

Attitudinal Study of Users of Japanese English

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Japanese English: Linguistic Attitudes of the Users

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Abstract

This paper examines the developmental stage of Japanese English as one of the expanding circle varieties from the attitude perspective. The literature review presents the theories of World Englishes, what Japanese English is, and the previous attitudinal studies on Japanese English. The questionnaire survey was conducted to assess the linguistic attitudes of Japanese English users towards the forms and use of their English. The result suggests that a higher frequency of English use positively affects the acceptability of some of the features of Japanese English, yet at the same time more frequent users of English tend to see the characteristics of Japanese English negatively, an ambivalent attitude reported in previous studies. The generational difference presents that there are less negative attitudes towards local features in younger generations except for strong norm dependency in students' age. The developmental stage of Japanese English and the applicability of Schneider's (2003) model are also examined. The paper concludes with an implication for English education and further field of World Englishes research.

Keywords: World Englishes, Japanese English, language attitudes

Introduction

Japanese English in World Englishes Context

English is for the majority learnt and used as a foreign language in Japan. This makes it categorized into the expanding circle in Kachru's (1985) three concentric circles of World Englishes. The three circles consist of the *inner circle*, the *outer circle*, and the *expanding circle*. Another way to label these circles is the norm-providing, norm-developing, and

norm-dependent variety, respectively. As the names suggest, the "native speakers" of the inner circle are traditionally seen as the norm. The expanding circle, on the other hand, relies on the norms provided by the inner circle; it is "exonormative" as Kachru puts it. The Englishes in the outer circles are diverse because each of these varieties has distinct features. These developments are the product of various multilingual/multicultural environments where English was brought in. Their linguistic behavior has conflicted with the

linguistic norms. Such is the situation that they are “both endonormative and exonormative.” The use of English in the expanding circle, as compared to the outer circle, is limited in terms of the *range* (i.e., “the context and domains in which English functions,” Kachru & Nelson, 1996, p. 85) and the *depth* (i.e., “the extent of use of English in the various level of society,” *ibid.*). It is mainly for this reason that English in Japan or any English in the expanding circle has not been discussed in the context of development as a variety.

The theories and discussion in World Englishes (WE) are mostly based on the development of the outer circle Englishes. The pluricentric approach of WE liberated the outer circle Englishes from the stigma of “non-native” English varieties. However, the expanding circle Englishes are, at that point, still seen as inadequate to be discussed as independent varieties or having the possibility of becoming one. This does not mean that the situation regarding the expanding circle stays the same forever. As Kachru himself pointed out, “[t]he outer circle and the expanding circle cannot be viewed as clearly demarcated from each other..., and the status of English in the language policies of such countries changes from time to time. What is an ESL region at one time may become an EFL region at another time or vice versa” (Kachru, 1985, p. 156). Moreover, a variety of English does not need to be an English-as-a-second-language (ESL) variety in order to recognize their features. Melchers and Shaw (2003) predict “[The expanding circle] may be becoming ‘independent’ and one can imagine two stages, one in which features of different varieties are mixed to create a norm, and the second in which regional expanding-circle Englishes develop which have unique features due to their own substrates, etc., like the outer-circle varieties” (p. 186). Yano (2009) argues that once everyone around the globe speaks English as a basic skill, which is a process well underway, the proficiency and cross-cultural communicative competence of the individuals outweigh the supremacy of native speaker (NS) norms. In such circumstances, the norm-dependent nature of the expanding circle Englishes is no longer relevant. With the penetration of English in the expanding circle continuing and the norm dependency of the varieties still being questioned, one can only expect that the WE discussion should be extended to the expanding circle varieties.

In this paper from now onwards, the term *Japanese English* (JpE) in a WE sense is used to address a variety

of English used by Japanese speakers of English. It should therefore not be confused with the English words or expressions incorporated in the Japanese language. In the survey, it further narrowed down the target to English spoken by L1 Japanese speakers for the sake of data analysis. However, the term is not necessarily exclusive in reality. Whether or not JpE is established as a variety will be the discussion of this paper. Yet, it postulates the term to be one of the many varieties in WE to allow the discussion to proceed. Some of the features of JpE to illustrate are distinct phonological features influenced by L1 Japanese (cf. Ohata, 2004, for an overview), grammatical aspects that are divergent from the current norm (e.g. Third-person singular *-s* omission [cf. Saunders, 1987], deviant use of articles [cf. Muto-Humphrey, 2006]), unique vocabulary characterized in *Wasei-Eigo*, the possibility of code-switching to Japanese utterances or intersentential items (cf. Nishimura, 1995), and frequent use of backchanneling (cf. Maynard, 1990).

Attitudes in a Variety Development

Kachru (1982) discusses developmental stages of non-native English varieties from the attitudinal perspective. He argues that the attitudinal process along with the linguistic process is requisite for developing non-native models of English. At the first stage of this process, local varieties are not recognized. In the second stage, as bilingualism prevails, the local varieties become increasingly identified but are still regarded low in the attitudinal sense. In other words, people take it as an insult if they are labelled as the user of, for instance, Indian English, even if it is apparent from their linguistic behavior. In the third stage, the local varieties are more accepted, and the contradiction between linguistic behavior and norm lessens. In the last stage, the varieties become recognized. Furthermore, the teaching materials begin to reflect the local context.

Later, Schneider (2003) theorizes how the English language settles in new environments in five stages; foundation, exonormative stabilization, nativization, endonormative stabilization, and differentiation. This dynamic model is for “postcolonial Englishes.” It considers not only the geopolitical aspect of the language spread and change in the linguistic forms but also the identity construction of the speakers. Through the five stages of development, the settlers’ identity shifts from that of the original nation to

the new land. Similarly, the indigenous gradually embrace the settlers' presence. In the postindependence stages, both the settlers and the indigenous develop the shared identity of belonging to one nation. He argues that the emergence of a new linguistic variety is the consequence of identity rewriting of all parties involved in the contact setting regardless of the types of initial contact (i.e., trade colonization, exploitation colonization, and settlement colonization).

In Ike (2012), the application of Schneider's model to JpE is discussed. Admittedly the dynamic model is not designed to accommodate the expanding circle context; however, she maintains that some parts of the developmental stages apply to the expanding circle varieties too (pp. 90–95). She uses English loanwords into Japanese and the emergence of *Wasei-Eigo* (made-in-Japan English) as a token of nativization and endonormative stabilization, respectively. In her application, it is in the endonormative stabilization stage that the distinct features of JpE become recognized and accepted. At the end of this identity development, "Japanese English completes its development and stands as an independent new variety of English" (p. 94).

In discussing the applicability of the dynamic model to nonpostcolonial varieties, Schneider (2014) mentions that, in the long run, there is a possibility that English becomes disassociated from the original cultural context and establishes a long-lasting role in the new settings. The paper concludes that the dynamic model can be applied to the expanding circle varieties only to a limited extent and calls for supplemental studies to explain the developmental model of the expanding circle.

Attitudinal Studies on Japanese English

As explained in the preceding section, attitudinal development shifts from dislike to acceptance. English gradually transforms from possession of the others to their own. Now that we are aware of the forms of this variety, investigating how JpE is perceived by its users would allow us to estimate its developmental stage more holistically.

Most of the attitudinal studies on JpE or other expanding circle Englishes are discussed in the English-as-a-lingua-franca (ELF) field. The book by Jenkins (2007) reviews previous studies on attitudes towards ELF and finds that 1) reliance on NS norms as a model and 2) the negative views on non-NS (NNS)

varieties are common amongst teachers of English. The latter half of the book presents her own studies on the attitudes and beliefs towards varieties of English accents. The questionnaire survey finds that both NS and NNS teachers of English see NS varieties (namely, the UK and US English) as more desirable than NNS. The interview test with English teaching professionals further supports this finding and also reveals that they have mixed feelings when it comes to their linguistic identity as English teachers; most of them are positive to the idea of ELF in theory, but at a personal level, they still seek to sound like NS.

As mentioned in Jenkins (2007, p. 93), previous attitude studies in the expanding circle tend to focus mainly on pronunciation. This is the case in JpE also. In a study by Chiba et al. (1995), Japanese university students rated the recording of American and British speakers' English more positively than those of Japanese and other NNS varieties: Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, and Malaysia. Also in the aforementioned Jenkins (2007) study, Japanese participants in her questionnaire largely rated their own accent negatively. This finding is confirmed repeatedly in the other researches as well.

Matsuda (2003) conducted a questionnaire and interview with Japanese senior high school students. One of the findings in this study is that although they perceive English as an international language, they believe that the NS, namely, the American and the British, have ownership of the language. They showed preference for American/British English over the outer circle varieties and also indifference to those varieties. However, this is coming from the lack of awareness of the outer circle varieties rather than having negative attitudes towards them. Her study also included questions regarding some features of JpE. Even though some students commented that having a Japanese accent is unavoidable, the majority held a negative attitude towards it for they believed that it would not be intelligible and that it was an "incorrect" version of English. As for *Wasei-Eigo* (or, in this writing, Japanese-made English), students showed ambivalence. More than half of the respondents agreed that "Japanese-made English can express Japanese things better than words from American English do" (p. 491), while at the same time more than half disagreed with the statement "It is OK to use Japanese-made English when speaking or writing English because it is, after all, English" (ibid.). In her conclusion, she argues

that a pluricentric approach should be taken and that students should be encouraged to take part in shaping English as an international language.

Ishikawa's (2017) study also consists of a questionnaire and interview, but this time with university students in Japan. His research confirmed Matsuda's finding that students have negative attitudes towards JpE in terms of its unintelligibility and incorrectness. To a limited extent, ambivalence was also observed in his findings; some students commented positively on JpE pronunciation such as "unique" and "a positive sense of solidarity" (p. 249) yet at the same time valued JpE less than NS English. His conclusion points out that too much focus on correctness over communicative competence and strong adherence to NS, especially American norms, are prevalent in Japanese society. He attributes this Japanese people's lack of critical thinking to the *doxic* experience in the Japanese society: "if the coupling of concentration on ENL (English as a Native Language) norms and adherence to North American ENL is naturalised in the society as a whole, then Japanese students become unaware of an alternative way of viewing English, thereby sustaining the present situation" (p. 256). Finally, he calls for raising ELF awareness so that the Japanese will see their English more positively and communicate in English with confidence.

Similar to Ishikawa's explanation of the *doxic* experience, Kachru (2005) gives an interesting insight into English in Japanese society. He explores the ideology behind *Eikaiwa* or the English conversation, a popular style of business-oriented English language courses. His examination of previous studies reveals that this ideology reinforces a certain and a limited aspect of English culture and English speakers as the learners' target. That is to say, the expected goal of *Eikaiwa* is to communicate with white middle-class people in English that carries the Western, especially American culture. As a consequence, it deprives the learners of creativity and the possibility of developing their identity in English. The penetration of such ideology can be seen in the Japanese agony between wanting to acquire better English skills and the fear of losing national and ethnic identity. In the conclusion, he argues that Japan must reconsider the pragmatic use of English as a multicultural medium of communication and that creativity must be explored so that it can articulate Japanese culture and ideology.

To sum up, it is a well-confirmed tendency that Japanese people hold negative attitudes towards and hesitation in their performance of English. This results from strict normative approaches in JpE education and reinforced ignorance of the English varieties/cultures other than NS or American. To tackle this situation, scholars have argued the need to educate diversity in the English world and to encourage the Japanese to take the reins of their activities in English. Much more liberal opinion can be found in the argument that JpE should be included in education. Morizumi (2009) calls for the teaching materials such as textbooks and audio recordings of JpE so it can be taught in the classroom and be used with confidence as a common language in international communications. Similarly, Hino (2021) argues that endonormative development of JpE is necessary for its users to be able to freely express themselves and make use of English in the international context.

This section is dedicated to exploring attitudinal research on JpE from various perspectives. Overview of the previous studies presented further points of investigation: 1) the pronunciation has been the main concern, and other features have not been given plenty of attention, and 2) how the individuals' background (e.g., age, English proficiency, frequency of English use, etc.) affects such attitudes is not well explored. The main purpose of this study is to have an overall understanding of the current attitudes towards JpE in the WE context. The acceptability and the applicability of JpE may differ depending on features. Also, identifying the factors influencing attitudes may allow us to see the dynamics of English in Japanese society. By investigating these points, it aims to extend the discussion of WE and the variety development to JpE context.

Methodology

The online survey was conducted in November 2021 using Google Forms. The survey was distributed with the help of students in the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS). The target of the survey is anyone whose mother tongue (or one of their mother tongues) is Japanese. The questionnaire was written bilingually in Japanese and English. The respondents can choose either of the languages to answer. The complete transcript of the survey questions is not provided due to the spatial limitation. To give an overview, it was composed of two main sections: the

first section on the respondents' basic information and the second section on the linguistic attitudes.

The questions included in Section 1 are their age, gender, educational attainment, experience abroad (for longer than six consecutive months), if they are NS of English or not, competence in English, frequency of English use, and proficiency in other languages (if any). The judgement of whether they are NS of English is based on the criteria proposed by Mann (1999). To put simply, the respondents are considered NS when they fulfill both childhood language ecology and current language competence. It also asked if they are/were students of TUFS since its unique linguistic background (i.e., the higher than average level of English proficiency needed upon entrance and the extensive exposure to foreign languages due to its curriculum) may not parallel that of the rest of the population. At the end of Section 1, the respondents were asked to describe their impression of JpE in their own words. This open-ended question is attitude related but placed intentionally before the attitude section so that their expressions will less likely to be influenced by the description and the questions that are prepared in the next section.

Section 2 asked the respondents to fill in the questions regarding English in Japan and the use of JpE. Topics such as acceptability of JpE features in both intra- and international settings, the importance of English for Japanese, and attitudes towards JpE are covered. The questions in this section mostly employ Likert scales to investigate the respondents' attitudes. To avoid respondents choosing the neutral point, an even number 4 was used so that each point on the scale would correspond to "Strongly agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly disagree." Some of these questions, especially those that ask about their use of English, were not mandatory. Therefore, in a case where the questions are not applicable to the respondents, they have the choice to leave it out. To facilitate the respondents' understanding, the explanation and examples of JpE characteristics are provided. The survey included the links to the web pages where they can listen to the audio recording of JpE speakers. One female example and one male example are chosen from the collection of the International Dialects of English Archive (IDEA, 2013, 2016). Aside from the phonological aspect, the following four characteristics of JpE are presented: grammatical features (e.g., the omission of third-person

singular present *-s*), code-switching activity, lexical feature (e.g., use of *Wasei-Eigo*), and conversation strategy (e.g., frequent backchanneling).

Results and Discussion

Respondents

Within the total 131 respondents, 9 of them were TUFS students/graduates. As speculated, TUFS people appear to have different linguistic backgrounds from the rest of the respondents. Their proficiency in English and frequency of English use were both higher than the rest of the respondents. In addition, the proportion of people with experience abroad was 44.4% among TUFS respondents as compared to 17.2% among non-TUFS respondents. Since their unique linguistic background and thus their linguistic attitudes might not parallel that of the majority of Japanese population, the nine responses from TUFS affiliates were excluded from further investigation.

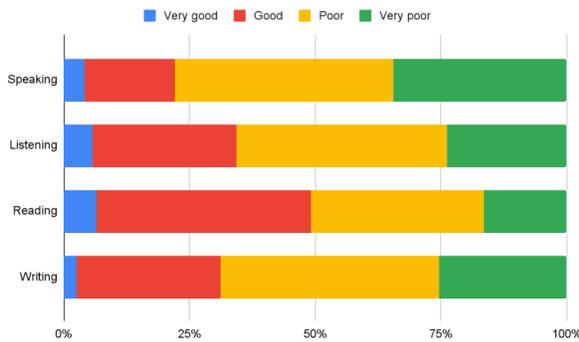
This makes the respondents' size 122. The biggest number was collected from the age group of 19–22 (24.6%). This is the most common age for university students. The rest of the age groups were relatively balanced: under 18 (13.1%), 23–29 (9.8%), 30s (10.7%), 40s (11.5%), 50s (17.2%), and over 60 (13.1%). The gender ratio was 58.2% female, 41.0% male, and 0.8% chose "Prefer not to say." The percentage of NS of English was 5%.

Graph 1 shows the English proficiencies in four skills. It should be noted that this is the self-evaluation of their performance ability. Therefore, what this shows is more like their confidence rather than proficiency scores evaluated objectively. Nonetheless, it gives interesting findings. It shows that almost half of the respondents have "Good" or even better reading skills. The reported proficiency declines in listening and writing and is even less in speaking.

How often they use these skills is shown in Graph 2. It shows somewhat similar results to the proficiency question. However, what can be observed here is that receptive skills (listening and reading) are used more often than productive skills (speaking and writing). Another finding is that although frequency ranges from a few times a month to everyday, approximately half of the respondents do use English on a regular basis.

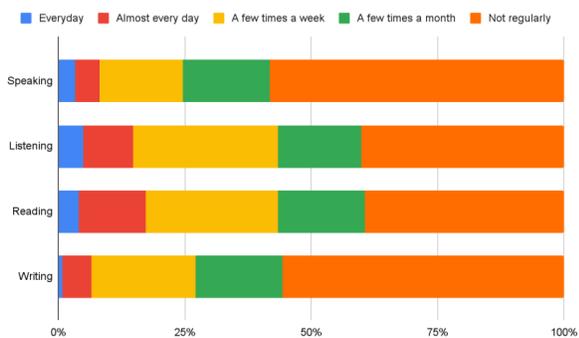
Graph 1

English Proficiency by Skills



Graph 2

Frequency of Use of Each Skill



A question may arise as to whether there is a correlation between age and English proficiency or the frequency of English use. As shown in Table 1, a remarkable difference in proficiency between the age groups was not obtained. The highest proficiency in reading and the lowest proficiency in speaking that have been found in the overall data can also be observed in all respective generations. Higher proficiency in the 50s can be attributed to the fact that 42.9% of them have the experience abroad, which is significantly higher than 17.2% of the overall data. Therefore, a simple correlation between age and English proficiency could not be found in the current data. Table 2 shows the frequency of English use by the age groups. Same as the proficiency section, the finding in the overall data is repeated in each of the age groups: receptive skills are more frequently used than productive skills. The under-18 group has by far the highest frequency of use, followed by 19–22 and 23–29. This is most likely because the younger generations, especially generally under the age of 22, have the opportunity to use English in the education system. The reason why the 30s’ figure is much lower is unknown. However, this might explain why the 30s have relatively lower proficiency as shown in Table 1. Aside from the high frequency in students’ generation, a simple correlation with age was not found with a frequency of use either.

Table 1. Percentage of Those With “Very Good” or “Good” English Skills by the Age Groups

	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	Average
Under 18	12.5	37.5	43.8	25.0	29.7
19–22	20.0	33.3	53.3	26.7	33.3
23–29	25.0	41.7	58.3	41.7	41.7
30s	15.4	23.1	30.8	23.1	23.1
40s	28.6	35.7	42.9	35.7	35.7
50s	38.1	47.6	57.1	42.9	46.4
60s and over	12.5	18.8	50.0	25.0	26.6
All	22.1	34.4	49.2	31.1	34.2

Table 2. Percentage of Those Who Use English More Than Weekly by the Age Groups

	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	Average
Under 18	68.8	87.5	87.5	87.5	82.8
19–22	26.7	46.7	53.3	30.0	39.2
23–29	25.0	50.0	50.0	25.0	37.5
30s	0	15.4	7.7	0	5.8
40s	21.4	35.7	28.6	14.3	25.0
50s	23.8	38.1	38.1	14.3	28.6
60s and over	0	25.0	25.0	12.5	15.6
All	24.6	43.4	43.4	27.0	34.6

A percentage of 88.5% agreed (“Strongly agree” and “Agree”) that being able to use English is important in international society. When the question asked about its importance in Japanese society, 74.8% agreed. It should be noted that the percentage of “Strongly agree” decreases greatly from 72.1% in international society to 28.6% in Japanese society. This drop in assertiveness may suggest that people see the greater use of English internationally rather than domestically. Although the degree of assertiveness varies depending on the settings, these data suggest that the significance of learning and speaking the English language is widely recognized.

Perceived Acceptability of Japanese English

Among the respondents, 72.9% agreed that the pronunciation of JpE can be understood by other Japanese speakers. This means that most people think that among Japanese speakers the pronunciation will not impair mutual understanding. To non-Japanese speakers, on the other hand, only 22.9% think it will be understandable. One can see from here that most people are afraid of the unintelligibility of JpE to people who do not speak Japanese. Filtering this data with the frequency of English use presents another insight. Among those who speak English more than “a few times a month,” 33.4% agreed that it will be understood by non-Japanese speakers. When this is even narrowed down to those who use it more than “a few times a week,” the percentage rose to 40%. It should not be dismissed that even among more-than-weekly English speakers, the majority’s opinion is in disagreement. Yet this may suggest that those who speak English regularly know the practical aspect of

JpE empirically and the fear of being unintelligible may be coming more from not having enough experience of English communication.

Similar to the question on pronunciation, the perceived acceptability of the other JpE features decreases in communication with non-Japanese speakers compared to that with Japanese speakers. This was the case in all four features asked in these questions. The grammatical feature (i.e., the omission of *-s* in third-person singular present verbs) was considered acceptable by a large portion of respondents. In communication with Japanese speakers, 81.2% agreed that it is acceptable, and in that with non-Japanese speakers, 68.8% agreed. Backchanneling received approximately the same level of perceived acceptability; “Strongly agree” and “Agree” amounted to 79.5% with Japanese speakers and 68.9% with non-Japanese speakers. The other two features, code-switching and *Wasei-Eigo* lexical feature, are considered less acceptable than the above-mentioned two. In the case of code-switching, 57.3% considered it acceptable to use with other Japanese speakers, which decreased to 40.1% with non-Japanese speakers. In the use of *Wasei-Eigo*, 62.3% agreed in the former situation and 36.9% in the latter. The possible explanation for the higher perceived acceptability of the first two features is that they require no knowledge of Japanese to understand them. The omission of *-s* is widely observed in ESL/EFL speakers, and it is not unique to Japanese speakers only. Backchanneling, both verbally and nonverbally, does not contain much concrete information other than the person’s involvement in the conversation. The latter two features, on the other hand, may not be understood if the listeners do not understand

Japanese. This explains why these two received lower acceptability in communication with non-Japanese speakers. It is interesting to note that these two are considered less acceptable even in communication with Japanese speakers compared to the first two features. Filtering the data with frequency did not change the results to a statistically significant level except for one category. Among more-than-weekly English speakers, the acceptability of code-switching in communication with non-Japanese speakers increased by 9.9%. The exceptional case that needs our attention is non-Japanese speakers living in Japan. It is highly possible that they have familiarized themselves with Japanese words and expressions even though they do not speak the language. If the higher frequency users in this survey communicate with such people, it is understandable that the acceptability of code-switching is higher among them. Since this questionnaire did not ask the context in which they use English, it is unknown whether their regular use of English takes place in the Japanese context or somewhere else. However, this finding may suggest the possible context in which the creativity of JpE can flourish.

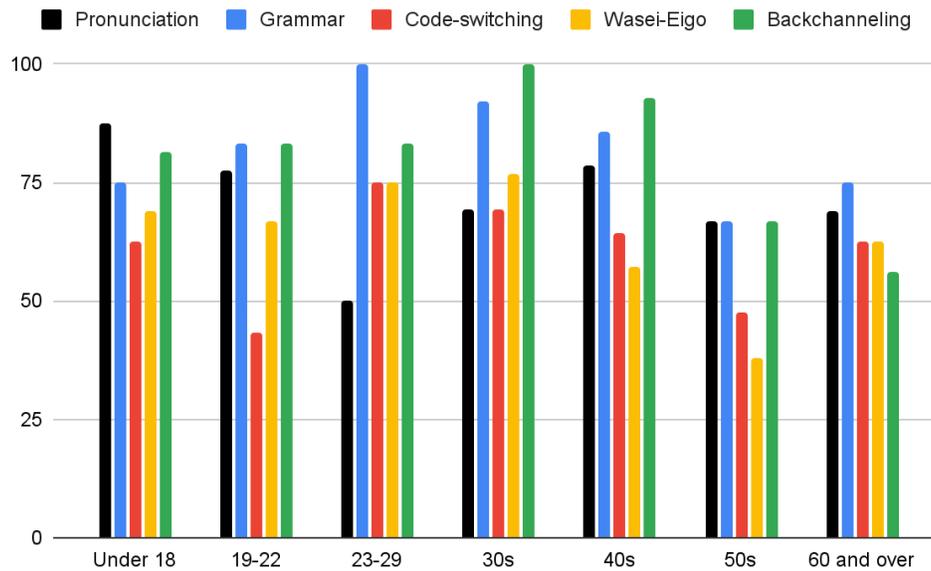
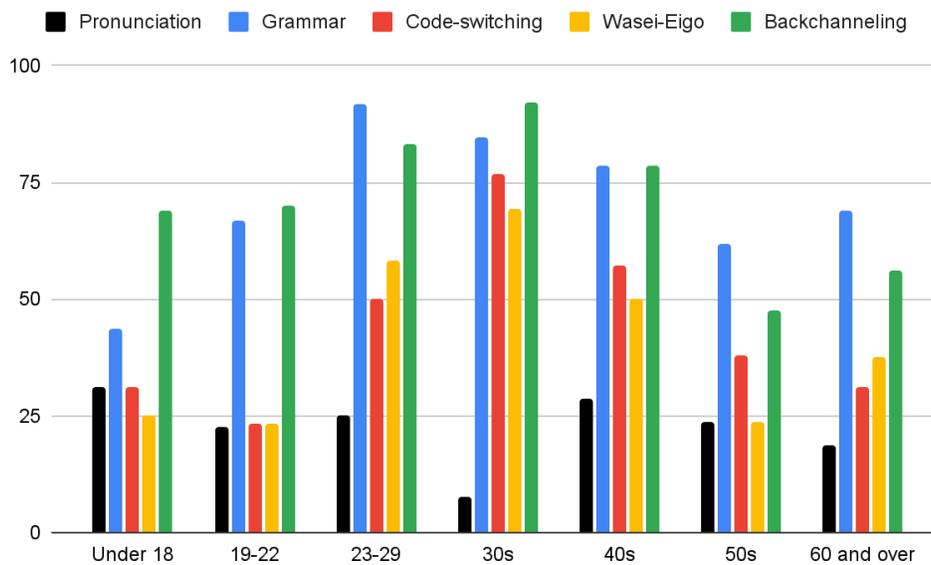
Each of the age groups shows a different level of acceptability of these JpE features. The percentage of those who think each feature is “Acceptable” or “Rather acceptable” is illustrated in Graph 3 (in communication with Japanese speakers) and Graph 4 (in communication with non-Japanese speakers). Although pronunciation data show the percentage of those who agreed that the pronunciation of JpE is understandable, it is included to represent the acceptability. In communication with Japanese speakers, the acceptability of each feature is relatively low in the older generations. Compared to younger generations, they may have and have had much fewer opportunities for English communication among Japanese speakers. Therefore, it might have been difficult for them to visualize the situation. Generally, acceptability is highest in the 30s and to a lesser extent in 23–29 and the 40s as well. In younger and older generations, the acceptability lessens. This tendency can be observed in both situations, but it is stronger in communication with non-Japanese speakers. The exceptional 30s’ lower acceptability of pronunciation in communication with non-Japanese speakers may be due to their less frequent English use (cf. Table 2). Lower acceptability in the younger age groups must be influenced by normative instruction in English education. This is highlighted in Graph 4 in

which the under 18 scored the lowest acceptability of the grammatical feature in all the age groups. After the students’ age, it can be generalized that acceptability decreases with age. The reason for this may be that older generations have a more conservative view of what English should be or the expected level of formality in the English communication that they have or assume is higher than those of younger generations, which restricts a creative use of the language.

There are four main takeaways from this section. Firstly, JpE features are considered to be less acceptable when communicating with non-Japanese speakers compared to the case with other Japanese speakers. Secondly, the acceptability varies depending on the features. In communication with non-Japanese speakers, the grammatical feature and backchanneling received relatively higher acceptability. Code-switching and lexical features, which require some level of Japanese to understand, were perceived as less acceptable. Pronunciation features turned out to be the least acceptable among these features. Thirdly, a higher frequency of English use positively affects the acceptability of pronunciation features and code-switching. Lastly, the general acceptability of JpE features declines in students’ age and older generations.

Linguistic Attitudes Towards Japanese English

Linguistic attitude towards JpE varies greatly depending on the individuals. The open-ended question at the end of Section 1 was not a required question, but most of the participants submitted their responses. Since it is not possible to list all of them here, priority is given to the frequently given and attitude-related comments. In order to analyze them, I have classified them into five categories: positive, rather positive, neutral, rather negative, and negative. It should not go without mentioning that this categorization is subject to the interpretation of the researcher since it was sometimes difficult to grasp the level of positivity/negativity of their responses. Also, some of the positive/negative connotations to the original Japanese words may be lost in translation. Nevertheless, it gives an insight into the complex linguistic attitudes to JpE. The number of the same or similar responses is shown in parentheses. Positive comments are “Easy to understand as a Japanese” (6), “Polite” (5), and “Beautiful” (3). Rather positive comments are “Slow” (3), “Clear,” “Formal,” and “Cute.” On the other end of the spectrum, “Poor” (7), “Weird” (3), “Not cool” (3),

Graph 3. Acceptability of JpE Features in Communication With Japanese Speakers by the Age Groups**Graph 4.** Acceptability of JpE Features in Communication With Non-Japanese Speakers

“Awkward” (2), and “Unpleasant” (2) are categorized as negative. In a less harsh tone, rather negative comments are “Broken” (5), “Hard to understand” (3), “Will not be understood” (3), “Far from the pronunciation of the native speakers” (2), “Distinct (Japanese) accent” (2), “Sometimes incorrect,” etc. Some comments can be interpreted in both directions or they are simply the description on the forms. Those

comments are put in the neutral section: “Katakana-like” (10), “Read word by word” (2), “Vowels are strongly pronounced” (2), “Less peculiar compared to other non-native varieties” (2), “Cannot be helped,” etc. It is interesting to see that the same characteristics can be seen positively by some and negatively by others. One shared point in most of the positive-toned comments is its contribution to comprehension. We

Table 3. Percentage of Those Who Agreed That JpE Is “Incorrect”

Age Group	Under 18	19–22	23–29	30s	40s	50s	60+
(%)	56.3	53.3	33.3	23.1	50	52.4	43.8

can also find this in Graph 3, in which the under 18, who would have more opportunities to listen to their peers’ JpE pronunciation, scored the highest percentage of those who agree that the pronunciation of JpE is understandable to Japanese speakers. Most of the negative-toned comments are coming from comparison with NS English or by expecting NS as the communication target.

The participants in this survey all speak Japanese as their first language; therefore, they all fall into the users of JpE by definition. Yet it does not mean that the description of JpE attempted earlier applies equally to their English. To the question asking how much the description of JpE pronunciation applies to their English, 14.8% chose “Applicable,” 35.2% chose “Mostly applicable,” 29.5% chose “Partially applicable,” and 4.1% chose “Not applicable.” Here I label the first two groups as marked JpE speakers and the latter two as unmarked JpE speakers. The frequency of English speaking was slightly higher in unmarked JpE speakers compared to those of the marked; 22.9% of marked JpE speakers and 36.6% of unmarked JpE speakers use English weekly or more frequently. The bigger difference was observed in their reported English proficiency. The percentage of those with “Very good” or “Good” speaking proficiency was 8.2% in the marked and 46.4% in the unmarked. Among marked JpE speakers, 27.9% think their English is acceptable to them. This is smaller compared to 58.5% of the unmarked JpE speakers. The percentage of those who are proud of their pronunciation is 13.1% in marked JpE speakers and 24.4% in unmarked JpE speakers. To put it simply, those who report having higher speaking skills recognized their English with fewer JpE pronunciation features. And those who think their English sounds like typical JpE have less acceptability and pride in their English.

To the question asking if the characteristics of JpE is “incorrect English,” 46.7% agreed and 53.3% disagreed (“Strongly agree” = 13.1%, “Agree” = 33.6%, “Disagree” = 34.4%, and “Strongly disagree” = 18.9%). The respondents’ proficiency in English did not strongly correlate to the response to this

question. Their frequency of English usage, on the other hand, seems to have some correlation. Among more-than-weekly English users, 59.4% think that JpE is incorrect. Compared to that of the rest (i.e., monthly and nonregular users), which is 42.2%, it is relatively higher. It may be said that higher frequency users tend to see the characteristics of JpE more negatively. Table 3 shows the percentage of those who chose “Strongly agree” and “Agree” to this question in each age group. Since the respondents in the 30s in this current survey exhibited a considerably lower frequency of English use, the big drop in the 30s can be explained by the same principle. However, the group of 23–29 have a relatively lower rate of norm dependency despite having a higher frequency of English use. Same as the acceptability of JpE features in communication with non-Japanese speakers, the younger and the older generations have a heavier dependency on norms, which results in negative attitudes towards JpE features.

Among the respondents, 34.4% agreed with the statement “Using Japanese English enables users to keep their Japanese identity even when using English.” However, only 13.2% reported that they use JpE to demonstrate their Japanese identity. It becomes clear from this that the idea of using JpE as an identifier of Japaneseness is still an alien idea to the majority. With that being said, even though those who practice this are the minority at the present, more people show understanding of the possibility. This leaves room for growing awareness and promoting such use of JpE in the future.

Summarizing the linguistic attitude of JpE is not an easy task for the findings only confirmed how complex it is. The previous chapter presented that more frequent use of English increases the tolerance to some of the JpE features. The findings in this section are seemingly contradicting this. People with salient JpE characteristics are more likely to be found in less proficient English speakers and they tend to have less confidence in their pronunciation of English. Those who use English more often have relatively higher confidence in their English but tend to see the features

of JpE in a negative light. It should be underlined that the previous chapter asked about the acceptability of JpE features while the questions in this chapter were concerning positive/negative attitudes. It seems that one can accept the features of JpE and yet hold negative attitudes towards them. In relation to age, the younger generations and the older generations tend to have more negative attitudes towards JpE. This finding is similar to that of acceptability. On the receiving end, JpE can contribute to a better comprehension of English to some individuals. Presenting JpE, on the other hand, encounters negative attitudes that are stemming from comparison to NS English. To use such features of JpE to demonstrate one's Japanese identity is an unexplored idea for the majority. However, understanding such a notion may lead to further exploration of JpE and its possibilities.

Discussion

Concerning the developmental stages of JpE, three main points are explored in this survey: introduction of English to Japanese society, independence from NS norms, and identity development in JpE. Most of the respondents acknowledge the importance of English both domestically and internationally despite the difference in assertiveness. The percentage of those who are confident enough to say that their English skills are "Very good" or "Good" is still smaller than the other part, but it is not insignificant. In addition, about half of the respondents use English on a regular basis, monthly or more often. Given these findings, the English language is widely introduced to Japanese society even though it may not have penetrated to the individual level.

Overall, more than half of the respondents disagreed with the idea that the features of JpE are "incorrect," suggesting that there are critical attitudes to the NS norm-centered view of correctness. Heavier norm dependence was found especially in younger and older generations. The acceptability of JpE features varied from one to another. The adaptability of JpE should be sought from features with higher acceptability: grammatical features and backchanneling. The *-s* in third-person singular present verbs was picked as an example in this survey, but other examples may receive different levels of acceptability. In application of Schneider's model to JpE, Ike (2012) considered the emergence of the *Wasei-Eigo* feature as the token

of endonormative stabilization, but the acceptance of this feature was revealed to be very low in the current survey. Therefore, it is hard to say that the sociolinguistic aspect of endonormative stabilization (i.e., acceptance and positive attitude to local norms) is fulfilled. The applicability of Schneider's model will be further discussed in the next paragraph. Pronunciation, which has been the main focus in the previous attitudinal studies, was considered the least acceptable feature. However, the practical aspects of JpE pronunciation should not be dismissed for the following two reasons. The first reason is that JpE makes comprehension easier for some people. The second reason is that the intelligibility of JpE to non-Japanese speakers is not as low as it is feared for the acceptability of its pronunciation increases in more frequent English users. The findings in the previous attitudinal studies (i.e., negative attitudes to JpE coming from norm dependency and ignorance to the idea of English varieties) were present in this survey as well, but the main focus on pronunciation and teachers/students as the respondent target in the previous studies might have accentuated such aspect. Even though it is true that the NS norm is still prevalent in Japanese society, the findings in this study suggest that degrees of norm dependency may not be uniform.

Identity development in JpE is not a well-explored idea for the majority. Only a small portion of the respondents use JpE to demonstrate their Japanese identity. However, the possibility of future development can be expected since a bigger portion of the respondents showed an understanding of the idea. Questioning the current situation and discussing this topic more actively will be the first step for independence from NS norms and eventually identity development in JpE. The dichotomy of "correct" NS norms and "incorrect" JpE will not serve JpE users because it makes them less confident in their English performance and prevents their linguistic creativity. In agreement with the arguments in previous studies, the clue to resolving the Japanese agony (Kachru, 2005) is in developing an understanding of English varieties, another idea that seems not to be well understood. Although the possibility of growing out of norm dependency and developing as an independent variety is mentioned such as in Yano (2009) or Schneider (2014), it seems less likely that such waves of change start in presently active English users in Japan. The reason for this is that more proficient (less marked

JpEness) and more frequent English users turned out to have stronger associations with NS norms. Unless explicitly promoted, pluricentric approaches to English will not be realized in near future. As an initial step, school English education should play a role in helping learners to relativize their English learning in the global context rather than fostering norm dependency.

Conclusion

The result of this survey demonstrated that Japanese people's linguistic attitudes towards JpE is not monolithic; mainly, the paper explored the difference in attitudes depending on the respondents' proficiency in English, frequency of English use, and their age. A higher frequency of English use positively affects the acceptance of some of the JpE features. However, higher frequency users also tend to see the characteristics of JpE as "incorrect," a negative attitude stemming from norm dependency. This is seemingly contradictory. However, similar arguments were made in previous studies where participants' ambivalence was observed (cf. Matsuda, 2003; Jenkins, 2007). Here we can see that having acceptance and having positive attitudes do not occur simultaneously, but rather one may be the step after the other. Those who carry salient JpE phonological features are more likely to be found in the less proficient group, and they tend to have less confidence in their pronunciation. Since proficiency in this study is self-reported, proficiency obtained by objective evaluation may present a clearer picture. No clear correlation between the respondents' age and English proficiency nor frequency of English use was observed with an exception to the high frequency in students' age. Receiving English education in schools and universities may lead to heavier norm dependency and consequently negative attitudes towards original features. Negative attitudes are also observed in older generations. Investigating the cause for this requires identifying the context in which they (assume to) use English. How other background factors (e.g., experience abroad and other foreign language proficiency) influence the attitudes needs to be investigated in a demographic survey with a bigger respondent size.

Regarding the developmental stage of JpE, English is widely introduced and plays an active role in Japanese society. Although norm dependency is still relevant, investigating the acceptability of different

features and differences in generations has shown possible fields of exploration. Identity construction in JpE is far from being achieved. As the importance of English skills continues to grow and more people have opportunities to use English both in and out of Japan, introducing the idea of JpE as one of many English varieties will help Japanese people to build better relationships with the language.

This paper attempted to shed light on the current situation of JpE in WE context and the linguistic attitudes of the users. Given the sample size and practical limitations to the data collection, the result presented may not represent the population of Japan. These limitations of this paper need to be further explored in the future research. Nonetheless, the paper illustrated that the discussion of WE can be extended to expanding circle settings, and it is hoped that this would initiate more discussion in Japan and around the world.

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