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Rote Learning in English Education for Japanese Students: towards more Context-Oriented Multimedia Material

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著者抄録

本稿の目的は、英語の心理動詞受動文(例. John was surprised at/by the news.)に関して、暗記型教授法が日本人英語学習者に与えている影響を明らかにし、よりコンテキスト志向な教材の必要性を示すことである。一般的な日本の英語教育において、心理動詞受動文は「be surprised at = ～に驚く」などと、「be 動詞+過去分詞+特定の前置詞」を対応する日本語訳とともにセットで指導することが多い。しかし、受動文である以上、心理動詞受動文にも by など他の様々な前置詞が共起することも本来は自然な現象であるが、現在の日本の指導法では様々な前置詞の使い分けなどが十分に指導されていない現状がある。そこで本研究では、British National Corpus の英語母語話者データと、日本人英語学習者コーパスデータを用い、心理動詞受動文に共起する前置詞について、英語母語話者と日本人学習者による使用頻度を比較した。比較分析にはコレスポンデンス分析とカイ二乗検定を用いた。調査の結果、日本人の前置詞の用い方は英語母語話者に比べて画一的であり、暗記学習の影響が見られることが確認された。調査結果を基に、単文を用いた暗記型指導のみではなく、前置詞を選択する仕組みがコンテキストとともにわかるような教材の必要性を論じた。一例として、コンテキストが伝わりやすいアニメーション動画などを用いて、状況に応じた前置詞選択の考え方を身につけられるようなコンテンツを提案した。

1. Introduction^{*1)}

To evaluate the effects of the rote-learning approach on Japanese students' learning and to consider these effects in relation to the development of more effective English-teaching materials, this study compares native speakers of English (NSE) and Japanese English as foreign language (EFL) learners' use of English passives with psychological verbs. The study uses the term *psychological passive* (*psy-passive*) to refer to an English construction that consists of 'subject + be-verb + past participle', which expresses an emotion or a 'psychological reaction', for example: *John was surprised (at/by the fact)*.^{*2)}

Although official English education in Japan has gradually shifted towards a more communicative approach, *psy-passives* have been taught in a confusing sentence-based approach, mostly with rote-learning materials.^{1) 2) 3) 4)} Our previous studies confirmed that many aspects of *psy-passives* still need to be explored in order to develop more effective teaching materials that reflect the natural usage of the construction.^{1) 2) 3) 4)}

Therefore, this study compares the use of *psy-passives*, especially with their co-occurring prepositions, by NSE and Japanese EFL learners. Prepositions that co-occur with psychological passives have been typical targets of rote learning in Japanese classrooms. The results of this comparison would provide insightful information for improving learning materials in English language teaching, especially for Japanese learners.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2

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reviews previous related studies. Section 3 explains the data and methodology used in this study. Section 4 presents a discussion of the study results and the implications for ELT in Japan. Section 5 summarises this research with a conclusion.

2. Literature Review

Before we turn to the main research, this section provides a brief overview of related studies regarding passives and their teaching in Japan. Among various grammar items essential for English learners, passive construction is one of the most difficult items for Japanese learners of English. It also has received relatively scant attention from researchers.^{1) 2) 3) 4) 5)}

The teaching of normal passive construction in English classrooms generally reflects shifts in linguistics. Passive construction was largely taught in reformation exercises of active and passive sentences when transformational grammar and generative grammar dominated linguistic discussions. Gradually, as the functional aspect of English began to be considered significant, descriptions of functional aspects of the passive construction were added in grammatical explanations. We can see an example of this in a well-known textbook by Murphy,⁶⁾ in which the function of passives

is explained explicitly, together with a clear indication of structural descriptions in active and passive sentences.

In more recent years, we can observe the reflection of corpus linguistics and the notion of awareness raising regarding the teaching of passives in McCarthy et al. (2005; 22-23),⁷⁾ where explicit structural description is no longer provided. Instead, plenty of authentic examples are available for students themselves to figure out the structure's characteristics, and more detailed description about when and how to use the construction in contexts larger than sentence-based examples (Fig. 1). Although linguistic studies and their applications regarding normal (unmarked) passives can be found as described above, corpus-based inquiries on marked passive constructions, such as *psy-passives*, *get-passives* and *have-passives*, still remain rare. One example is Carter and McCarthy (1999),⁵⁾ which is concerned with a specific passive English structure: the *get-passive*. Their large-scale research with *The Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English* data revealed that *get-passives* were used more frequently than *be-passives* in spoken discourse. Carter and McCarthy investigated contexts where *get-passives* were used and provided deep insights into the discourse



Figure 1: Corpus-based textbook "Touchstone" provides discourse contexts with examples of passive sentences.⁷⁾

environment for the structure and its communicative functions. In addition, Granger⁸⁾ pointed out the absence and importance of corpus study in the teaching of passives. These examples showed that corpus-based studies on passives would be a promising area in applied linguistic research.

As Fuyuno^{1) 2) 4)} stated, psy-passives have been taught in confusing, sentence-based rote learning in Japanese classrooms, where official English education has been exam-oriented and previously had a strong tendency towards the grammar–translation approach. In this context, psy-passives have been taught as ‘idioms’ that express emotions or psychological reactions of subjects with *be*-verbs and specific prepositions. For example, Japanese learners are usually encouraged to memorize specific sets, such as *be surprised at* and *be amazed at*, by rote as idioms, with corresponding Japanese translations (e.g. *be surprised at* = ～に驚く). By the time learners memorize these, they have already learnt the normal passive construction, generally through sentence-based transformations between actives and passives. Thus, it is quite confusing for Japanese students to learn the idioms as grammatical items differing from the passive construction they resemble. Because of the rote learning of idioms, many Japanese English teachers and Japanese learners tend to assume that they cannot use a sentence such as *John was surprised BY Bill*.

Besides the confusing introduction of psy-passives as idioms, another problematic issue is a washback effect from a significant impact caused by National Center Test for University Admissions (Cheng et al., 2003; Taylor, 2005).^{9) 10)} Washback effect refers to an impact on language-teaching curriculum and related issues from public examinations (cf. Cheng et. al, 2003). In this context, even though psy-passives are confusing in their functions and structure, Japanese teachers and learners tend to focus on more superficial issues, for instance, memorizing ‘participle + preposition’ combinations because standard entrance examinations tend to contain questions regarding these combinations. We can see an example of this issue in *Forest*

(Oku and Ishiguro, 2006),¹¹⁾ one of the most highly regarded grammar reference books for Japanese learners of English.

A section in *Forest* provides explanations on the function of general passive construction, with example sentences and basic information on psy-passives, but the focus remains on participle–preposition combinations because they are what would be queried on standardized examinations. Figure 2 shows examples of concluding questions in the section on the passive of *Forest*:

1. 彼はそのニュースを聞いてがっかりした。
He () () at the news.
2. 彼女は新しい仕事に満足している。
She () () with the new job.

Figure 2: Single sentence-based quizzes about psy-passives in *Forest*¹¹⁾

From these questions, we see that the memorization of combinations is highly prioritised. Furthermore, although *Forest* provides a list of prepositions that can normally be used in psy-passives, as shown in Figure 3, the book does not provide any contextual descriptions about when and how to use different prepositions.

- excited at (about)
- disappointed with (at/about)
- be satisfied with (at/about)
- confused with (at/about)
- shocked at (about)

Figure 3: Examples of prepositions that co-occur with psy-passives in *Forest*¹¹⁾

With these considerations in mind, an examination of effects from Japan’s rote-learning approach to psy-passives is expected to be fruitful. To evaluate the effects of rote learning, the present study compares data of NSE and Japanese EFL learners on psy-passives and their co-occurring prepositions.

This study investigates two research questions:

RQ1) Are the relationships of psy-passives and their co-occurring prepositions different for NSE and Japanese learners' data?

RQ2) Is there a significant difference between NSE and Japanese learners' data regarding the frequency of *by* in psy-passives?

To address these issues, NSE and Japanese learners' data were extracted from several corpora. For data analyses, correspondence analyses and a chi-square test were performed on the data sets. Details of the data and methodologies are discussed in the next section.

3. Data and Method

3.1. Data

To collect the data, corpora data were examined and extracted. The data for NSE were extracted from a sub-corpus called *Belief and Thought* from the British National Corpus (BNC). The total data size was approximately four million words. As the name indicates, this sub-corpus consists of 146 written materials related to the expression of personal or organisational ideas and views on various topics such as religious affairs, moral issues and documentaries. This sub-corpus was adopted for several reasons. First, its size, approximately 340 million words, was more appropriate for the study's purpose than using the entire BNC, which is very large to compare with Japanese learners' data.

Second, the contents of the sub-corpus appeared to match the type of data needed for the present study. Since the texts in the sub-corpus were about ideas and views on certain issues, the usage of psychological passives was expected to be more frequent than in other written sub-corpora, such as *Applied Science*. Since psychological passives are mainly used to express personal emotions, they are fewer when the topics require writers to be objective, as in scientific or academic materials. In fact, the frequency of the participle *surprised* was 13.09 times per one million words in *Applied Science*, but it rose to 27.07 times per one million words in *Belief and Thought*.

Next, the data of Japanese learners were extracted from several learners' corpora, namely, *Japanese EFL Learner Corpus*,¹²⁾ *Nagoya Interlanguage Corpus of English*¹³⁾ and *Corpus of English Essays Written by Japanese University Students*.¹⁴⁾ Each corpus consists of written English data by Japanese students obtained through controlled writing tasks without dictionary use. The total data size of learner corpora for the present study was approximately three hundred thousand words.

Table 1 lists the past participles that were investigated in this study.

Table 1: List of Past Participles Investigated

excited	surprised
interested	tired
pleased	worried
satisfied	

They were chosen because each participle appeared with a preposition that appeared more than 10 times in learners' corpora.

The prepositions investigated were those in Table 2. The five prepositions in the right column were chosen because they were often taught as parts of idioms in Japanese English education. The preposition *by* was included in order to evaluate the effects from the rote-learning approach in Japanese classrooms. Most Japanese students comprehend that *by* is a typical preposition for passive construction, but as mentioned in the previous section, *by* is not usually taught with psy-passives in Japan.

Table 2: List of Prepositions Investigated

<i>by</i>	<i>at</i>
	<i>of</i>
	<i>with</i>
	<i>in</i>
	<i>about</i>

3.2. Method for Data Collection and Analyses

To obtain the data necessary for comparison, the following steps were performed by using the corpora

concordances. First, to specify the passive use of the target participles, the frequencies of the seven participles and the frequencies of their co-occurring *be*-verbs in L1 to L5 were examined in both NSE and learners' data. Next, co-occurring prepositions within R1 to R5 of the past participles were counted. After extracting those raw frequencies, the percentages of each preposition's use in total preposition frequencies with each participle were calculated. From the data obtained, correspondence analyses and a chi-square test were performed to investigate the two research questions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results of Corpus Investigation

Through the data collection process described above, raw frequencies and percentage data were obtained from the BNC and learners' corpora. The data were gained as shown in Tables 3–6.

Table 3: Raw Frequencies from BNC (NSE Data)

	by	at	of	with	in	about	prep. total	pssv. total
excited	5	0	0	0	3	7	15	32
interested	3	2	26	3	161	6	201	207
pleased	4	2	3	16	5	0	30	70
satisfied	13	2	0	21	5	0	41	92
surprised	16	16	8	1	5	0	46	77
tired	1	2	14	3	2	0	22	38
worried	7	1	3	0	3	22	36	45
total	49	25	54	44	184	35	391	561

Table 4: Percentage Data from BNC

	by	at	of	with	in	about
excited	33.33	0	0	0	20.0	46.67
interested	1.49	1.0	12.94	1.49	80.10	2.99
pleased	13.33	6.67	10.0	53.33	16.67	0
satisfied	31.71	4.88	0	51.22	12.20	0
surprised	34.78	34.78	17.39	2.17	10.87	0
tired	4.55	9.09	63.64	13.64	9.09	0
worried	19.44	2.78	8.33	0	8.33	61.11

Table 5: Raw frequencies from Japanese Learners' Corpora

	by	at	of	with	in	about	prep. total	pssv. total
excited	3	1	0	1	6	2	13	85
interested	0	0	0	0	116	1	117	117
pleased	0	1	2	13	1	0	17	46
satisfied	1	1	2	43	2	0	49	71
surprised	2	59	8	3	2	2	76	302
tired	2	3	35	3	10	0	53	298
worried	0	0	0	0	1	21	22	32
total	8	65	47	63	138	26	347	951

Table 6: Percentage Data from Japanese Learners' Corpora

	by	at	of	with	in	about
excited	23.08	7.69	0	7.69	46.15	15.38
interested	0	0	0	0	99.15	0.85
pleased	0	5.88	11.76	76.47	5.88	0
satisfied	2.04	2.04	4.08	87.76	4.08	0
surprised	2.63	77.63	10.53	3.95	2.63	2.63
tired	3.77	5.66	66.04	5.66	18.87	0
worried	0	0	0	0	4.55	95.45

First, to investigate the relationships of participles and prepositions, correspondence analyses were performed on both BNC and Japanese learners' data sets. The data used for the statistical procedures are shown in Tables 4 and 6.

The result of the correspondence analysis for BNC data is shown in Figure 4. The result for Japanese learners' data is shown in Figure 5.

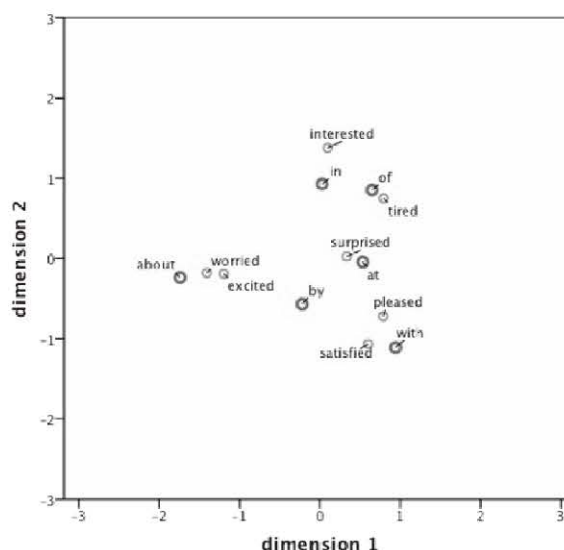


Figure 4: Result of Correspondence Analysis for BNC Data

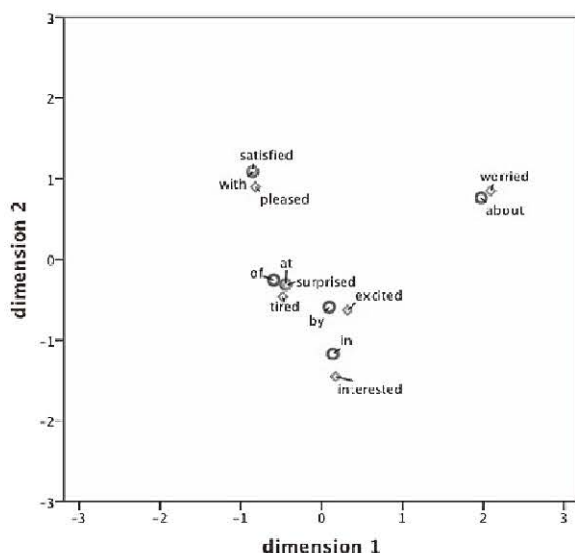


Figure 5: Result of Correspondence Analysis for Japanese Learners' Data

By looking at the relationships between the prepositions and the participles, we can see that the preposition use of Japanese learners (Fig. 5) is less flexible than that of the NSE (Fig. 4). Especially, there are strong connections between *surprised* + *at*, *satisfied* + *with* and *pleased* + *with*. These combinations are located so closely that some of them even overlap in Figure 5. This indicates that Japanese learners tend to use specific sets of participle + preposition combinations that are likely memorized through rote learning. These results reveal the effects of rote learning on Japanese students regarding the selection of prepositions.

Second, to investigate the second research question, the frequencies of *by* in both data sets were obtained (Table 7).

Table 7: Frequencies of *by* in the Total Frequencies of Prepositions

Corpus	Prep. Total	Raw freq. of <i>by</i> (%)
BNC	391	49 (12.5%)
Japanese learners' corpora	347	8 (2.3%)

**) **

To evaluate the significance of the difference in the frequencies of *by* between BNC and Japanese learners' data, a chi-square test was performed. The test confirmed that the difference is statistically significant ($p < .01$). The result and data showed certain co-occurrences of *by* with psy-passives in BNC, but

many fewer in Japanese learners' data.

In summary, the first RQ was: Are the relationships of psy-passives and their co-occurring prepositions different for NSE and Japanese learners' data? The answer is YES. From the results of the correspondence analyses, BNC data (Fig. 4) showed a greater variety of preposition use, and the connections between prepositions and past participles were more flexible than in the Japanese learners' data. In contrast, the result from the correspondence analysis of the Japanese learners' data (Fig. 5) showed less variety in preposition use. A possible reason is the influence of rote learning of 'participle + preposition' combinations.

The second RQ was: Is there a significant difference between NSE data and Japanese learners' data regarding the frequency of *by* in psy-passives? The answer is YES. There was a significant difference according to the result of the chi-square test ($p < .01$). The frequency of *by* in psy-passives was significantly less in Japanese learners' data than in NSE data.

4.2. Implications for English Language Teaching

From the results of the corpus investigations, the rote-learning approach in Japanese classrooms has clearly affected the use of prepositions in psy-passives. Since the learners tend to memorize the specific sets of 'past participle + preposition' combinations, they might not know how to choose appropriate prepositions according to contexts. Therefore, a better teaching approach than simplistic, sentence-based rote learning is needed for Japanese learners.

One possible approach would be to implement more context-oriented materials in Japanese classrooms. For example, from the results of the BNC data correspondence analysis, it seems probable that NSE choose prepositions depending on the discourse contexts. Thus, instead of mechanical rote learning, it is possible to utilise animation clips that provide contextual information and then have learners describe the scenes.

Let us take the example of *be surprised at/by*. For some students, merely receiving explanations that both *at* and *by* can be used with *surprised* might be very ab-

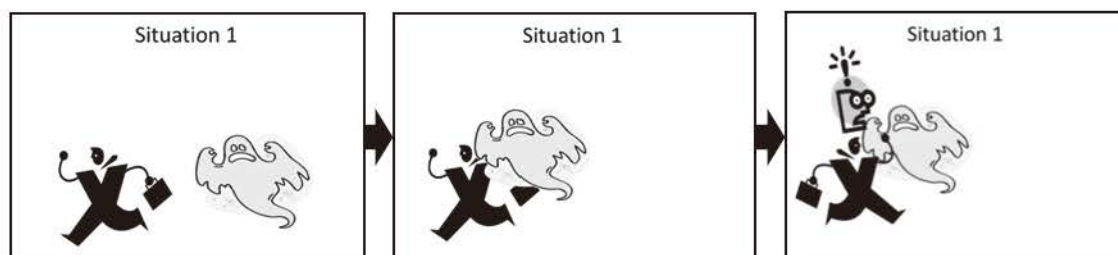


Figure 6: Situation 1) A man is going home. A ghost suddenly surprises him from behind.
 [Possible Answers: *The man was surprised by the ghost!* (?) *The man was surprised at the ghost!*]



Figure 7: Situation 2) On Halloween Day, a boy encounters someone who is wearing a fancy costume.
 [Possible Answers: *He was surprised at the nice costume!* *He was surprised by his friend!* *He was surprised at his friend!*]

stract. To show the differences in contexts, short animations, such as shown in Figures 6 and 7, can be useful. In Figure 6, Situation 1, a man is going home when a ghost surprises him from behind. In Figure 7, Situation 2, a boy encounters someone wearing a fancy costume on Halloween. Using such short animations makes it possible to describe different contexts vividly, let students think about which sentence they would use, and share their opinions in small groups.

For example, in both situations *at* and *by* are possible with *surprised*; however *by* is more natural for Situation 1. In Situation 2, both *at* and *by* can be used, but some would say *at* is more natural for this situation as compared to Situation 1. This kind of activity would be useful not only because students can confirm their understanding of the differences in situations but also because they may actually notice that individual perceptions of a situation differ. By sharing their perceptions with peers, they may realise that an absolutely correct answer may not exist. Very often, Japanese students are forced to memorize one ‘correct’ answer, and by doing so, they sometimes cannot capture even the notion of context-dependency. By engaging in discus-

sions with other classmates, based on vivid contextual information such as animation clips, students can discover that each classmate has a different interpretation of the context, and that having different answers is natural because of context-dependency.

5. Conclusion

This study compared the use of psy-passives with their co-occurring prepositions in NSE and Japanese learners’ data. Corpus research suggests that the rote-learning approach in Japanese classrooms affected the Japanese learners’ selection of prepositions. It was argued that these findings should be applied in developing more context-oriented materials for learners to study context-dependency in the selection of prepositions in psy-passives.

As Carter and McCarthy (1999)⁵ showed that corpus research is one of the most effective methods for providing authentic supporting evidence from actual language usage and applying that evidence in language teaching. Although this study focused on the co-occurring prepositions in psy-passives, many more components of passives need investigation. To reveal

the complete features of passive constructions and examine their pedagogical applications, more corpus-based studies, material creation and evaluations are necessary.

注

- *1) The author thanks the audience at the 44th annual meeting of British Association for Applied Linguistics for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.
- *2) The issue of adjectiveness/pure-passiveness of this construction is not the target of discussion in this paper. To avoid any confusion, we will simply call all instances that share the same formal pattern of *be + past participle* psy-passives. Related discussions of this issue can be found in Fuyuno (2012)².

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