

氏 名 : 小西 瑛子
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論文審査委員 : (主査) 教授 馬場 哲生
(副査) 教授 高橋 邦年 教授 岸 学
教授 出口 利定 教授 西垣 知佳子

学位論文要旨

1. Introduction

The aim of this doctoral thesis is to investigate Japanese EFL learners' acquisition of parts of speech. Parts of speech are classified by 'meaning' of words, 'form' of words, and 'the use' of words, but normally these three are closely related (Takahashi et al., 2005), and 'parts of speech is the traditional term for the major classes of words that are grammatically distinguished in a language' (Shopen, 1985, p.1). Understanding the parts of speech is important in English learning and acquiring the three aspects (meaning, form, and use) will facilitate learning of the language.

The researcher investigated Japanese EFL learners' acquisition of these three aspects of parts of speech; specifically, nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. The research questions in this thesis were as follows:

- ① How do Japanese students comprehend parts of speech? (Are there any differences in the comprehension of parts of speech between 'form', 'meaning' and 'use'?)
- ② Are Japanese parts of speech really acquired by Japanese students?
- ③ Are there any common characteristics between Japanese and English regarding the comprehension of parts of speech?

2. Method

There were four studies. The researcher used a booklet as a tool to investigate the acquisition of parts of speech in all the studies. The booklet consisted of three parts: a questionnaire, an English section (E-sect), and a Japanese section (J-sect). In Study 1, the E-sect contained three tests: a category judgment test (CJT), a correction test (CT), and a modifier test (MT); and the J-sect contained two tests: a CJT and MT. The maximum time to fill out the questionnaire was five minutes and the maximum time to

take the tests was 30 minutes. In Studies 2-4, the E-sect contained four tests: a category judgment test (CJT), a blank filling test (BFT), a modifier test (MT), and a same form test (SFT); and the J-sect contained two tests: a CJT, BFT and MT.

The participants in each study were high school students and university students. Their mother tongue was Japanese. The students who did not answer a quarter of the total number of questions were removed from data analysis. The total number of participants exceeded 1000.

3. The thesis structure

- Chapter 1. Introduction
- Chapter 2. Study 1: Japanese University Students' Knowledge about Parts of Speech
- Chapter 3. Study 2: Japanese Twelfth Grade High School Students' Knowledge about Parts of Speech
- Chapter 4. Study 3: Japanese University Students' Knowledge about Parts of Speech. ~ in the case of English majors ~
- Chapter 5. Study 4: Japanese High School Students' Knowledge about Parts of Speech. ~ from the tenth grade to the twelfth grade ~
- Chapter 6. General Discussion
- Chapter 7. General Conclusion
- References

4. The results

The characteristic that was common through four studies was that acquisition of nouns by students is insufficient. This is a notable characteristic in the results of this thesis. In previous studies, many researchers have argued that the noun is the easiest part of speech (Rodgers, 1969; Ellis and Beaton, 1993; Yanai, 2002), and some evidence has showed that many second language learners acquired nouns preferentially in the targeted language (Saita, 2008; Vasiljevic, 2010; Horiba, 2011). However, the researcher's results showed that many students have difficulty with acquisition of nouns not only in English, but also in Japanese. It seems that one of the reasons that the researcher's results differed from those of the previous studies was that many researchers had used a vocabulary size test. Many vocabulary size tests can measure the number of words which the participants have acquired. However, in many cases, the aspect that the tests can measure is restricted to the meaning aspect. These tests do not measure other aspects of words (especially about the use aspect of words). In the researcher's studies, the meaning aspect, the form aspect and the use aspect were all investigated.

In addition, many participants had difficulty in morphological and syntactic knowledge. In particular, morphological knowledge of Japanese nouns is insufficient,

even though Japanese is their mother tongue. In every Japanese CJT, the words which derived from other parts of speech were contained.

According to Takahashi et al. (2005), there were typical forms of nouns which derived from other parts of speech. They showed how to make nouns from other parts of speech with formulas, for example, a verb radical + ‘-kata’ = a noun (ex. 作り方), an adjective radical + ‘-sa’ = a noun (ex. 長さ), and an adjective radical + ‘-mi’ = a noun (ex. 深み). These were typical forms of nouns derived from parts of speech, however many participants did not recognize them. The scores for derived nouns were lower than those for other nouns.

Insufficient acquisition of syntactic knowledge appeared in English CJT and English MT and English SFT. In English CJT, the participants can use semantic, morphological, and syntactic knowledge in an integrated manner, and it might be possible to answer questions by using only semantic knowledge. However, the semantic knowledge was not main a factor to answer the questions correctly. It was impossible to answer questions in MT and SFT without syntactic knowledge. The scores for MT and for SFT were remarkably lower than those for CJT. This result suggests that semantic knowledge can be better acquired than morphological and syntactic knowledge.

5. Conclusion

Regarding acquisition of parts of speech, there were differences among parts of speech. The noun is one of the most difficult parts of speech. The difficulty in adjectives and in adverbs was different in studies. However, the scores for verbs were relatively high in these studies. In addition, acquisition of ‘form’ and ‘use’ was insufficient. The scores were low when the participants were required to use syntactic knowledge intensively. In addition, there was a possibility that the students did not recognize the difference of forms of parts of speech.

In Japanese parts of speech, at least the students had difficulty in nouns. The recognition of nouns was insufficient, especially in nouns which derived from other parts of speech. In Japanese CJT, the students were required to choose the part of speech which was the same as the target part of speech in the examination sentence. When the target word was a noun which derived from other parts of speech, many participants chose the same part of speech as the that of the source of derivation of the noun. If they had used syntactic knowledge, they would have chosen the correct answer. Therefore, at least, the Japanese students did not acquire the concept of nouns enough.

There were common characteristics between Japanese and English regarding the comprehension of parts of speech. Acquisition of nouns was insufficient both in English and Japanese morphologically and syntactically.