

**Characteristics According to Level of Oral Proficiency
as Observed at the Beginning of Responses
to a Japanese Interview Test:**

Analysis of Repetitions and Expressions Which Imply That Learners Are Thinking

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Summary

When a question is asked in a real daily conversation, it is often the case that a response is given after filler sounds are used rather than a substantive answer being given immediately. In this study, we aimed to clarify the process of Japanese language acquisition by non-native speakers of Japanese by describing the characteristics of the start of their responses during interactions between native speakers and different levels of non-native speakers. The data is from the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics “Japanese Learners’ Conversation Database”. We used the interview tests of a total of 7 non-native speakers of Japanese (Novice-High to Superior level) whose mother tongue is Chinese. Close attention is paid to expressions implying that learners are “thinking” before giving substantive answers to questions, as well as their use of “repetitions”. As a result of the analysis, it was found that “repetitions” could be classified into 9 types. It was observed that those who required the assistance of an interviewer at Novice level gradually gained more independence from the interviewer as they moved towards Advanced or Superior level. In addition, by analyzing the expressions implying that learners are “thinking”, we were able to define the expressions and level-specific characteristics from the stage when the non-native speakers of Japanese are not aware of a conversation partner, to the stage where they can turn their attention to and consider the conversation partner’s utterance and existence.

Key words : Japanese interview test, responses, characteristics according to level of oral proficiency, repetitions, expressions implying that learners are thinking