

Speech Modifications of Native Japanese Speakers in A Contact Situation: The Characteristics of Foreigner Register Observed in An Inquiring Telephone Call.

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The previous studies of "Foreigner register" in the field of Japanese as a Second Language have focused on features of the register without considering much about the fundamental reasons: addressor's proficiency levels which represent their communicative competence. Thus the uncoincided results, such as the usage of case suffix, have not been investigated.

In this study, twelve NNSs were divided into three groups: intermediate, advanced, and superior based on the results of ACTFL OPI (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Oral Proficiency Interview). Four NSs (Native Japanese speakers) made up the control group. A total of sixteen volunteers were asked to call up the information center at Okayama Station. Each volunteer was to carry out the same task of inquiring about the train schedule going to Tokushima without being given a preset dialog model. All sixteen conversations were recorded and the addressees' (station attendants) utterances were examined by conversational and statistical analysis.

The analyzed items were: (1) Speech length (measured by total number of words) (2) Number of T-units (Minimal Terminable Unit) and T-unit quality (3) Variety of vocabulary (4) Lexical Density (5) Speech rate (words per minute) (6) Frequency of Final Particles (7) Omission of auxiliary verbs (8) Frequency of back-channeling per PPU (Pause Bounded Phrasal Unit) (9) Repetition of information and (10) Interactional modifications.

As a result, three different NNSs' proficiency levels which were evaluated beforehand, were clearly reflected by the addressee's utterances which constitute Foreigner Register. This indicates that not only NNS' performance but NSs' speech could also be used as a feasible index to evaluate speaking proficiency, or at least to assess the quality of communication in the domain of Japanese language learning.