

修士学位請求論文要旨

Pragmatic Features of Japanese Returnees' Speech Act Performances in English

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Introduction

This study aims to investigate the pragmatic features of Japanese returnees' speech act performance in English. During the sojourn abroad, returnees used their second language at school and spoke their first language at home, that is, they lived in a bilingual and bicultural environment. The investigation on how this environment would affect their pragmatic performance will contribute to the research field of interlanguage pragmatics as well as the fields of second language acquisition and second language education.

Literature Review

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is considered as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (Crystal, 1985, p.240). In the field of pragmatics, one of the most relevant theories is the Speech Act Theory, which is proposed by Austin (1962). He divided those intentions into three types of acts: locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. Within the illocutionary act, they are divided into different types of speech acts. In this research, 6 types of speech acts will be used: Request, Apology, Expressing gratitude, Refusal, Response to compliment, and Advice.

Politeness Theory

Moreover, Pragmatics focuses on how the speaker tries to be polite. The origin of the traditional theory lies in Grice's maxim. One of the most influential theories in the field of Pragmatics is Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. They state that interlocutors consider the power and distance of their relationship when choosing among different options for conveying a given speech act.

Interlanguage Pragmatics

Next, Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is defined as "the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language" (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p.3). ILP focuses on how L2 learners produce and comprehend speech acts, and how their pragmatic competence develops over time (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Studies investigate the development of interlanguage pragmatics involving different kinds of speech acts, L2 language and L1 background. These studies suggest that performing proper communicative acts often involves culture or context-specific norms (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Returnees

Lastly, Yoshitomi (2007) defines returnees as "English learners who have spent a number of years during their childhood in an English-speaking country, and which have

therefore acquired English quite naturally as their second language (ESL), but who undergo a process of forgetting English after returning to Japan” (p.372). Returnees have a better understanding of and ability to produce their second languages than their native speakers of their home countries who have not gone abroad (Marti, 2006). However, some studies prove some returnee students cannot use their second language well regardless of their experiences living abroad (Bouton, 1994; Bialystok, 1993). Nevertheless, there are not many studies that focus on the pragmatics of Japanese returnees, which will be the focus of this study.

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent are the pragmatic features of Japanese returnees' speech act performances similar to and diverse from those of Japanese and native English speakers?

RQ2: What kind of factors affect their pragmatic performances? Do their age, length of stay, proficiency and intensity of interaction affect them? Is there any difference according to the type of speech act?

Methodology

Participants

Three groups of participants have participated in this study. Twenty Japanese

returnee college students (RE), seventeen Japanese learners of English (JE) and fourteen native English speakers (NE).

The RE students (5 male, 15 female) are students who received English education abroad for 3 to 11 years. During the sojourn, they used English at school and spoke Japanese at home, that is, they are bilingual and bicultural. All of them had lived abroad for more than three years, went to the local school or international school, and came back to Japan after 11 years old. Their English proficiency level was presumed to be the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) B2 to C1 level in reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Their age ranges from 19 to 22. They were recruited from Meiji University and other universities in Japan.

The JE students (5 male, 12 female) were also undergraduates who attended different universities in Japan. They were all students who have no experience of visiting abroad for more than a month. Their English proficiency level was presumed to be from CEFR A2 to B2 level in reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Their age ranges from 19 to 22. They are also recruited from Meiji University and other universities in Japan.

The NE speakers (6 male, 8 female) were all in their 20s who were born and grew up in English-speaking countries at least until graduating college. They are now either working in Asian countries (Japan and Taiwan), working in their home countries, or Japan

as exchange students. Their age ranges from 23 to 28. They were recruited from Meiji University and are also acquaintances of the researcher, NE speakers and RE students.

Procedure

The data were collected through the Oral Computer-Animated Production Tasks (CAPT). According to Halenko et al. (2019), CAPT is “a form of virtual role-play embedded into a PowerPoint format, where learners first viewed and listened to short, animated speakers and responded by making” appropriate speech for the context (p.76). CAPT contains 15 situations, including requests, refusals, apologies, thanking, response to compliment, and giving advice. Those situations were chosen from previous studies which reported different pragmatic features between English native speakers and Japanese learners of English. The speech of RE students were compared with those of NE speakers and JE students according to criteria of each situation, such as particular forms, contents, and pragmatic routines. For the data analysis, a Fisher’s exact test was used, which is a statistical test used to determine if there are nonrandom associations between the two variables. If the results show a statistically significant difference, then it means the difference in the results did not occur randomly.

There are two parts to this study. In part 1, Fisher’s exact tests were conducted for the three groups to examine whether RE students’ pragmatic performance is similar to

that of NE speakers or that of JE speakers. In part 2, another Fisher's exact tests were conducted to examine whether the length of stay, age of going abroad and proficiency affect the pragmatic performance of the RE group. The RE students were divided into two groups for each factor and analyzed by Fisher's exact test. Lastly, to further examine if there are any other possible factors, two returnees' cases were chosen from the RE group and qualitatively analyzed: one RE student who showed the performance most similar to JE speakers' speech and another RE student who presented the least similar speech.

Results and Discussion

In part 1, the results show that there were more situations where the pragmatic performances of RE students were more similar to those of NE speakers and more diverse from those of JE students. Out of all situations, the performances of RE students were similar to the performances of JE students in the situations for apology and response to compliment. On the contrary, they were similar to those of NE speakers in the situations for request and refusal. For the two situations for expressing gratitude, one was similar to JE students and another was similar to NE speakers. For the situations for advice, there were no similarities for both groups. Further investigation has revealed that RE students tended to perform like NE in pragmalinguistic aspects, while they were likely to perform

like JE students in sociopragmatic aspects.

In part 2, the results of Fisher's exact tests show how the length of stay, age of going abroad and English proficiency do affect pragmatic performances of RE students.

The results indicate that all of these three factors can be influential to their pragmatic performance. Also, the results show that the frequency of interaction with native English speakers, the way they learned English and cultural awareness have possible influences on their pragmatic performances.

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