[Abstract] This report explores the nature of foreigner talk (FT) which occurs in the naturalistic conversation between a native speaker of Japanese and a non-native speaker, to find out if the characteristics match those proposed by Skoutarides (1980) or Long (1992).

Introduction

Ferguson, C. (1971) first introduces the idea of “foreigner talk” (FT) and examines the grammatical simplicity in FT by indicating the absence of the copula in “grammatical machinery for equational clauses” (for instance, in the case of the Japanese language). Evidences of simplified speech in FT is similar to ‘retarded talk’. And, because it can also be directed at children, it is also referred to as “baby talk”.

Ferguson, C. (1975) also defines FT as commonly regarded as an ‘imitation of the way foreigners speak’. In other words, foreigner talk is the reduced and simplified version of a language that native speakers use to address other non-native speakers. According to Ferguson, foreigner talk is the basis of the emergence of pidgin and creole and his studies focus mainly on the initial stages and process of pidginization.

Long, D. (1992) and Skoutarides, A. (1980) furtherconceptualize and explore FT in the context of foreign-language learning (second language acquisition). In the following section, we will focus mainly on the characteristics of FT listed by Skoutarides, A. (1980) and with some references to the characteristic proposed by Long, D. (1992). The aim of this study is to examine norm violations (speech adjustments) made by the Japanese Native Speaker (NS) to a non-native speaker (NNS). I will explore and report about the nature of 'foreigner talk' which occurs in the naturalistic conversation which I have with a native speaker of Japanese.
Background information:

The NS:

The recording was then done via the mobile phone with Mrs M. Gideon, a friend of L. Wong, who lives in Adelaide. Mrs Gideon is a native Japanese speaker and an Associate lecturer teaching Japanese language in an Australian University. She has about 20 years of teaching the Japanese Language to foreigners of varies ages ranging from 13 years-old (students taking the JLPT levels 5-1, and GCE Cambridge “AO” and “A” level examinations) to adult-businessmen (business Japanese). She has taught in Japan, England, Singapore and currently she is teaching in Australia.

The NNS:

L. Wong is a Chinese-Singaporean and she emigrated from Singapore to Perth about 8 years ago with her family. Her native language is Chinese(Mandarin) and English and she studied at the Japanese Language School affiliated to Tokyo University of Foreign Studies for 1 year and subsequently completed her undergraduate studies thereafter at the University about 20 years ago. Upon graduation, she has taught Japanese to Singapore students aged 13-17 (who take Japanese as a 3rd language) taking the GCE Cambridge ‘O’ Level Japanese language examination and has been an oral examiner for the GCE Cambridge ‘A’ and ‘AO’ Level Japanese language examination.

Methodology

A recorded telephone conversation of approximately five minutes with a NS (native speaker) of Japanese was conducted and recorded (with the consent of both parties) in the mp3 format. Both parties are female and the topic was taken from the list of topics provided. Out of the many topics given, the NS chose (g), which is 好きな料理（日本食）の作り方.

Topic: (g) 好きな料理（日本食）の作り方

Time: 5 mins

Other information

As the topic is about learning to make Japanese Niku-jyaga, I (NNS) had a pencil and a notepad to take down notes on the instructions (from the NS) and after the recording I would also prepare the dish to test out if I could grasp the instructions correctly.

The transcription of the conversation includes hesitations, pauses, and both parties’ emotional reactions (laughter) for this study. There is also overlapping talk in the conversation that cannot be transcribed fully.

Transcription keys

- . . . pause, hesitations
- M rising intonation
- T: Native speaker (NS)
- L: Non native speaker (NNS)
- laughter
- 4 overlapping
The conversation is authentic and naturalistic and the NS is not aware of the study of FT before the recording. She is only told during the follow-up interview. Although the conversation is mainly about the NS giving instructions, the NNS reacts to what the NS says by signalling verbally or questions if she has any queries pertaining to the instructions.

There is some overlapping talk in the recording and thus unable to transcribe fully. However, it does not affect the findings because incursions into the other speaker's supposed turn is a feature of involvement and active participation of both parties.

Results and discussion

In this paper we will examine the 6 characteristics (pp57) of "foreigner talk" based on Skoutarides' study (1980). Subsequently, we will examine the other 3 characteristics that is evident only in the Japanese language. We will also explore the areas in Long's study (1992) that are not elaborated in Skoutarides' study. All of these are done using evidences (examples) from the recording.

(Note: The 9 characteristics in total are briefly translated here. For Skoutarides' own exact translations of the terms in English, please refer to: Skoutarides, Alina. 1986. Foreigner talk in Japanese. Thesis (Ph.D.)--Monash University, 1986.)

(1) A relatively slow tempo in speech, and there are frequent pauses between clauses and sentences.

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