Pragmatic Features of Utterances by Chinese Advanced Learners of Japanese

Patterns of Refusing Requests

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The purpose of this article is to investigate pragmatic features of utterances by Chinese advanced learners of Japanese, examining whether there are significant differences between Chinese advanced learners of Japanese who are studying in Japan (JSL), Japanese office workers (JJ) and Chinese office workers (CC) in how they refuse requests. This research asks the following two questions.

i.   What are the three most commonly used patterns of initiation of refusals by JSL, JJ and CC and how do these patterns differ in quantity?

ii.   What are the three most commonly used patterns of finishing refusals by JSL, JJ and CC and how do these patterns differ in quantity?

Data was collected using a Discourse Completion Test composed of four cases: i. refusing a friend's request to check an English translation, ii. refusing a friend's request to borrow money, iii. refusing a company superior's request to work overtime, and iv. refusing a company superior's request to make a list. A total of 215 significant responses were obtained from 49 JJ, 59 CC, and 107 JSL.

Regarding the classification of *semantic formulas,* I followed the classification scheme of Meng (2008), which revised and supplemented those of Fujimori (1994) and Ito (2004). The Japanese classification scheme of *semantic formulas* was then translated faithfully into Chinese and checked by two Chinese graduate students majoring in Japanese. Following this, with the assistance of two Japanese graduate students majoring in Japanese education and a Japanese graduate student majoring in Chinese education, I analyzed the data of JJ and JSL. Meanwhile, with the assistance of a Chinese radio announcer, a Chinese national highly proficient in Chinese, and a Chinese graduate student majoring in Japanese, I analyzed the data of CC. In the two analyses, I used those results with approximates 90 percent correspondence in coding among these four persons.

For the initiation of refusals, I first counted the frequency of each *semantic formula* per group. Second, I calculated the total frequency of each *semantic formula* for all three groups and eight situations. Third, I examined the differences among the three most common patterns for each group using Chi-Square Tests and Residual Analysis provided by the Web statistical service- JavaScript-STAR. The data for the finish of refusals was analyzed by the same process.

Results are as follows.

i. In the initiation of refusals, significant differences were found among the three groups, according to the social distance between participants in the speech act. In the case of relatively familiar interlocutors, Chinese advanced learners of Japanese either made excessive use of antecedent patterns of *apology* and *faltering and making brief responses while listening* or their usage fell between that of native Japanese speakers and native Chinese speakers. The learners underused the antecedent pattern of *reason* compared to native Japanese speakers.

ii. In the finish of refusals, significant differences were found among the three groups, according to the context of the request. In the cases of refusing a friend's request to borrow money and refusing a company superior's request to make a list, Chinese advanced learners of Japanese used the terminal patterns of *alternative plan* less than native Japanese speakers or between the frequency of native Japanese speakers and native Chinese speakers. The learners made excessive use of the terminal pattern of *reason*, but underused the terminal pattern of *decision* in comparison to native Japanese speakers.

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