

# 日本人英語学習者の理由表明能力の発達 —海外語学研修参加前と参加後の *because* の使用を比較して—

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会話において自身の考えを相手に伝え納得してもらうためには、その考えを持つに至った根拠や動機、すなわち理由を述べることが重要となる。なかでも会話相手の文化的背景が異なる場合は、互いが共有する情報が限られているため、理由を明示的に表明することが不可欠な場面も多いと考えられる。では、第二言語での会話において理由表明を行う能力はどのように発達するのだろうか。

本稿は理由表明能力の発達過程の一端を解明することを目指し、日本語を母語とし英語を学ぶ学習者を対象に行った調査により得られた知見を示すものである。焦点をあてたのは、理由表明の典型的なマーカーとされる *because* である。6週間の海外語学研修に参加した大学生が会話において *because* をどのように用いているのかを観察し、その用い方の量的・質的な変化を明らかにすることによって発達過程について考察を試みる。

研究課題は、1. 研修に参加する前の学習者と英語母語話者の間に *because* の使い方に関して相違が見られるか、もし相違が見られるとしたらどのような相違か、2. 研修への参加を経て学習者の *because* の使い方に変化が見られるか、もし変化が見られるとしたらどのような変化か、という2点である。資料は、研修に参加する前と参加後の2時点における学習者の会話資料および母語話者同士の会話コーパスである。調査は、(i) *because* の使用頻度、(ii) 会話相手との相互行為の中で *because* を用いる位置、(iii) *because* と共起する表現や行動、(iv) *because* を用いて構築する談話構造、という4つの観点について、学習者と母語話者を比較するというかたちで進める。

調査の結果、以下の知見が得られた。研究課題1については、研修に参加する前の時点から既に、学習者は理由を伝える談話のパターンを身につけているものの、

理由を自発的かつ流暢に述べるのは困難であることが明らかになった。研究課題2については、学習者は研修への参加を経て、より自発的かつ流暢に理由を表明できるようになることが実証された。これらの知見から、*because*の使用を通して見る限り、学習者の理由表明能力は、理由表明のための談話構造すなわち抽象的なパターンの習得から自発性と流暢性の向上へ、という順序で発達するものと考えられる。

# Learning How to Provide Reasons: A Comparison of Learners' Usage of *Because* Before and After Study Abroad

Aya Yamamoto

## 1. Introduction

In everyday conversation, speakers often need to provide reasons to support, explain, or justify their arguments. Developing the abilities to provide reasons in an explicit manner is considered an important component of second language learning. Such abilities, however, might not be fully developed by solely relying on classroom instruction, as the explicit focus of such instruction tends to be on learning the target grammar and vocabulary. One way to supplement classroom instruction is through study abroad programs in communities where the target language is spoken, given the accessibility to native speakers' speech and the extensive opportunities to learn how to explain reasons in the target language.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how Japanese learners of English develop the ability to explain reasons in conversation. In particular, this study examines how Japanese university students who enrolled in a six week study abroad program, use *because* before and after their participation in the program.<sup>1</sup> The following two research questions are addressed:

- 1 Is there any difference in the use of *because* by native English speakers and Japanese learners of English before studying abroad? If there is, how do they differ?
- 2 Is there any change in the Japanese learners before and after studying abroad? If there is, how do the learners change?

The organization of the paper is as follows: Section 2 provides a brief overview of how *because* is used in conversation; Section 3 describes the participants, data sets, and procedure used in the study; Section 4 shows the results; and Section 5 concludes the study.

## 2. Previous studies

### 2.1 *Because*

Syntactically, *because* is a subordinate conjunction that links a main clause and a subordinate clause. *Because* and the following subordinate clause might be preceded by a main clause as illustrated in (1), or they might precede a main clause, as shown in (2) (Quirk et al., 1985).

(1) Raven didn't leave the party early because Carol was there.

(2) Because Carol was there, Raven didn't leave the party early.

According to Schiffrin (1987), *because* is a linguistic device used when stating a reason for something. Although other expressions like *as*, *for*, and *since* may also be used in a similar way, *because* is the most frequent and common both in written and spoken discourse (Biber et al., 1999).

In conversation, *because* might appear without an explicit main clause. A typical example of such a case would be found in a question and answer sequence, i.e., an adjacency pair (Quirk et al., 1985; for adjacency pairs, see Sacks et al., 1974).

(3)

A: Why did he do it?

→ B: *Because* he was angry.

### 2.2 Japanese learners' use of *because*

Kobayashi (2009) focuses on the Japanese learners' use of *because*. Using a cross-sectional, quantitative research design, he examines learners' errors in the writing samples of junior high school, high school, and college students. The results indicate that the older groups tend to make fewer errors.

According to Kobayashi (2009), Japanese learners begin to use *because* at an early stage of learning, and it takes (at least) several years for the learners to develop their skills to provide reasons with it. However, no longitudinal study exists that tests their developmental process. In addition, little is known about how they actually use *because* in conversation. This study adopts a longitudinal research design, collecting data from the same learners' group at two different points of time to examine their usage of *because* in face-to-face conversation.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Participants

The participants of this research were twenty-seven female Japanese learners of English who enrolled in a summer abroad program.<sup>2</sup> The learners lived with English-speaking families in either

Australia or New Zealand for approximately six weeks, and received twenty-five hours of language instruction per week.

The learners were all native Japanese speakers from monolingual households, and they did not speak English on a regular basis outside of a classroom setting. The mean score of the learners' TOEIC® test was 623.15 (SD 91.19).

### 3.2 Data

This study used three sets of data: two from a single group of Japanese learners and one from a spoken corpus of native speakers of English.

#### 3.2.1 The Japanese learners' data

Dyads between the Japanese learners and native speakers of English were recorded six weeks before departing for, and six weeks after returning from the study abroad program. Each learner had a face-to-face conversation with a native English speaker for approximately twenty minutes in each recording session. They were asked to give a brief self-introduction at the beginning of a conversation but were not given any specific conversation topics to cover or roles to play. This implies that the learners' data represents a semi-spontaneous conversation with a native speaker with whom they were not acquainted.<sup>3</sup> All of the dyads were recorded using IC recorders and transcribed (See Appendix A for Transcription Conventions.)

#### 3.2.2 The native speakers' data

To better understand how the Japanese learners used *because*, it seemed essential to compare their usage with that of native English speakers. For the comparison, native speakers' data were also collected from dyads in *the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English*. From among the various types of spoken data in the corpus, eighteen sets of face-to-face conversation between British English speakers in their twenties or above and from different occupational backgrounds (including university students) were selected. From each data set, the first two hundred lines were extracted for the analysis.

Table 1 shows the basic statistics of the data used in this study.

**Table 1 Conversation data**

	Japanese Learners		Native Speakers
	BEFORE	AFTER	
Number of speakers	27	27	36
Hours of conversation	9	9	-
Number of words	20,433	30,326	28,506

### 3.3 Procedure

All the usages of *because* in the three data sets were extracted using computer programs.<sup>4</sup> This study first compared the native speakers' use with the Japanese learners' use of *because* before the study abroad program. Then, the learner group's usage of *because* after completion of the program was examined.

The following four factors were examined: (i) frequency of *because*, (ii) positions that *because* occupied in conversation, (iii) expressions that co-occurred with *because*, and (iv) discourse structure(s) in which *because* played a significant role.

The results comprise descriptions of quantitative followed by a qualitative description of excerpts. The statistical significance was not tested because of the skewness of the relatively small sample size.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Japanese learners before studying abroad vs. the native speakers

A comparison between the learners before studying abroad and the native speaker corpus showed that the learners differed from the native speakers with respect to (i) frequency, (ii) positions in interaction, and (iii) co-occurring expressions. As for (iv) discourse structure, a similar pattern was observed. Subsections 4.1.1 through 4.1.4 describe the observed differences and similarity in detail.

#### 4.1.1 Frequency

Before studying abroad, the learners used *because* less frequently than the native English speakers. The normalized frequency (per 1,000) for the learners was 1.42, while that for the native speakers was 2.17.

#### 4.1.2 Positions in interaction

Prior to the study abroad program, the learners often used *because* in their responses to the questions that began with "why" or some prompts such as "because?" From among all the instances of *because* in the learners' data, 31.0 % of their use of *because* appeared in the initial position of the answers to reason-seeking questions/prompts. On the other hand, the ratio was only 1.61 % for the native speakers. Except 1 is an example of how a learner, Yuki, initiated her answer with *because*.

Excerpt 1 [Meeting people from different cultures]

Yuki: I I u uh it's very fun time. n: fun.

Chuck: Because?

→ Yuki: *Because?* n: I can know other kan cultures? n: i: n: and each other.

Yuki, who asserted that it was amusing to get to know people from other countries, was asked by Chuck to explain why she thought so. In response to Chuck's "because?" prompt, she began her answer with *because*.

#### 4.1.3 Co-occurring expressions

The learners showed a great tendency to use fillers, to repeat, to self-repair what they had just said and to pause when they used *because*. The ratio of the learner group's co-occurrences with such expressions (including unfilled pauses) far exceeded that of the native speaker group (68.97 % vs. 22.58 %).

Excerpt 2, given below, illustrates how a learner's *because* was likely to co-occur with such expressions.

Excerpt 2 [How Mami's parents feel about her going abroad]

Bob: Are your parents worried.

Mami: Not.

Bob: No?

Mami: No.

Bob: Why not.

→ Mami: *Because* I n: *because* I hm *because* hm *nandaro* (2) I I'm acquainted.

Bob: Mm hm, acquainted.

Mami: Maybe? Acquainted? [nareteru]

Bob: [Mm hm]

Mami: I can (4) n:? acq nareterukara.

Bob: Right. So you mean they are not worried because you are, capable?

Mami: Yes ((laugh))

In response to Bob's question, Mami replied that her parents were not worried at all. Bob's following request for a clarification, "why not," invited her answer. Here again, *because* is placed at the initial position of the answer part of a question-and-answer pair. In Mami's answer, *because* was followed by various fillers (e.g., *n:*, *nandaro*), repetitions (e.g., *because*, *acquainted*), and pauses that

were over two seconds long.

#### 4.1.4 Discourse structure

The learners and native speakers showed a similar structure in their discourse. They first provided a statement, added the reason(s) using *because*, and then returned to the previous statement using *so* or *therefore*. A schematic diagram of the discourse structure is shown in Figure 1.

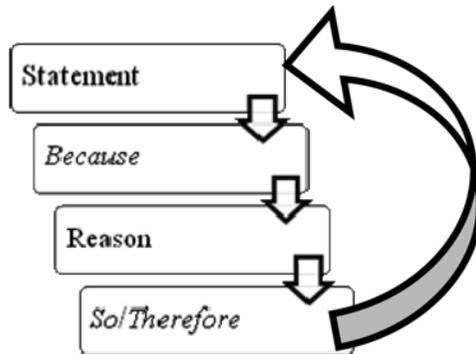


Figure 1 Discourse structure containing *because*

Excerpts 3 and 4 are examples of the discourse structure schematized above. Excerpt 3 illustrates how a learner, Akane, constructed her argument using *because* and *so*.

#### Excerpt 3 [Choosing a major]

Akane: an: I I will major in English.

Chuck: Okay.

Akane: But I haven't decided yet.

STATEMENT

Chuck: I see =

→ Akane: = *Because* (1) etto (1) *because* we we  
will decide (1) on (3) July a July ? or

*because* +  
REASON

Chuck: Mm

Akane: Or August. And we have we will began to studying the major

Chuck: I see.

Akane: Courses?

Chuck: Sure.

Akane: etto at the (2) last semester in this year.

Chuck: I see, sure.

→ Akane: *So* we haven't decided.

*so* +  
STATEMENT

Although Akane made it explicit that she was going to major in English, she withdrew what she had just said. The reason she provided for her uncertainty was the fact that she still had time to consider her decision until the fall semester began; she then used *so* to complete her explanation, restating that her major had yet to be determined.

A similar discourse structure was observed in the native speaker group. For example, Excerpt 4 illustrates how a native speaker (referred to as ES) organized his discourse.

Excerpt 4 [The marriage of some friends]

<p>ES: One of two uh got married one or two          → <i>because</i> their wives or future wives were          → expecting babies and <i>so</i> they they'd got to get married.</p>	<p>STATEMENT  <i>because</i> + REASON  <i>so</i> + STATEMENT</p>
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The speaker first stated that a few of his friends were already married and then placed *because* in the phase to explain the reason for their marriage. This explanation is tangential to the ongoing topic. To end the digression, he used *so* to return to the previous point that his friends were already married.

#### 4.2. The Japanese learners before studying abroad vs. after studying abroad

The learners' usage of *because* before studying abroad was compared with that after studying abroad. The before-after comparison showed that they had acquired a more native-like use of *because* after the program in terms of (i) frequency, (ii) positions in interaction, and (iii) co-occurring expressions. The details of their development are explored in 4.2.1, 4.2.2, and 4.2.3 respectively.

##### 4.2.1 Frequency

The learners began using *because* more frequently after studying abroad. The normalized frequency per 1,000 rose from 1.42 to 2.17 (See Figure 2).

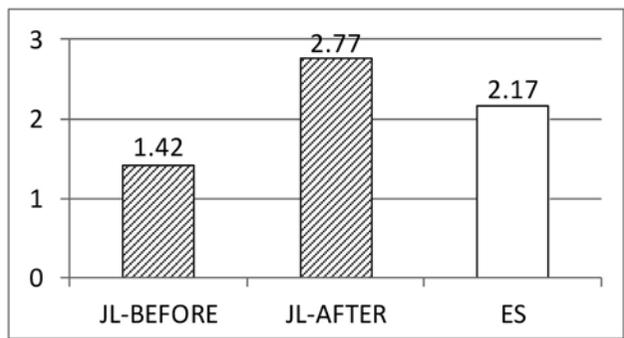


Figure 2 Normalized frequency (per 1,000)

#### 4.2.2 Positions in interaction

After studying abroad, the learners were less likely to use *because* in the initial position of an answer. The decrease after their sojourn is evident in Figure 3.

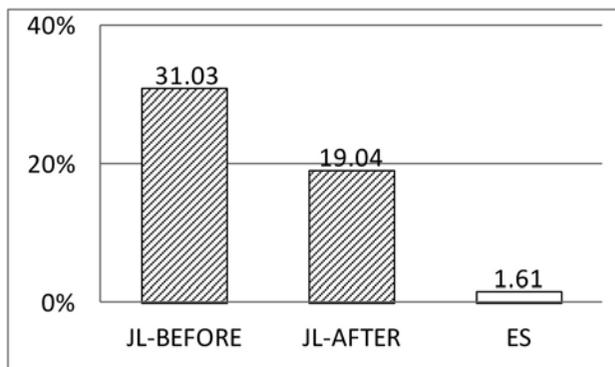


Figure 3 The use of *because* in the initial position of answer

Excerpt 5 illustrates how a learner, Yuki, came to respond to a question after her stay in Australia. *Because* appears in her answer, but not in the initial position.

#### Excerpt 5 [How did Yuki like Australia]

Bob: Would you be interested in living in Australia. [For a long time.]

Yuki: [Yeah: n: ]

→ I like Australia *because* mm they are very n: uh a lot of kinds of fruits?

Bob: Yes.

Yuki: Or vegetables, and so I like their food.

Bob asked Yuki if she would like to live the country for a longer time. She immediately replied “yeah.” Although she was not asked to provide reasons for her response, she stated a reason using *because*. By supplying reasons without any request to do so, she successfully continued and expanded the conversation.

#### 4.2.3 Co-occurring expressions

After studying abroad, the learners were less likely to use fillers, repetitions, self-repairs, or pauses when they used *because*. Although the ratio of the co-occurrences with such expressions (including pauses) was still higher than that of the native speakers, it showed a considerable decrease from 68.97 % to 45.24 % (See Figure 4).

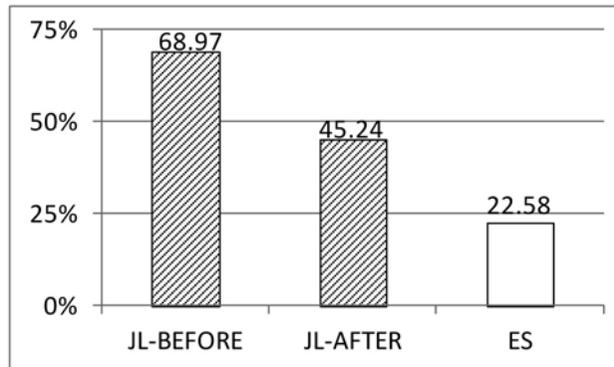


Figure 4 Co-occurrences with fillers, repetitions, self-repairs, and pauses

Excerpt 6 [Revisiting Australia]

Brian: Do you wanna go back?

Mami: Ye:s

Brian: Okay.

Mami: Maybe next summer.

Brian: Oh really.

→ Mami: *Because* I have a friend. I make a friend with Australian.

Mami, who also visited in Australia, was asked by Brian if she would want to return to Australia in the future. She immediately replied “ye:s.” Although she was not asked to specify when the revisit would be, she told him that it would be the next summer. Then, she used *because* to provide a rational explanation for her revisit. Before studying abroad, Mami’s reasoning contained fillers, repetitions, and pauses (see Excerpt 2 in Section 4.1.3); however, here, no such expressions or elements are observed.

5. Summary and conclusion

The present study has examined the usage of *because* by Japanese learners of English, who enrolled in a six-week study abroad program in Australia/New Zealand. It has investigated the following research questions: (1) Is there any difference in the use of *because* by native English speakers and Japanese learners of English before studying abroad? If there is, how do they differ? and (2) Is there any change in the Japanese learners before and after studying abroad? If there is, how do the learners change?

The results suggest that a six-week study abroad program helped the learners develop their

ability to provide reasons using *because*. The findings detailed in Section 4.1 show that before their participation in the program, the learners used *because* less frequently, despite the fact that they learned how to construct discourse with *because*. They did use *because*, but it was owing to the fact that they were asked to provide reasons; that is, the learners' reasoning was not always a spontaneous one. The results also suggest that the learners were not fluent when they provided reasons using *because* and that they tended to include fillers, repetitions, self-repairs, as well as unfilled pauses.

The before-after comparison given in Section 4.2 show that after studying abroad, the learners came to exploit *because* in a more native-like manner. Their spontaneity and fluency increased. These empirical findings suggest that the learners first learned how to organize their discourse using *because* and then learned how to provide reasons more fluently without any prompts from other speakers.

## Notes

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 26th Annual Conference of The Japanese Association of Sociolinguistic Sciences held on September 4-5, 2010, at Osaka University. I would like to thank the audience for their valuable comments and suggestions.

- <sup>1</sup> *Because* is sometimes shortened to "cause" or "cos" in conversation. Although these variants might have some functions that *because* does not have (Stenström, 1998), they have not been eliminated in this study.
- <sup>2</sup> The study abroad program participants might be unique as a research sample (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). For example, they might have stronger motivation toward English learning and positive attitudes toward the language, taking risks of living abroad and interacting with native speakers.
- <sup>3</sup> The native speakers, who participated in this study as conversation partners to learners, were all males in their 30's to 40's and professionals in secondary education for English speaking children.
- <sup>4</sup> AntConc 3.1.3 and the Search function of Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup> were used.

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## Appendix

### A Transcription Conventions (Adapted from Jefferson, 1979)

- ? rising intonation  
 . falling intonation  
 , continuing intonation  
 : extension of the sound or syllable it follows  
 (#) timed pause  
 [ ] simultaneous or overlapping utterance  
 = latching  
 (( )) detail of the conversational scene, various characterizations of the talk or transcriber's comment (e.g., laughter)  
 [ ] conversation topic

### B Basic statistics of the use of *because* in the data

	Japanese learners		ES
	BEFORE	AFTER	
Number of tokens of <i>because</i>	29	84	62
Number of speakers who used <i>because</i>	14	22	27
Number of tokens in the initial part of an answer	9	16	1
Number of tokens co-occurring with fillers, repetitions, or pauses	20	38	14

