Effects of Gender Transition on Language Use in Second Language Acquisition of Japanese
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EALL442 Final Project

Background

- Variables that influence learning process:
  - Cognitive and social factors.
  - Social environment.
  - Linguistic environment.
  - Native tongue.
  - Identity, and more.
- Identity influences everyday encounters and is impacted by social construction, which differs between languages.
- Transgender students whose identity is in transition can be particularly impacted by social environment and anxiety.

Research Questions

- What will be the impact of environment, identity, and learner differences on the journal writings of an intermediate level LGBTQ student?
- Will heightened anxiety impact the use of gendered language?

Methods: Autoethnography

I. Collected six writing samples from journals from previous Japanese classes here at the UO.
II. Examined frequency of gendered/neutral pronoun use.
III. Examined frequency of gendered/neutral sentence ending particles.
IV. Compared usage frequency with affect content written in journal.
V. Analyzed correlation between gendered language use and heightened affective filter.

Results

Features of Japanese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>僕 [-boku]</td>
<td>私 [-watashi]</td>
<td>私 [-atashi]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Particle</td>
<td>-な [-na]</td>
<td>-ね [-ne]</td>
<td>-わ [-wa]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ぜ [-ze]</td>
<td>-よ [-yo]</td>
<td>かしら [-kashira]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ぞ [-zo]</td>
<td>よね [-yo ne]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Usage found in Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Particle</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Zero Anaphora:
  - Pronouns not often used in Japanese.
  - Some differences only found in speech.
  - Pronouns avoided or kept neutral in journals.

- Sentence Ending Particles:
  - Gender marked through Ideology, not embedded in morphology (Hasegawa, 2015; Okamoto, & Shibamoto, 2004).
  - Can be used to index affective stances 30% of the time (Maynard, 1997).
  - Ending particles avoided or neutral forms used.

- Environment:
  - Anxiety can cause: freezing up, lower grades, slower learning/processing speed, speaking less, attempting less complex forms (Ortega, 2009).
  - Stress, anxiety, depression discussed in journals.

Conclusion

- Explicit declaration of gender can be difficult for trans students with a heightened affective filter or anxiety levels.

- Languages with no gender embedded in morphology could allow trans students to engage more freely or easily in production activities.

- Explanations for gender language usage could lead to increased gender euphoria for trans students, and therefore higher frequency of classroom involvement and risk taking.

Significance

- More research into the impact and effects of Second Language Acquisition theories on trans learners is needed in the field.
- Gender language ideology could be a tool or an obstacle for some learners, and understanding this relation could shed more light on classroom dynamics and cognitive learning processes.

References