

A Comparative Analysis of the Use of English Colloquial Expressions by Japanese and Chinese University Students: Insights from an Anime Dubbing Activity

Mariko Takahashi^aEriko Taniguchi^b^aSchool of Sociology, Kwansai Gakuin University^bGraduate School of Human and Environmental Studies, Kyoto University^atakahashi.mariko.76z@kyoto-u.jp^btaniguchi.eriko.58a@st.kyoto-u.ac.jp

1. Introduction

According to the anime industry report of 2016, Japanese anime yielded more than 1.8 trillion yen in 2015 (AJA, 2016). Japanese anime has gained popularity across the world, partly with the help of fansubbing communities (González, 2007). Anime characters often use colloquial expressions including onomatopoeia. In language education, teaching informal or colloquial expressions in the classroom can pose a challenge (Frumuselu, De Maeyer, Donche, & Plana, 2015). In case of English language teaching, this is especially the case in English as a foreign language (EFL) countries where English is not regularly used outside of the classroom, for example, Japan and China. Various approaches such as showing American television series (Frumuselu et al., 2015) have been devised to deal with this issue of teaching informal language. In addition to giving input to students, it is important to facilitate students' output in second language acquisition (Swain, 2005). The use of chat rooms, for example, has been a "classic" way to have students produce informal expressions. The anime "dubbing" activity has a potential to facilitate the output of colloquial expressions because students are required to use informal language to convey the meaning of characters' original utterances.

In the academic year 2015, there were more than 200,000 exchange students in Japan, and nearly half of them were from China (JASSO, 2016). Exchange students often mention their interest in Japanese popular culture such as anime as one of the reasons they chose to study in Japan. Japanese students as well as Chinese students generally study English as a foreign language as mentioned above. There have been comparative studies of Japanese and Chinese students' use of English, especially regarding writing (e.g., Shen, 2007). However, comparative studies on their use of English colloquial expressions have been quite limited. The present study has two purposes. The main purpose

is to compare the use of English colloquial expressions by Japanese and Chinese university students through an anime dubbing activity, and the secondary purpose is to explore the potential of anime dubbing activities for facilitating students to produce informal English expressions.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

Fifty-two Japanese students studying at University A in West Japan and 40 Chinese students studying as exchange students at University B in West Japan took part in this study. Japanese students were all freshmen in three different English communication classes with the English skills of equivalent of TOEIC(R) scores 500-650. Chinese students were taking English language seminars, and most of them were juniors and seniors with the English skills of equivalent of TOEIC(R) 550-700. Chinese students were studying at the Japanese language and culture center at University B, and the majority of them belonged to advanced Japanese classes.

2.2 Materials

A two-and-a-half minute video clip (38 lines) from an anime series "Tamako Market" (Kyoto Animation, 2013) was selected based on the request by Chinese students as well as the clarity of the original lines. An activity sheet was prepared to facilitate the dubbing activity. A brief description of the storyline and the original lines in Japanese were given on the activity sheet.

2.3 Procedure

Students were divided into groups of three or four in each class. In total, Japanese students were divided into 16 groups, while Chinese students were divided into 12 groups. We first showed the video clip to the participants twice. We then distributed the

handout and asked the students to translate the lines so that they could “dub” the video clip into English. We encouraged them to use colloquial expressions to reflect the original Japanese utterances by the characters. We gave approximately 20 minutes for the translation during the class and asked the students to complete it at home as an assignment. We told them they would actually dub the video clip in front of the class the next week and encouraged them to watch the video clip again to practice beforehand. We told them not to use dictionaries or online translation services.

3. Results and Analysis

The collected data were typed into text files group by group, and AntConc (Anthony, 2011) was used for the data analysis.

3.1 Data overview

The Japanese data (16 groups, 52 participants) consisted of 2599 word tokens (292 word types). The average number of tokens produced by each group was 162.4, and the average number of types was 84.9 (min: 74, max: 99). The Chinese data (12 groups, 40 participants) consisted of 2226 word tokens (286 word types). The average number of tokens each group produced was 185.5, and the average number of types was 97.9 (min: 84, max: 119). Table 1 illustrates 20 words which frequently appeared in each dataset (converted to per 1000 words).

Table 1. High Frequency Words

Japanese students	Chinese students
you (59.6)	you (66.0)
I (44.2)	it (45.8)
it (43.9)	I (43.1)
bird (34.6)	my (24.7)
oh (33.1)	a (23.4)
n't (26.9)	bird (22.9)
do (26.5)	n't (22.5)
s (it's) (23.9)	do (20.7)
is (22.7)	are (20.2)
my (20.8)	s (it's) (19.3)

3.2 Differences in Word Frequency

In order to identify characteristic words used by Japanese students and Chinese students, we compared the word frequency data (per 1000 words) of the two datasets and elicited the words which matched the following criteria: there were more than 14 ranks of difference in word frequency ranks and there were more than 3 differences in the raw frequency per 1000

words. Table 2 summarizes the words which were characteristic to Japanese students compared to Chinese students, and Table 3 summarizes the words which were characteristic to Chinese students. The frequency per 1000 words as well as the word rank in the dataset are indicated in the table.

Table 2. Japanese students > Chinese students

	Japanese students	Chinese students
<i>hi</i>	10.0, R23	2.2, R96
<i>surprised</i>	10.0, R23	2.2, R96
<i>ok</i>	8.5, R31	4.9, R47
was	8.1, R32	4.5, R56
<i>have</i>	7.7, R36	4.0, R65
<i>speak</i>	6.5, R38	1.8, R112
<i>love</i>	6.2, R41	2.7, R86
<i>wow</i>	6.2, R41	1.8, R112
<i>beautiful</i>	5.4, R49	2.2, R96
he	5.0, R50	0.9, R152
<i>help</i>	3.8, R62	0, N/A
<i>may</i>	3.8, R62	0.4, R186

Table 3. Chinese students > Japanese students

	Chinese students	Japanese students
the	12.6, R17	5.8, R45
that	12.1, R18	4.6, R53
<i>really</i>	11.2, R19	1.2, R116
<i>right</i>	8.5, R26	4.2, R56
<i>huh</i>	8.1, R29	0, N/A
<i>head</i>	6.3, R36	3.1, R71
<i>nice</i>	6.3, R36	2.7, R78
<i>scared</i>	6.3, R36	0.8, R145
<i>as</i>	5.4, R43	0.4, R186
<i>for</i>	5.4, R43	1.2, R116
<i>day</i>	4.9, R47	0.4, R186
<i>hurt</i>	4.9, R47	1.9, R92
of	4.9, R47	0.8, R145
<i>be</i>	4.5, R56	1.5, R100
<i>cute</i>	4.5, R56	0.8, R145
<i>just</i>	4.5, R56	0.4, R186
off	4.5, R56	3.1, R71
<i>pretty</i>	4.5, R56	0.4, R186
<i>welcome</i>	4.5, R56	1.2, R116

3.3 Characteristic expressions

The differences in frequency of the italicized words in Table 2 and Table 3 resulted from the use of distinctive expressions by Japanese students and Chinese students. Some examples are described below. Note that this does not mean all Japanese groups (or Chinese groups) chose the same English expression. The original Japanese lines are given to highlight the differences, but this does not imply that the students tried to translate Japanese directly into English because

we had strictly asked them to write a script for “dubbing” not for subtitles. The number in parentheses indicates the number of groups who used that word (note that there were 16 Japanese groups and 12 Chinese groups).

- [1] line 7: これきれいだね
 Japanese students: beautiful (14), pretty (1), nice (1)
 Chinese students: beautiful (5), lovely (1), pretty (6)
- [2] line 14: わーびっくりした
 Japanese: I was surprised (10)
 Chinese: Various expressions such as “what happened?”
- [3] line 18: 痛くなかった？
 Japanese: hurt (5), are you ok/ alright (6)
 Chinese: hurt (10)
- [4] line 21: おれにほれちゃあ
 Japanese: fall in love (16)
 Chinese: fall in love (6), fall for me (4), crush on me (1)
- [5] line 24: おどろいたぞ、娘
 Japanese: surprised (16)
 Chinese: surprised (3), scared (8)
- [6] line 25: あーあ、なんで乗られてるんだろ
 Japanese: on my head (5), on me (7)
 Chinese: on my head (12)
- [7] line 27: なんでこんなにしゃべるんだろ
 Japanese: speak (12), talk (3)
 Chinese: speak (3), talk (8), say(1)
- [8] line 30: 鳥飼ったのか
 Japanese: have (10)
 Chinese: keep (3), buy (4), get (1), have (1)
- [9] line 32: あら、いいわね、鳥？
 Japanese: cute (1), nice (3), good (8), wonderful (1)
 Chinese: cute (5), nice (5), good (1), lovely (1)
- [10] line 38: いらっしやいませ
 Japanese: Can/May I help you? (10), Welcome (3)
 Chinese: Welcome (10)

In addition to the expressions above, differences were observed in the choice of interjections. For example, Japanese students used “wow” “hi” “ok” “right” more often than Chinese students, and Chinese students used “huh” “hey” “really” more often.

There were differences in the grammatical choice as well. For example, Chinese students used articles, especially the definite article more frequently than Japanese students. Compared to Chinese students, Japanese students tended to use “he” to refer to the bird character.

3.4 Sentence structures

There were some differences between the two groups with regards to the choice of sentence structures as well. “Sentences” here refer to structures which contain a subject and a verb (including the ones with an implied subject). In the original Japanese video clip, there were 33 sentences (the rest of the lines were short interjections). Japanese students produced 32.5 sentences per group on average, while Chinese students produced 34.5 sentences per group on average. The majority of the sentences produced by both groups were simple sentences, probably reflecting the instruction to use informal language. There were only 8 compound sentences and 7 complex sentences among the 414 sentences produced by Japanese students. Similarly, there were only 10 complex sentences among the 520 sentences produced by Chinese students.

Table 4 summarizes the sentence types used by Japanese students and Chinese students (per group). The categorization was based on the four sentence types described by Quirk et al. (1985). In the original video clip, there were 17 declaratives (51.5%), 12 interrogatives (36.4%), and 4 imperatives (12.1%).

Table 4. Sentence Types (per group)

	Japanese	Chinese
Declarative	16.8 (51.5%)	18.3 (52.9%)
Interrogative	12.2 (37.5%)	11.4 (33.1%)
Imperative	3.4 (10.6%)	4.0 (11.6%)
Exclamative	0.1 (0.4%)	0.8 (2.4%)
Total	32.5	34.5

Although the two groups did not differ significantly in the distribution of the sentence types as a whole, there were some specific differences regarding the choice of sentence types as the examples below illustrate.

- [11] line 15: お花と一緒に入って来ちゃったのかしら
 Japanese students: Did it come with flowers?
 Declarative (1 group), Interrogative (15 groups)
 Chinese students: I guess it came with the flower.
 Declarative (6 groups), Interrogative (6 groups)
- [12] line 28: そんなにほめるんでない
 Japanese: Don’t praise me so much.
 Declarative (2), Imperative (14)
 Chinese: That’s very flattering.
 Declarative (8), Imperative (4)
- [13] line 32: あら、いいわね、鳥？
 Japanese: That’s so cute/ That’s good.
 Declarative (12), Exclamative (1)

Chinese: What a lovely bird/ How nice.
Declarative (5), Exclamative (7)

4. Discussion

The present study has compared the use of English colloquial expressions by Japanese and Chinese university students through an anime dubbing activity. Chinese students used a wider range of vocabulary compared to Japanese students although the majority of the words were still level 5 and below on ALC's standard vocabulary list (<http://www.alc.co.jp/vocgram/article/svl/>). This probably reflects the instruction to use "informal" language as well as the simplicity of the original utterances in Japanese. High frequency words such as "you," "I," "my," "is," and "n't" were shared between the two groups, but each group used some distinctive expressions. As the analysis was based on an anime dubbing activity, there was obviously an influence of the original Japanese words as well as the actions of the characters. However, it is noteworthy that Japanese students and Chinese students of advanced Japanese levels chose some different expressions to convey the original Japanese meaning in English. For example, Japanese students consistently chose the word "surprised" for 「おどろいた」, while more than half of the Chinese groups chose "scared." Similarly, for 「いい」, Japanese students tended to use "good," while Chinese students used different expressions such as "nice" and "cute."

Both groups tended to use simple sentences rather than compound and complex sentences. The distribution of sentence types overall did not differ significantly, however, there were some differences in specific choices. Japanese students tended to use interrogatives when there was an obvious interlocutor on the screen even when s/he did not give a clear reply afterwards; for example, 「お花と一緒に来て来たのかしら」 and 「しゃべったよね」. They also tended to choose the same sentence type as the original Japanese line. On the other hand, Chinese students did not hesitate to choose the sentence type different from the original Japanese line as can be seen in the use of exclamative sentences.

This study has shown that Japanese and Chinese university students prefer to use different English colloquial expressions to convey certain meaning and intentions. There was inevitably the influence of Japanese as the original video was all in Japanese.

However, an anime dubbing activity proved to be an effective way to "force" an output of English colloquial expressions. It was also received favorably by the students as indicated on informal comment sheets distributed at the end of the class.

5. Conclusion

The present study has illustrated characteristic English colloquial expressions used by Japanese and Chinese university students through an anime dubbing activity. It remains to be seen whether the differences resulted from differences in interpretation of the original Japanese lines, transfer from native languages, or other factors. In addition, the amount of data was limited, and it will be necessary to analyze more data to quantify the results more accurately. Future studies should also analyze data by speakers who use English as their first language to see if there are characteristic patterns produced by those who use English as their foreign language. This study has shown that anime dubbing activities can be a fun and engaging way to have students produce English colloquial expressions in a creative manner.

References

- Anthony, L. (2011). AntConc (Version 3.2.4w) [Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. Available from <http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/>
- Frumuselu, A. D., De Maeyer, S., Donche, V., & Plana, M. D. M. G. C. (2015). Television series inside the EFL classroom: Bridging the gap between teaching and learning informal language through subtitles. *Linguistics and Education, 32*, 107-117.
- González, L. P. (2007). Fansubbing anime: insights into the 'butterfly effect' of globalisation on audiovisual translation. *Perspectives, 14*(4), 260-277.
- 京都アニメーション(Kyoto Animation) (制作)、山田尚子(監督). (2013). 第一話「あの娘はかわいいもち屋の娘」、『たまこマーケット』(Tamako Market).
- 日本動画協会(AJA). (2016). 「アニメ産業レポート2016」一般社団法人日本動画協会.
- 日本学生支援機構(JASSO). (2016). 「平成27年度外国人留学生在籍状況調査結果」独立行政法人日本学生支援機構.
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., Svartvik, J., & Crystal, D. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language* (Vol. 397). London: Longman.
- Shen, Y. (2007). An analysis of discourse markers used by non-native English learners: its implication for teaching English as a foreign language. *異文化コミュニケーション研究, 19*, 51-83.
- Swain, M. (2005). The output hypothesis: Theory and research. *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning, 1*, 471-483.