

An Analysis of Grammatical and Lexical Features in an Identical Task Across Different Modes

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and characterize features of second language use in Japanese learners of English that explicitly indicate developmental progress. Spoken and written learner corpora were compiled by conducting a picture description task to investigate grammatical and lexical features between spontaneous spoken production and less time-pressured written production. The examinees took the Standard Speaking Test (SST), a speaking proficiency test which was developed under the theoretical basis of ACTFL OPI. Part-of-speech (POS) tags were added using the CLAWS tagger using the C7 tagset, and errors were manually tagged. The results reveal patterns that verbal errors were firmly associated with lower-level learners, and nominal errors were firmly associated with advanced-level learners. Furthermore, noun-related errors in written production do not seem to vanish readily over the course of development. In addition, detailed examinations of error categories suggest that some errors may share common developmental patterns, while others may vary uniquely across proficiency levels. The better language teachers understand about how much learners have learned – and what problems learners face – the more effective teachers can become in providing targeted instruction and feedback in their speaking and written classes.

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