LEXICOGRAMMATICAL FEATURES IN JAPANESE ENGLISH: A STUDY OF FIVE SPEAKERS

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Abstract
Japanese English (JE) refers to the English spoken by Japanese citizens. This paper characterizes JE by examining its lexicogrammatical features produced by five speakers participating in experimental recordings. Drawing on the initiatives taken by Cogo and Dewey’s seminal work (2012), this study presents nine lexicogrammatical features which are taken to be typical of JE. It is shown that one decisive factor in creating a new variant is the formation of an alternative form to its native counterpart and this mechanism is sourced from the speaker’s multiple knowledge about two languages.

Keywords: creativity, Japanese English, lexicogrammatical features, multiple knowledge about two languages

1. Introduction

In this rapidly globalizing world, people from different countries and cultures communicate using English, a language which is not the mother tongue of the majority of those who speak it. Already in the 1980s, scholars witnessed a surge of non-native speakers of English which led the latter to outnumber the population of native speakers (Swan 1985; Strevens 1992: 27). For example, Swan (1985: 7) predicted the rise of “the new international English” which may, viewed from his EFL (English as a foreign language) perspective, shed many of the complexities of present-day native Englishes (e.g. British English, American English), such as in the tense system. In Japan, one learns English as a foreign language at school. Within the Japanese education system, English is a compulsory subject from the first year of junior high school (at which point pupils are 12–13 years old), but English has never become integral to the daily communication of Japanese nationals. The average Japanese citizen living in Japan with no outside contact has no need to communicate in English; Japanese is the language used to express oneself in all situations of everyday life (e.g. Browne and Wada 1998; Seargeant 2011; Abe 2013; Tsuneyoshi 2013; D’Angelo 2018). The need for communicative English is therefore restricted to specific domains, such as international business.

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