LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network
ISSN: 2630-0672 (Print) | ISSN: 2672-9431 (Online)
Volume: 17, No: 2, July – December 2024

Language Institute, Thammasat University
https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/LEARN/index

Okay, what we're just going to do now is…: Discourse functions of *wh*-clefts in YouTube How-to Videos

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APA Citation:
Hammond, M. (2024). Okay, what we're just going to do now is…: Discourse functions of *wh*-clefts in YouTube How-to Videos. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network, 17*(2), 621-637.

Received
26/09/2023

Received in revised form
12/06/2024

Accepted
21/06/2024

ABSTRACT

Procedural knowledge is often transferred by spoken 'how-to' instructions delivered with simultaneous hands-on demonstration. As reflected by the popularity of YouTube instructional videos, such spoken texts have become a common way to learn how to learn a wide range of things. Surprisingly, there is a lack of research concerned with salient linguistic features and communicative functions associated with this type of discourse, referred to in the paper as procedural monologues. This study moves towards filling this gap by investigating discourse functions in procedural monologues associated with *wh*-clefts (e.g., What you want to do is use a screwdriver). This construction, considered as a highlighting device to mark relevant important points in spoken discourse, is frequently found in instructional videos. Extracted from a specialized corpus of 100 how-to-videos posted on YouTube, 130 *wh*-clefts were categorized by function to better understand how speakers shift between guiding listeners through the essential sequence of procedural steps and providing additional content to produce a coherent and cohesive text. With the underlying goal of supporting pedagogical approaches to prepare learners of English as a

second or foreign language to produce communicatively dynamic procedural monologues, the study describes seven possible functions highlighted by *wh*-cleft utterances.

Keywords: procedural discourse, discourse functions

Introduction

In diverse settings, procedural knowledge is often transferred through a demonstration of a task at hand and simultaneously produced verbal 'how-to' instructions. Such pedagogic spoken texts could include, for instance, instructions we give to a friend asking for help with editing a photo using a smartphone app, or those given in a professional context such as a specialist teaching new rehabilitation techniques to physical therapists during a training seminar. In some situations, this variety of procedural discourse can be interactive and take on a dialogic exchange structure, however, how-to instructions are primarily delivered as a monologue to a group of passive listeners.

Increasingly, such instructional monologues are video recorded and uploaded to hosting platforms such as YouTube, where they become pedagogical resources that can be accessed whenever needs arise. For practically any how-to task that can be imagined, someone has probably created and uploaded a video demonstration. The popularity of the how-to genre is reflected in consumer behavior research, which shows that more than half of YouTube viewers in the United States regularly watch how-to videos to gain knowledge of tasks they have never done before (Pew Research Center, 2018).

Much like written instructions in a manual, on a product's package, or other printed materials, how-to-X monologues are primarily structured around the sequential steps needed to complete the task. In contrast to written instructions, however, such monologues are not limited to these steps and encompass a wider range of discourse functions that guide a listener through a task by highlighting important aspects as procedures unfold in a real-time demonstration. Accordingly, speakers may construct monologues inclusive of their personal perspective, experience, and expertise.

Surprisingly, there is a lack of studies that explore the salient linguistic features, communicative functions, or rhetorical structure of this variety of discourse, which in this paper will be referred to by the term *procedural monologue*. As a working definition, a procedural monologue is a pedagogic text produced by a single speaker that: focuses on the completion of a clearly defined *how-to-X* task, follows a predetermined sequence of procedural steps,

involves some type of physical manipulation of objects or materials, and is delivered with a simultaneous demonstration of the task. Although the study presented here is centered on texts transcribed from instructional videos, this definition also extends to procedural monologues given in face-to-face situations.

With the underlying goal of supporting pedagogical approaches to prepare learners of English as a second or foreign language to produce communicatively dynamic procedural monologues, the current study aims to address a gap in the literature by focusing on a single grammatical construction, *wh*-clefts (also known as pseudo-clefts). While there are other observable features of procedural monologues (e.g., imperative verbs, conditional adverbial clauses, personal pronouns, modals and semi-modals) worthy of investigation, *wh*-clefts are useful as a point of departure towards understanding the range of discourse functions typical of hands-on procedural demonstrations. This construction frequently occurs in procedural monologues and is similar in function to what has previously been categorized as: relevance markers (Hunston, 1994), importance markers (Deroey, 2015; Lynch, 2004), focusers (Simpson, 2004), text-structuring metadiscourse (Thompson, 2003), engagement markers (Hyland, 2010), and highlighting devices (Biber et al., 1999). More specifically, *wh*-clefts have been included in past research focused on how speakers mark importance and structure discourse in the context of university lectures (Biber et al., 2004; Deroey, 2012; Prince, 1978) and in academic conference presentations (Rowley-Jolivet & Carter-Thomas, 2005).

Specifically, this study describes seven discourse functions identified in 130 *wh*-clefted utterances extracted from an originally compiled corpus of 100 how-to videos posted on YouTube. Although texts of these videos may have other pervasive linguistic features, the current study is limited in scope to this single construction. Towards this goal, the paper starts with a description of the syntax of basic *wh*-clefts and a brief review of relevant literature concerned with how the construction is used in other contexts. A description of methods follows, including an overview of the process of compiling the corpus, the range of videos selected for inclusion, and the qualitative coding of function at the utterance level. Results are then presented with examples from the corpus to illustrate the seven identified discourse functions. Finally, discussion is offered on possible interpretation of findings to illustrate how *wh*-clefted utterances may contribute to the speaker's ability to structure procedural monologues and how methods and results may be explored in future studies.

The Wh-Cleft Construction and Relevant Literature

As defined by Biber et al. (1999. p. 959), *wh*-clefts consists of three parts: (1) a clause introduced by an interrogative *wh*-word (i.e., *why*, *who*, *which*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *how*) with its own point of focus; (2) a form of the verb be; (3) the specially focused element, which may be a noun phrase, an infinitive clause, or a finite nominal clause. Accordingly, the following examples, with the *wh*-clause in italics and the focused element underlined, can be considered *wh*-clefts: *What you want* is a loose knot; *What you want* is to have a loose knot; *What you want* is that the knot has been tied loosely.

A variety of labels have been given to the two components joined by the copula: cleft clause/clefted constituent (Weinert & Miller, 1996), backgrounded/foregrounded (Jucker, 1997), the variable/the value (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2006), and *wh*-clause/highlighted element (Deroey, 2012). For clarity, Deroey's terms will be used here.

Although the *wh*-clause may be formed with any *wh*-interrogatives, the *what* variety is by far the most occurring (Biber et al., 1999) and is commonly the focus of studies that explore this construction. Moreover, in spoken language, *wh*-clefts may diverge from the basic structure, such as in the example, *What you need, you want a loose knot.* Researchers investigating the construction must interpret whether speakers have aborted the initial subordinated *wh*-clause or if they are loosely applying the syntactic structure, which may occur by leaving out the copula or by taking a discontinuous route to get to the highlighted element (Deroey, 2012, p. 114).

To frame how *wh*-clefts are a key element in procedural monologues such as those in how-to videos, it may be useful to consider the concept of *information structure* (Halliday 1967), also referred to as *information packaging* (Chafe, 1976). Acknowledging that different research traditions are not always in agreement of a precise definition, the concept is fundamentally concerned with the ways information is presented at the clausal level to mark what is prominent information. Information structure revolves around mechanisms that the writer/speaker employs to indicate to the reader/listener that which is "given" information tied to preceding discourse or context and that which is contextually "new" information (Biber et al., 1999, p. 896). For the purposes of this paper, Lambrecht (1994) offers the following concise definition of information structure:

> That component of sentence grammar in which propositions as conceptual representations of states of affairs are paired with lexicogrammatical structures in accordance with the mental states of interlocutors who use and interpret these structures as units of information in given discourse contexts. (p.5)

Associated with the informational structure, the concept of *focus* refers to a part of a sentence or utterance that is in some way linguistically marked to indicate it is new and informative to the hearer (Halliday, 1967). As described by Lambrecht (1994), focus is the part of the sentence that cannot be taken for granted by the receiver as it is an "unpredictable or non-recoverable element in an utterance (p. 207)." A generally governing principle in the English language is end-focus, which favors the last lexical item at the end of a clause as a position for the new information (Biber et.al., 1999). In addition, focus is most often expressed by "prosodic prominence" of one syllable in the sentence (Lambrecht, 1994, p. 225). For example, focusing on a required tool may be signaled in an utterance such as: *For this job, you will need a SCREWdriver*. There are also syntactical mechanisms that may be used to mark focus, such as constructions of topicalization or fronting that put grammatical elements that typically come after the verb in a position in front of the subject, as in the example *A screwdriver, you are going to need one for this job*. Depending on the context, such fronting could be used to organize the information structure, express contrast, or to emphasize elements (Biber et al, 1999, p. 900).

The importance of the *wh*-cleft construction in procedural monologues may be grounded in its potential to serve as a device to facilitate the on-line processing of descriptions of sequential steps of a task that the viewer may be witnessing for the first time. Unlike a brief list of imperative commands typical of written instructions, procedural monologues encompass a more dynamic range of discourse functions may require the listener to identify relevance and importance of specific points as the monologue progresses. Hunston and Thompson (2000) argue that such evaluations of importance by the writer/speaker are a significant element in directing the reader/listener to the main points of the text. They suggest that pseudo-clefts may provide an added text-oriented function of organizing a coherent message and serve as a linguistic device to facilitate subjective evaluation. This theory is also manifested in Deroey's (2012) study of discourse functions of *wh*-clefts in university lectures drawn from the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus. Deroey emphasizes that *wh*-clefts may support a thematic structure in lectures, as they signal something new and important is about to be introduced and address the on-line processing needs of the listener to comprehend content and take efficient notes. Notably, Deroey makes a case that *wh*-clefts are well suited for structuring procedural descriptions in the physical sciences, such as those that may be used for future technical application that may involve detailed steps (p.120).

Moreover, in terms of information structure in spoken *wh*-clefts, Weinert and Miller (1996) argue that a central concept behind this construction is the establishment of a balanced or neutral sense of focus. The

speaker or writer may use *wh*-clefts as a syntactical device to make information "cognitively salient for the addressee" (p. 179), as in their example taken from spoken text of giving directions on a map: *What you're doing is you're going down the side of the allotments* (p. 181). The presupposed information embedded in the *wh*-clause (i.e., the listener wants to get to a specific place) sets up the subsequent, more significant information of exactly where they need to go. This syntactical organization is also pointed out by Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas (2005) in their investigation of native/non-native spoken English in academic presentations in the field of science. They found that despite a lack of *wh*-clefts in published articles, native speaking scientists often employed the construction as a device to ease the processing burden on the listener by putting weight on the information that comes at the end of an utterance. For example, a *wh*-clause such as *Well, what we are talking about here is…* encourages the listener to pay attention to the important new information that will follow.

Although there appears to be a void of studies centered on procedural monologues in general on YouTube, there have been several investigations of specific videos that demonstrate how to apply cosmetics, make-up, and other beauty techniques. (Bevan, 2017; Bhatia, 2018; Riboni, 2017; Tolson, 2010). Research in this area leans towards sociolinguistic features including interdiscursive aspects and the construction of identity of the speaker. Notably, Riboni (2017) provides a possible framework of "generic, rhetorical, and linguistic practices of make-up gurus" (p. 189), however, no special attention is given to *wh*-clefts, which are only referenced in a single example to illustrate combinations of the indicative and imperative moods.

Methods

An original corpus (55,369 tokens) was compiled for the study, comprised of transcribed spoken texts of 100 how-to videos publicly posted on YouTube. With the goal of including a range of content and avoiding overrepresentation of any subject or field, selection was limited to short (maximum six minutes) monologues from 12 thematic categories, listed in Table 1, which I observed while screening approximately 500 videos. Only videos that featured live-on-camera speakers engaged in the demonstration were chosen. Although the study is not concerned with regional varieties of language, for consistency, speakers with North American accents and L1-level proficiency were selected, as intuitively determined by two native-speakers of American English (myself and a colleague).

Table 1

Thematic Categories and Examples of Videos Selected for the Corpus.

Category (number of texts)	Example (How to…)
Hand/power tools (15)	Start a chain saw
Sport technique (10)	Throw a football
Food preparation (10)	Cut pineapple
Computer software (10)	Copy/paste on an iPad
Computer hardware (5)	Remove a hard drive
Scientific equipment (5)	Prepare a petri dish
Emergencies (5)	Use a fire extinguisher
Repairing items (5)	Mend an extension cord
Assembling items (5)	Assemble a saxophone
Hair/skin care (5)	Trim a beard
Nursing practice (5)	Tape an ankle
Miscellaneous (20)	Load a film camera

Preliminary transcription was facilitated by the automatic speech recognition (ASR) feature available on the YouTube platform. While the quality of ASR transcription has greatly improved with the advancement of technology, to ensure accuracy, all transcripts were manually checked. Moreover, utterances were punctuated with full stops and commas for clarity in separating clauses. Brief false starts, stutters, and fillers (e.g., um, uh) were omitted from transcription.

In corpus-based studies that investigate *wh*-clefts, the construction has been identified via several methods. For example, Deroey (2012) employed corpus query language (CQL) searches that extracted instances of the word *what* that occurred within a 5-word range to the left of lemmas of *be*; Lee (2016) used a 15-word range between *what* and *are/is* to cast a wider net. In both cases, the researchers manually inspected the raw data compiled by CQL searches and eliminated irrelevant results. However, in the current study, the manageable number of occurrences of the word *what* (n=223) in the corpus made it possible to forgo preliminary CQL filtering and to manually confirm which instances were part of *wh*-clefts. Both standard constructions (*wh*-clause + copula + highlighting element) and syntactic blends were counted. For example, despite missing the copula, the utterance *So what we're looking at here, two totally different pineapples, our pineapples*, was treated as a *wh*-clefted utterance. In total, 130 *wh*-clefts were identified in the corpus. These occurrences were widely distributed among the 100 videos that comprise the corpus; 62 had at least one occurrence of a *wh*-cleft.

Starting with themes observed during transcription, an initial coding scheme was devised to determine the primary discourse function embedded in each of the identified *wh*-clefted utterances. After several rounds of preliminary coding and revision of the scheme, codes were aggregated into a frame of the following seven observed functional associations: describing procedural activity, marking stages or steps of the task, describing pre-procedural activity, reporting results of procedural activity, referring to items used in the task, elaborating on a previous utterance, and giving advice.

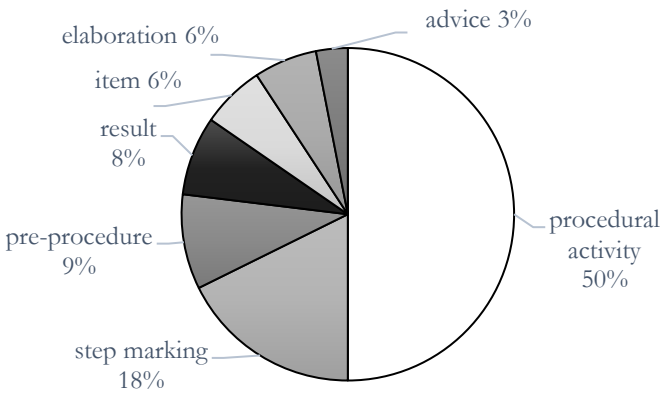
After my final round of coding, I called on an additional rater, also a native speaker of American English, to enhance the reliability of results. Following a training session, the additional rater independently coded each utterance and achieved 82% consistency with my results; the 24 codes in disagreement were resolved after discussion.

Results

Results of the qualitative coding of the 130 *wh*-clefts found in the corpus are shown in Figure 1. Predictably, speakers most often employed the construction to bring attention to the hands-on activities required to complete the predetermined task. To some degree, a polarity of two groups of functions is present in that one half directly focuses on a demonstrable action needed to complete the task, while the other half comprises utterances that are perhaps not essential.

Figure 1

Discourse Functions Associated with Wh-Clefts



The following sub-sections describe the characteristics of each function, illustrated by examples from the corpus. When applicable, further details of pervasive linguistic features of functions are included.

Describing Procedural Activity

By far the most frequent discourse function is describing an essential action being demonstrated as a means towards completing the how-to task. Coded as *describing procedural activity*, this function was found in 50% (n=65) of all occurrences of *wh*-clefts. These utterances are spoken just before or at the same time as the action was being performed, as shown in the following:

(1) *So <u>what we're gonna do is</u> pull up on the string.* (Replace a guitar string)
(2) *Then <u>what you do is</u> pull up your lashes a bit.* (Applying mascara)
(3) *Now <u>what you're gonna want to do is</u> immediately remove that from the pan.* (Cleaning a skillet)

In 73% of *wh*-clefts with this function, speakers started the utterance with either *so* (n=29), *then* (n=11), or *now* (n=8). In addition, the subject of all *wh*-clauses was a personal pronoun; *you* was most frequently found (n=30), followed by *we* (n=20) and *I* (n=15). Moreover, in the *wh*-clause, three verbs, in either the present or present continuous tense, account for most occurrences: *go* (n=25), *do* (n=20) and *want* (n=15). In contrast, in the highlighted element, a wide variety of 44 different verbs was observed, with only *pull* occurring more frequently (n=8) than others.

Step Marking

The second most frequently occurring discourse function is *step marking* of a forthcoming step or stage of procedural activity. Such use was found in 18% (n=23) of the *wh*-clefts in the study. In some cases, marking a step sounds much like describing a procedural activity. An important distinction, however, is that a step marking utterance is not simultaneously produced with the performance of the procedure being described. Consider the examples below:

(4) *Now <u>what we need to do is</u> remove the cables and reverse order of how we connected them. So we start off with the black cable on the former dead battery's car. Remove it from that piece of metal that you clamped it to.* (Jump-starting a car)

(5) *So what I'm going to do first, while we build this martini, is chill the glass. Put a little ice in there and use this carbonated water or soda water to chill it.* (Mixing a martini)

In (4), the speaker's intent is to highlight that the monologue has advanced to the final stage of the task of jump starting a car (i.e., removing the jumper cables). The speaker did not, however, start disconnecting the cables directly after the utterance, but instead gave further description of the stage by stating the desired starting point of the black cable. The same is true in (5), as the *wh*-cleft puts into focus that the next steps of procedural activity will be concerned with chilling the glass, but the speaker is required to use an additional utterance with an imperative (*Put a little ice in there*…) to demonstrate and explain how chilling is achieved.

As was the case when describing procedural activity, the verbs *go*, *do* and, *want* are most frequent in the *wh*-clause. There is a difference, however, concerning verbs in the highlighting element as 7 of the 23 utterances (30%) have verbs not associated with hands-on activity, such as *show*, *go ahead*, *learn*, and *walk through*. In addition, unlike the high frequency of *you* in procedural activities, pronouns used for step marking were most often made in the first person with the pronouns *we* (n=12) and *I* (n=5), which outnumber the second person *you* (n=4).

Describing Pre-Procedural Activity

In 9% (n=12) of the *wh*-cleft utterances, the discourse function can be interpreted as verbalizing a pre-procedural activity that falls short of an essential procedural activity. In such utterances, the *wh*-cleft's focusing constituent is concerned with a preliminary action taken to begin a new procedure, as illustrated in these examples:

(6) *So what you're going to do first is you're going to take your horsehair brush. Yeah, you know run it all over your shoes.* (Shining shoes)
(7) *Now what you want to do is you want to take a look at your mirror over here. You want to turn your car until you see the car behind you in the mirror.* (Parallel parking a car)

In certain occurrences, pre-procedural *wh*-clefts may serve the same function as step marking. The key difference is that the speaker highlights the new step by starting some small aspect of it. For example, the speaker in (6) directs the listener to do something (i.e., *take your horsehair brush*), yet this utterance is too general to be considered as a procedural step and is simply preparatory for the activity of rubbing the brush on a pair of shoes. Likewise,

in (7), looking in the mirror in this situation is a pre-activity of the procedure of turning the wheel while backing up.

Utterances to highlight pre-procedural activity include an almost exclusive (10 of the 12 occurrences) use of second person pronoun *you* in the *wh*-clause. Moreover, in the highlighted element, the verbs *start* or *take* are found in half of all occurrences.

Reporting Results of Procedural Activity

The discourse function of highlighting a result of procedural activity or step was central in 8% (n=10) of the *wh*-clefts identified in the corpus. These utterances directly follow a procedure and report on a specific consequence or outcome, as shown in the following examples:

(8) *You'll pour them in there. And what happens is they both start to boil in the beginning.* (Distilling chemicals)
(9) *What you then do is you pull the pieces apart. And what this does is this pinches the dirt in between the two spades.* (Digging a post hole)

The *wh*-cleft clauses *what happens* and *what it/this does* were most often employed to describe results, occurring three times each. A similar sentiment is expressed in the remaining *wh*-clauses with personal pronouns, such as *what you get*, *what you're left with*, *what I've done*, and *what you're able to do*.

Referring to Items

An additional discourse function served by *wh*-cleft utterances is the reference to items used in the demonstration, such as tools, materials, or specific parts of objects. These occurred in 6% (n=8) of occurrences.

(10) *And what we want to take note of here is the little groove on the memory stick.* (Adding memory to a computer)
(11) *Now, what it says on the side of the tire is maximum pressure.* (Checking tire inflation)

Although it is not uncommon for a speaker, usually at the start of the monologue, to introduce a list of items needed to complete the task, all occurrences of this type of function refer to one specific item as it is used in context of the demonstrated procedural activity. One observed pattern associated with this discourse function is that in four of the eight occurrences, the highlighted element consists of a single noun phrase.

Elaboration

A discourse function found in 6% (n=8) of *wh*-clefts utterances in the corpus is the elaboration on the content of the previous utterance. Accordingly, in all cases, such utterances begin with the conjunction *and*, as shown in the following:

(12) *You'll take the striker. And what the striker is is basically a piece of flint across which metal moves creating a spark.* (Lighting a Bunsen burner)
(13) *There's a brass knob here that you can turn clockwise or counterclockwise. And, what it's function is is to pull the blade in.* (Using a hand planer)

Speakers may produce a *wh*-clause that Prince (1978) would describe as a "metalinguistic antecedent" (p. 890) to elaborate by defining a term. In (12), for example, the term *striker* is defined for the listener who is not familiar with the tool's function; similar occurrences in the corpus include terms such as *lock out an elbow* (Training with a boxing speed bag) and *44 psi* (Checking tire pressure). In addition, elaboration may follow item descriptions, as in (13), to offer additional information on the function of the knob.

Giving Advice

A final function of *wh*-clefts in the corpus is the giving of advice or suggestions on how to approach procedural activities. Found in 3% (n=4) of occurrences, this function transpires when the speaker describes a personal preference or a recommendation but implies that it is not a required sequential step.

(14) *So what you probably want to do is clean out all this ahead of time with vinegar or bleach.* (Replacing a gasket on a refrigerator)
(15) *I'm going to squeeze down. Squeeze together. Just like that. And what I like to do is I like to use my other hand as well.* (Using wire strippers)

In the case of (14), the speaker points out that cleaning the refrigerator before installing the gasket is worth considering, but as evident by the *ahead of time* reference, doing so is not part of the real-time demonstration. In contrast, in (15), the speaker demonstrates using two hands, but with stipulation that is his personal preference, leaving the possibility that just one hand is acceptable.

Discussion

Relevant to the seven discourse functions associated with *wh*-clefts identified in the corpus, there are two areas worthy of discussion. The first concerns the premise, previously mentioned at the start of the results section, that a polarity of two levels of functions may exist in procedural monologues. This idea was borrowed from Swales' (2016) investigation of short descriptive texts, produced by art historians and curators, that accompany exhibited or published images of art. His analysis showed a pattern of oscillation between details of the artwork itself and broader descriptions of the context of when and how it was created. To some degree, such dual foci oscillation is present in procedural monologues. Using terms from Fontan and Saint-Dizer's (2008) analysis of written procedural texts, one side may be seen as the *rational structure* concerned with the step-by-step procedural activities (including pre-procedures), while the *explanation structure* on the other side comprises utterances that the speaker thinks can improve the "internal coherence and cohesion" (p. 116) of the monologue. The functions of step marking, result reporting, elaboration, and giving advice can be considered as part of the explanation structure.

This polarity implies that a speaker is obligated to build a rational structure that follows a logical and sequential step-by-step path to complete the task but is also expected to intermittently diverge to the explanation structure to add some personal perspective as the task unfolds. It may be possible that *wh*-clefts serve as a useful device to switch between these two structures, as seen in the following excerpt from a demonstration of glass cutting:

> So I can see the line that I cut through the film through the glass here. <u>What I need to do is</u> line it up carefully so that the wheel, the straightedge positions, the cutting wheel right over the top of that line.

Here, the *wh*-cleft is situated at the point when the speaker returns to the rational structure of lining up the plate of glass after reporting on results that the line is now visible. Although in the current study, quantitative coding of the entire corpus was not feasible, future research could explore this idea further to determine if there are any salient patterns of speakers employing *wh*-clefts or any other linguistic features when shifting between these two poles. Moreover, future studies may build on the qualitative coding scheme used in this study, and contribute towards a more formal analysis of the how-to video as a specific genre or register variation.

A second area of discussion is the potential usefulness of findings for the teaching of procedural monologues to learners of English as a second or

foreign language, either for general or specific purposes. Although *wh*-clefts are not included in traditional pedagogical grammars, it is not a particularly complex structure to teach. The *wh*-clause constituent, as the findings show, is usually formed with a small set of verbs (i.e., *go*, *do*, and *want*), and can be presented as formulaic language that learners can add on to simple structures or even noun phrases. For example, once a learner has internalized *What we're going to do now is*…they have more processing time to construct the highlighted element. In addition, the coding frame developed for the study can support the design of lesson plans or learning materials that bring awareness to the two levels of functions embedded in typical how-to videos. Moreover, learners could be tasked with conducting their own analysis of YouTube videos or even with producing their own original procedural monologue to be shared and qualitatively coded with others. Lastly, the findings here may be used in future studies as a baseline to provide perspective for a present situation needs analysis by comparing it to a corpus of videos produced by a specific group of learners to determine what disparities or shortcomings may exist.

Conclusion

In this investigation, seven discourse functions were identified from the analysis of 130 *wh*-clefts extracted from a corpus of procedural monologues compiled from the text of 100 how-to instructional videos that were publicly posted on YouTube. Accounting for 50% of occurrences, the most frequently identified function was the highlighting of a demonstrable activity essential to complete the predetermined step-by-step sequence of the task. In addition, 9% of occurrences functioned to emphasize a pre-procedural activity, prior to a procedural step. Combined, these two functions may be viewed as part of the rational structure of the monologue concerned with the procedure itself. In contrast, a group of five discourse functions make up the monologue's explanation structure, by either mediating the speaker's knowledge and experience or adding coherence and clarity: step marking, reporting on result of a procedural activity, referring to items used in the task, elaborating, and giving advice. Identifying these functions may provide a point of departure for further investigation of this type of spoken discourse.

Acknowledgements

The research presented in the paper was funded by a grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (Kaken-hi Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research Category C: # 23K00671), as part of the project *Linguistic Register*

Analysis of Procedural Monologues in YouTube Videos, for which the author is the principal investigator.

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