

Proficiency and Pragmatic Competence :

The Case of Disagreements by Thai Learners of Japanese

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Summary

This paper investigates the relation between Japanese language proficiency level and pragmatic competence in disagreements by Thai learners of Japanese. The data were collected through a Discourse Completion Test which consisted of three variables: interlocutor's status, familiarity, ranking of imposition, as well as a follow-up interview. Data from 40 Japanese native speakers, 40 upper-intermediate learners, 40 lower-intermediate learners, and 40 Thai native speakers were coded according to semantic formulas that appeared in the opening and the closing of each disagreement act, and analyzed by means of Decision Tree Analysis. The results revealed that the upper-intermediate learners tend to show more similarities with Japanese native speakers than the lower-intermediate learners. This study intended to shed light on L1 effect aspect. However, the results indicated no significant differences in L1 influence between two groups of learners. The findings suggest that besides L1 transfer, learners' cognition of language distance plays an important role in pragmatic competence development.

Key words : pragmatic competence, pragmatic transfer, speech act of disagreement, quantitative analysis