture, had you been feeling ‘unconfident’ on English five sentence patterns?
YES.... 47 students out of 57. (=90%)
NO.... 10 students out of 57. (=53%)
- Q2. Had you ever understood the difference of SVC and SVO? – The difference between C and O?
YES.... 35 students out of 57. (=78%)
NO.... 23 students out of 57. (=66%)
- Q3. Did you understand the difference of SVC and SVO by attending my lecture?
YES.... 44 students out of 57. (=87%)
NO.... 11 students out of 57. (=54%)
- Q4. Had you ever understood the difference of IO and DO in SVIODO?
YES.... 9 out of 57. (=34%)
NO.... 50 out of 57. (=93%)
- Q5. Did you understand the difference of IO and DO in SVIODO?
YES.... 21 students out of 57. (=64%)
NO.... 35 students out of 57. (=78%)
- Q6. Do you understand the word order of OC in SVOC?
YES.... 33 students out of 57. (=76%)
NO.... 24 students out of 57. (=67%)
- Q7. Do you get confused by the word order of SVOC?
YES.... 41 students out of 57. (=84%)
NO.... 16 students out of 57. (=59%)

The above-mentioned questions Q1–7 confirms that 57 students of mine do not have enough confident in understanding the five sentence patterns. Most of them overwhelmingly do not comprehend the differences between O and C in SVO and SVC, as well as IO DO in SVIODO. Furthermore, the majority of them get confused in the word order of SVOC. Hence, I would like to propose a solution for the above-mentioned problems, with a particular reference to Q7: The word order of SVOC could be rote-learned by the

following acronyms that stands for ‘Super Voice Of Cats’, i. e. SVOC. This could be one of the solution to help solve the matter. In addition, as you have found problems in Q4 and Q5, you may get confused the word-order of SVIDO. In other words, you might not know which comes first; IO or DO. In such a case, you may as well adapt the following phrase to the sentence pattern of SVIDO as “*AI-wo DOZO*” (Here is Love for you.)²⁾. It is simpler to memorize the above-mentioned syntax order as is shown above. With such a fun of memorizing, even it may be a little clumsy or none-sense, the students may possibly master-up what they have confronted fundamentally so far. Their impression on learning English grammar or five sentence patterns must be changed from its difficult image to the simpler one.

The solution for the problems in learning English syntax

The solution that is considered from the results of the questionnaires concerning the five sentence patterns, implemented in my classes, is as follows: That is that the class instructor should be well considerate in choosing the textbooks with references to enough explanations on five sentence patterns with some grammatical exercises. Hence, on that occasion, I would like to introduce a textbook entitled as *Basic Skills in English*, (Tokyo: SEIBIDO 1996), written by Prof. Dr. Ken’ichi Tamoto and Prof. Simon Sanada, Aichi University. In the textbook, the students can learn five sentence patterns, with some compositional and advanced excercizes.

Final Remarks

I have thus realized myself in teaching English language, the necessity of the better understandings of the English five sentence patterns. It is because without completion of mastering the five sentence patterns, the English language does not become what it naturally be. Therefore, firstly English learners (as none native of English language/learners who are not brought-up with English mother tongue) should realize themselves of what they do not know understand. Secondly, lecturers should take enough time in focusing the points they are not sure of. The problems are, as mentioned in the previous sections, as follows: the difference between C and O; the difference between IO and DO; and the word order of SVOC. Thirdly, as the questionnaires and the answers to them in

the first section shows, the understanding of the five sentence patterns seems to be the best solution to solve the problems of the present-day English education in Japan.

Notes

- 1) I translated the title as follows: “Tracing back to the origin of the five sentence patterns- Further consideration by C. T. Onions, *An Advanced English Syntax* (1904)”
- 2) I translated the sentence.

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