

Difference of Expressions Classified by Semantic Formulas between Japanese, Thais and Thai Learners of Japanese in the Context of Declination of Offers

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This paper investigates the difference of expressions in the context of 'declination of offers' between Japanese, Thais and Thai learners of Japanese.

The data was obtained using the Discourse Completion Test which studied 13 situations of offer to 83 Thai native speakers, 92 Japanese native speakers, 84 Thai JFL (Japanese as a Foreign Language) learners and 19 Thai JSL (Japanese as a Second Language) learners who have studied in Japan.

To analyze the difference of declination patterns relative to the relationships between speakers and listeners, expressions of declination elicited used the Discourse Completion Test and were classified into the semantic formulas used by Beebe et al. (1990).

The results indicate that <direct refusal>, <reason>, <let interlocutor off the hook> and <gratitude> semantic formulas were used as the main formulas in declination of offers. An attempt was made to analyze the differences of combined patterns of these four formulas between Japanese, Thais and Thai learners of Japanese.

As a way of statistical analysis, Correspondence Analysis was used. This method enables the reading of the relationship between each element to be displayed on a graph.

It was found that declination patterns can be explained using two politeness features- indirectness and complexity. The result of the analysis using these features shows that Japanese speakers tend

to use direct declination patterns, whereas Thai speakers do not. JFL learners' speech patterns tend to be in between those of Japanese and Thai. Whilst Japanese use complicated expressions in a response, Thais seem to have no characteristic features regarding complexity, though JFL learners' speech patterns indicate small complexity on the scale. These results suggest that the indirectness of learners of Japanese is influenced by pragmatic transfer, and its small complexity is caused by the lack of linguistic knowledge and communicative competence in Japanese.

Regarding human relationships, the expression tendency of Thai learners of Japanese to people of higher status is similar to that of native Japanese to those of lower status. There was also an indication that the phrases used by Thai learners of Japanese, when conversing with people familiar to them, are similar to the speech of native Japanese when speaking to those unfamiliar to them.

This infers that these findings result from the difference in social convention between Thais and Japanese. Whereas Japanese prefer to refuse clearly to avoid the debt of offers, Thais prefer to follow the convention which forces them to accept offers to gain profit from each other.

In teaching Japanese, use the following suggestions: 1) it is important to improve learner's language competence in using complicated patterns of Japanese politeness. 2) practice conversational tasks regarding the status and relationship between speaker and listener. In addition, it is essential to introduce information about the differences between Thai and Japanese culture and social conventions as a background to sociopragmatic differences; vis-à-vis, Japanese tend to refuse directly in a situation of offer because they do not want to incur a debt of gratitude. Furthermore it is necessary for them to state expressions of compensation for declined offers.

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