

On Final Project

Final project: Choose one topic

(1) *Language variation*. Come up with an hypothesis about language variation (region, age, gender, register etc.) and confirm it with your own data.

(2) *Language in interaction*. Discuss the role of a linguistic item (such as “uh”, “well”, “you know”, “んー”, “てか”, “-じゃん”) in discourse with your own data.

(1) Language variation

Difference between speakers

Native language, dialect, age, gender etc.

Difference between situations

Domain/register; topic of conversation;
audience; communications means etc.

(1) Language variation

Examples

Younger people more often use *ないです*
instead of *ありません* than old people

women use *-ね* more often than men.

People from Western Japan speak longer than
those from Eastern Japan in conversation.

(1) Language variation

Your goal can be pursued by either:

Questionnaire(s) that directly asks whether your participants use/know/like your target expressions.

or **Suitable when you're interested in concrete words that are unlikely to occur frequently in conversation**

Recording of natural conversations.

Suitable when you're interested in grammatical items or discourse particles that are difficult to introspect

Questionnaire

Do you say *hokasu* (ほかす) to mean “throw away”?

() Yes

() No, but I hear someone use it

() No, I never hear it

(2) Language in interaction

Your target expression can be “uh”, “I mean”, “てか”, “じゃん” or even intonation or gesture

Make sure that your target expression occurs frequently enough in conversations — low-frequency items might never appear even if your participants keep talking for hours.

Your participants might never use the target expression due to individual or stylistic differences.

(2) Language in interaction

When you find a target expression, transcribe its context.

B: これだと ちょい目立ちすぎって[いうか

A: [ん:::

(1.8)

B: てか 別にこれ

(0.8)

B: いいんじゃないの 無くても

(0.3)

B: そこ[メインじゃないし

A: [そう

(0.3)

A: そうかも

(2) Language in interaction

Discuss the role of the target expression in interaction.
Examples:

It is used when the speaker tries to go back to an earlier topic.

It is used when the speaker wants to confirm background information about the request being asked.

It is used when the speaker is hesitating to say something negative.

Collect your own data

Your work should contain your own data collected in person. It should not be entirely based on texts available on the web, books, TVs, etc.

Recording technologies

Usually, you do not need fancy equipments to record conversations (unless you're interested in a subtle phonetic feature). A single PC or smartphone is sufficient.

However, check to see if your software can record sufficiently wrong conversations. Do not waste your participants' time due to technical problems.

How many data points do I need?

It depends.

If your project is based on a questionnaire with just a couple of questions, you might want to ask 20 to 30 people

If your project involves detailed analysis of conversations, the recordings of two or three one-hour conversations may be enough.

How many data points do I need?

Our project need not be statistically rigorous, but you have to discuss potential problems your data might have.

One person from Kyushu cannot represent the Kyushu dialects.

Ethics

You should not secretly record conversations, even if you want to make your data as natural as possible.

You need to obtain an agreement from your participants.

Clearly explain that the data is only for the course project, and the data will not be stored, copied, or published beyond the need of the course project.

Language Change

Languages change over time

When that Aprille with hise shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
And bathed euyre veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour.

**When April with its sweet showers
has pierced the drought of March to the root
and bathed every vein in such liquid
from which strength the flower is engendered.**

つれづれなるままに
日ぐらし硯に向ひて
心に移り行くよしなしごとを
そこはかたなく書きつくれば
怪しうこそ物狂ほしけれ

**What a strange, demented feeling it
gives me when I realise I have spent
whole days before this inkstone, with
nothing better to do, jotting down at
random whatever nonsensical thoughts
that have entered my head.
(translation by Donald Keene)**

Why does language change?

Why does language change?

We need new words for new ideas.

Linguistic factors: e.g. people want to simplify pronunciations, abbreviate frequent words, avoid confusing expressions, etc.

Social factors: e.g. influence from a more prestigious language variety; use of slang for the solidarity of a peer group etc.

Language change and language variation

Language change and language variation

Language doesn't change from one grammar to another grammar overnight.

Language change always involves language variation at each moment.

Age difference is particularly relevant to language change.

Age difference and “apparent time” method

Sometimes it is possible to track language change based on historical records.

An alternative is *apparent-time* studies: age difference suggests language change.

But be careful because an age difference may be because young people like to use slang, for example

Language change and dialects

An ongoing language change can also appear as difference between dialects, social class, or gender

Similar examples

chigau (違う) as adjective — *chigakute* (違くて),
chigakatta (違かった), *chigee* (ちげー) etc.

iku nai (いくない)

Used by aged people in Fukushima and Tochigi prefectures

uzattai (うざったい)

Used by aged people in Tama area (west of Tokyo)

Language change and social class

- *Change from above*
A language change that starts from higher social class
Conscious adoption of a prestigious form etc.
- *Change from below*
A language change that starts from lower social class
Unconscious sound change etc.

Koinee

Koinee emerges as a result of dialect contacts. (cf. pidgin and creole). This process is called *koineization*.

Which form wins out in a koine depend on both linguistic and social factors.

vowels in Texas

rural town A

rural town B

ride [ra:d]
write [rait]

ride [ra:d]
write [ra:t]

city

ride [raid]
write [rait]

Two reasons (linguistic and social)

Reaction paper: On prescriptivism

A friend says: "*Ra-nuki kotoba* is wrong. You shouldn't use it."

How do you answer?