

論 文 の 英 文 要 旨

論文題目

The Development of the Grammatical Features in  
Japanese Upper Secondary School Students' English Compositions:  
A Longitudinal Study

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The present study reports on the usage patterns and development of grammatical competence of one group of EFL writers in Japan. The data was collected from a longitudinal examination of the incidence of attempts with grammatical features in English compositions by Japanese upper secondary school students. A different composition task was given each academic year from pedagogical reasons. Each of the three compositions written by the students was analyzed in order to investigate the emergence of 'acquired' grammatical items. The development of sentence complexity of their compositions was also examined in order to observe the progress of grammar manipulation in another aspect.

First, the criterial grammatical features that discriminate the levels of the CEFR and the other target grammatical items in government-authorized English textbooks for lower secondary school (71 items in total) were collected and listed. The use of listed grammatical items in the students' longitudinal sets of compositions was checked, and the 1/0 dichotomous data was gained (1: correct use, 0: incorrect use or absence). The 1/0 data was analyzed by the Rasch model software, and the item difficulties and the learners' abilities were calculated and sorted out in order to identify the grammatical items that were regarded as being 'acquired' by the students. The result showed that almost all the extracted grammatical items were items that were designated as criterial features at the A2 level of the CEFR or items featured in lower secondary school textbooks, namely, items taught in the earlier stages of English education in Japan. Moreover, it was not until in the third year of upper secondary school that the items learned in the third year of lower secondary school emerged as 'acquired' grammatical

items. As well as the trajectories of acquisition of the grammatical items, the development of the Mean Length of Utterance (MLU), a measure of syntactic complexity, was investigated. Although the MLU remained at the upper A2 level even in the third academic year, its development was confirmed to be statistically significant by Friedman test and the multiple comparison test. Furthermore, the correlation between the MLU and the total word count, as an index of writing fluency, was examined (Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient), and it was found that the correlation became stronger year by year, which would indicate the development of the learners' writing proficiency.

Then, the composition data from another group of EFL writers was analyzed in order to identify the task-dependent grammatical items. They were also upper secondary school students of three academic years, and were considered to be at the similar level of proficiency in English as the main subjects of this study. Since the main subjects wrote a different essay in each academic year, it was not certain whether the emergence of a grammatical item was due to their development of linguistic knowledge, or due to the task requirement. Therefore, the students at another upper secondary school were asked to work on all the three composition tasks at the same time in order to examine whether there was difference of the emergence of grammatical items between the three different tasks. The same list of grammatical items as used for the main subjects was adopted to check the correct use of each item in the three tasks. The 1/0 data sets of the same individuals were analyzed by Cochran's Q test. If the difference of use of a particular item was statistically significant, the item was regarded as task-dependent. After the identification of task-dependent items, the trajectories of grammatical competence of the main subjects was revisited. Then, the development of acquisition of the task-independent items was confirmed, with the task-dependent items eliminated.

The MEXT's goal of English education for upper secondary school students is to have them acquire the CEFR B1-level proficiency by the time of graduation. Supposing that grammar knowledge is considered to be part of this 'proficiency', the fact that no B1 grammatical items were judged as 'acquired' in the students' compositions, may be a testament to the issues of teaching practice in English class in

Japan. Teachers of English need to teach the context in which each grammatical item is often used, and many writing opportunities should be given in class in order for the students to try to use their linguistic knowledge at will and acquire it more steadily through trial and error. Also, different types of tasks should be given to learners so that they can try to use as various items as possible. The use of particular grammatical items as done in this study could also be an indicator of writing proficiency of learners. By using it for writing assessment, teachers would be able to assess their students' compositions more objectively and economically, and would be motivated to introduce more writing activities in class. It is to be hoped that collecting learners' output data as much as possible and analyzing it, as done in this study, would help, not only reconsider language activities, but also design more practical syllabi and create more effective teaching materials, for teaching English in the future.