

Variations of Responses to Negative Yes/No Questions in English

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1. Introduction

Japanese learners of English often respond incorrectly to English negative yes/no questions because English grammar rules are different than Japanese grammar rules. Negative yes/no questions in English are usually answered with either “yes” or “no” depending on the correctness of the proposition, but in Japanese, the respondent usually answers by saying “yes” (hai) or “no” (iie) as an answer to the presupposition, not the proposition.

Since English negative yes/no questions have a complicated function, there have been many studies done on negative yes/no questions (Ladd 1981, Romeo & Han 2004, Watanabe 2009). However, there have been very few studies on the way of answering negative yes/no questions (Bald 1980, Büring and Gunlogson 2000, Clancy 2008). It is especially rare to find research which has analyzed irregular responses to negative yes/no questions by English native speakers.

My research question is whether native speakers of English make mistakes when answering negative yes/no questions which seem structurally complicated (Takahara, 2003a, p. 281) to Japanese learners of English. In this paper, I will attempt to show that such irregular responses often occur in authentic daily conversation, and I will investigate the meaning of these responses, why this phenomenon happens, what the function is, how native English speakers recognize this phenomenon in their daily conversation, and how much influence society has on the way people communicate in the English language. In this study, negative yes/no questions and the responses to these questions which do not follow the prescriptive grammatical rules will be thoroughly examined and analyzed from the viewpoint of communication

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review the results of previous studies about negative questions and answers, in addition to studies about the communicative aspects of negative questions.

In communicative grammar, Leech and Svartvik (1998) compared declarative and interrogative sentences and analyzed yes/no questions from the perspective of communications. They found that responses are caused by both declarative and interrogative sentences in conversation, and the responses give the speaker the information that they need (p. 184). For a yes/no question, only one of two answers is possible, an affirmation or a

negation (p. 185).

Machida (2010) examined multiple ways to answer negative sentences in English. He pointed out that the issue is not simply a conflict between a negative sentence and a positive sentence. According to Machida, a negative sentence exists as an expression that shows that the situation described in a positive sentence is assumed to be false. Therefore, negation is an act of denial that denies the entire situation or condition (p. 18).

Terakado and Sato (2008) argued that usually an expected situation is expressed as an affirmative sentence, and a negative sentence appears only when an unusual situation arises. An affirmative sentence usually expresses the way things are or the way that things exist in a normal situation. However, negation is not merely the opposite of affirmation because all judgments in language are subject to value judgments, and affirmation and negation in language are fundamentally dependent on the value judgments of the speaker (p. 97).

Horn (1989) and Takahara (2003a) referred to the function of negation. A negative yes/no question has a complicated function that is interpreted semantically due to other words in the context (p. 281).

Murata and Narita (1996) argued that the function of negative questions is not neutral. Instead, negative questions are always either positively biased or negatively biased. When a negative yes/no question has a positive bias, the speaker believes or at least expects that a positive answer is correct. On the other hand, when a negative yes/no question has a negative bias, the speaker believes or at least expects that a negative answer is correct. For example, the following three sentences have a negative bias because the interrogators of these questions expect that the responses will be negative (p. 7 - 8).

- (1) Don't you believe me?
- (2) Can't you drive straight?
- (3) Hasn't the train left yet? [p. 7 - 8]

A negative bias occurs when the speaker faces a situation in which he/she expects an affirmative answer, but it is not given. For example, if a person had a very doubtful expression on his/her face, the other person might say (1) above. This utterance can be interpreted as "I thought that you believed me." This kind of question indicates the interrogator's surprise, disappointment, or confusion (p. 8).

Romeo and Han (2004) claimed that in English yes/no questions, there is an interpretational difference which is correlated with "preposed" and "non-preposed" negation. "Preposed" negation in yes/no questions means that the question has a positive bias and "non-preposed" negative means that the question has a negative bias (p. 609). For example, if a speaker says "Doesn't John drink?," the speaker believes or at least expects that John drinks, so this question is a preposed question because it has a positive bias. On the other hand, the question "Does John not drink?" is a non-preposed question (i.e., it has a negative

bias) because the question asks whether or not John is a teetotaler.

Kamio and Takami (1998) referred to negative questions as one of three special features of English utterance style. The “territory theory” states that manifestation of territory is found in human language (p. 3). For example:

- (4) a. That lady is my mother.
- b. Isn't that lady your mother?
- c. You went to Okinawa last summer.

Sentence (4)a only consist of the information that the speaker knows, but (4)b consist of information that both the speaker and the listener share. On the other hand, (4)c consists of information that only the listener knows. According to Kamio and Takami, information belongs to the speaker's and/or the listener's “territory.” because the interrogators of these questions expect that the responses will be negative. They claimed that in negative English questions, the extent of “territory” differs between the speaker and the listener.

Kamio (1979) argued that the territory theory has an important element in irregular responses for negative yes/no questions because in English grammar, fundamentally, when a question is answered with “yes,” it means “correct,” while “no” means “incorrect.” When the territory is shared by the interrogator and the respondent, the respondent who agrees with the content of the proposition responds “yes” to show his/her agreement about whether the proposition is correct or incorrect. In other words, it sometimes happens that the respondent is affected by the interrogator's intent and knowledge because they have common information and the respondent already knows the truth of the proposition when the interrogator asks with a form of a negative question. The samples found in my data corpora may include irregular responses that are explainable in accordance with the territory theory (p. 213-231).

Watanabe (2009) argued that unlike affirmative yes/no questions, a negative yes/no question is never a neutral question (p. 21). He referred to the implication of answers to negative questions, and he contrasts Japanese and English as to the forms of answers to negative questions. English negative questions, whether positively or negatively biased, elicit constant patterns. “Yes” always introduces a positive statement, and “no” always introduces a negative statement. However, negative Japanese questions with a negative bias elicit answers of the reverse pattern. In Japanese, “yes” introduces a negative statement and “no” introduces a positive statement. In English, answers to negative questions are determined based solely on what is being asked. However, in Japanese, answers to negative questions are determined based on whether the proposition behind the question is either affirmative or negative, depending on whether the negative question is positively biased or negatively biased (p. 22).

Koyama (2002) confirms this difference in the responses between English and Japanese negative questions (p. 59). He describes how in Japanese, use of *hai* and *ie* is more complex

than in English, as illustrated below:

(5)a. Don't you think he is a genius?

Yes, I do. / No, I don't.

b. kare wa tensaida to omoimasennka?

hai, sou omoimasu / iie, sou wa omoimasen [p. 59]

Terakado and Sato (2008) studied the differences between Japanese, English, and German in the way of responding to negative yes/no questions. They concluded that the differences originate from the speaker's situational assessment, which becomes a presupposition when a negative question is addressed. Affirmative interrogatives are the same in English and Japanese, but for negative yes/no questions, the difference is that in Japanese, when a question is constructed, there is no presupposition that the expected response will be affirmative (p. 89).

When a primary sentence is a negative sentence, such as (6), a negative interrogative is implied, as in (7). However, if a primary sentence is affirmative, as in (8), the implied interrogative is affirmative, as in (9). Even though both affirmative and negative interrogatives can be neutral expressions, the interrogator is likely to expect an affirmative answer when he/she chooses an affirmative interrogative, while he/she is likely to expect a negative answer when he/she chooses a negative interrogative.

(6) You didn't finish your homework.

(7) Didn't you finish homework?

(8) You finished your homework.

(9) Did you finish your homework?

(10) Haven't you finished your homework yet?

If what is being asked is whether the respondent's homework is finished or not, an affirmative interrogative is normally used, as in (9). However, if an interrogator assumes that the homework has probably not been finished, a negative interrogative is used, as in (10). In Japanese, interrogatives are neutral so that they do not imply whether they are affirmative or negative. In Japanese, the respondent is expected to respond affirmatively when being asked an affirmative question, and to respond negatively when being asked a negative question.

In research by Yoshikuni (2005) about incorrect answers to negative questions from the perspective of educational psychology, he mentioned a point made by Yasui (1996) that Japanese learners of English often give incorrect answers when responding to English negative questions, and these errors are caused by influence from their native language. Since these incorrect answers convey intentions that are the opposite of the correct answers, these errors can cause significant mutual misunderstandings (p. 52).

Clancy (2002) claimed that second language learners of English find negative questions

difficult to understand and teachers find them equally difficult to teach in the classroom. The reason why Japanese students of English find negative questions difficult to understand is that they do not understand the function of such questions. Negative questions are often delivered in stimulus-response situations. The function of negative questions is often a means of expressing surprise or disbelief. As function is often neglected in textbooks that are currently offered on the market, it is up to the individual teachers to develop their own materials and props. As a result, most Japanese university students still make mistakes when answering negative questions (p. 88 - 90).

Nakano (1994) conducted research on negative questions from an English-Japanese translation viewpoint and explained the responses to those questions by comparing them in both languages. He said that English "yes" and Japanese *hai* are affirmative answers and "no" and *ie* are negative answers, but the responses reverse when answering negative questions. For example, if the word "no" is the answer to a negative English question, it is often translated into Japanese using affirmative words such as *ee* and *un*, so that the translation will flow more naturally for Japanese readers (p.105-110). Nakano points out that Soseki Natsume (1867 -1916), a famous Japanese novelist, occasionally purposely made characters in his novels respond to negative questions following English grammar (Natsume, 1969).

Kodani (2002) investigated through drama how questions and answers are performed in dialogs. He found that negative questions have two kinds of usages: one is to confirm the affirmative concept ("yes" is expected) and the other is to confirm a negative concept ("no" is expected). It is clear which usage is used according to the context and its situation. The answer is "yes" if the respondent approves of the proposition, and the answer is "no" if he/she is opposed to the proposition (p. 188 - 189).

Milroy (1998) stated that according to descriptive grammar, a "grammatical sentence" means that it follows the rules of the language as it is used by native speakers. These rules are followed unconsciously and native speakers usually do not make mistakes (p. 98). This unconscious knowledge of a set of rules which allows native speakers to produce grammatical sentences and to distinguish grammatical from ungrammatical sentences can be described as a "mental grammar." (p. 99)

Milroy concluded that so-called "bad grammar" is a cover term to describe a number of different kinds of English expressions. Some are widely used by educated speakers and writers, but are excluded from traditional prescriptions. All are perfectly grammatical, providing evidence of a complex body of rules which constitute mental grammar, the unconscious knowledge which speakers have of their own language. In comparison, the prescriptions which are recommended as "good grammar" are revealed as at best marginal, and frequently as unrealistic and trivial (p. 101). As Milroy concluded, "Bad grammar is a cover term to describe a number of different kinds of English expressions." This conclusion leads us further into a consideration of irregular responses in negative yes/no questions.

Bald (1980) investigated the functions which "yes" and "no" have as responses in English

conversations, what they mean, and the correlations with intonation. Bald found that with the exception of one type of context, and as long as the choice of intonation does not counteract it, “yes” and “no” signal agreement and disagreement, respectively, in all of the instances that they examined (p. 190). He explained that the most neutral context calling for a response is a yes/no question. However, negative yes/no questions usually imply surprise or disbelief (p.191).

Also, Bald found a tendency that “yes” responses occur far more frequently than “no” responses. One reason is that there is a preponderance of positive statements in his data and “yes” usually tends to occur after positive statements. But another factor is represented by the type of text. For example, an interview situation prompts the interviewee to agree rather than disagree with the interviewer (p. 190).

3. Investigation

In order to collect data for this research, three corpora were used: the British National Corpus, Wordbanks Online, and the Larry King Live corpus. In addition, irregular responses were researched in materials obtained in daily life such as textbooks, novels, movies, and TV programs. By analyzing examples from these sources, I attempted to prove that there are instances where the responses of native English speakers to negative yes/no questions in natural conversations are grammatically irregular or incorrect.

4. Results and Analyses

It was verified that various patterns which do not comply with standard English grammar rules often appear in authentic English communication. I found nine examples from several corpora in which English native speakers responded when negative yes/no questions were asked.

First, in Dialogue 1 below, the respondent answered “Yeah” as an affirmative answer. However, grammatically, the respondent should have answered “No” or “No, it wasn’t” as a negative answer. Thus, this is an irregular answer within the conversation.

1. “...and then this, this, the phone went and I picked it up and this squeaky voice at the end of the phone said ... I thought who the Hell’s that.” “Wasn’t that me?”
“Yeah, that’s Jane.” [BNC #322]

In the question “Wasn’t that me?,” the interrogator is trying to confirm that it was not the interrogator himself/herself because the respondent was able to infer who the actual caller was. The situation is that the respondent already knew who the caller was, so it is obvious from the context that the respondent’s answer is negative.

English negative yes/no questions usually cause the respondent to answer “yes” or “no” about the proposition grammatically. In the case of 1 above, the proposition was “That was

me.” However, the function of negative questions is not neutral. Instead, the presupposition always has a degree of bias in the direction of affirmation or negation (Murata & Narita, 1996, p. 7). “Yeah” is an informal word for yes (Leech & Svartvik, 1977, p. 189).

It was thought that the respondent who already has the information of “that was not me” and who also senses the negative bias in the interrogator’s sentence, would have agreed with the fact “that was not me.” In other words, although grammatically correct, this is an irregular response from the English grammatical point of view.

We will now apply the territory theory to this case. We can assume that both the interrogator and the respondent have almost the same information about the proposition. According to the territory theory, information belongs to the territory of both the speaker and the listener, and in negative questions, the extent differs from the speaker to the listener (Kamio & Takami, 1998, p.4). Thus, in this situation, the respondent has sufficient information as to “who the Hell’s that.” On the other hand, the interrogator has the information of “that was not me.” But this is not a confirmed fact, so the interrogator would like to confirm “that was not me.”

The interrogator asked about the information of “I don’t think that it was me” by using the negative question “Wasn’t it me?” with an implied wish for confirmation of the information with a negative bias. So the respondent agreed with the interrogator’s presupposition, including the negative bias.

2. “This is a job, if I don’t lose it, feeding my dog beans one at a time.” “Won’t it bubby?” “Yeah, I ain’t, I ain’t done any work here. [BNC #2941]

In Dialogue 2, the respondent should answer “No” in order for the phrase that follows (“I ain’t”) to be grammatically correct. However, the respondent answered “Yeah, I ain’t,” which is an affirmation followed by a negation. Therefore, the response “Yeah, I ain’t” is not grammatically correct. From the point of view of communicative grammar, “won’t” has an intent of negation because it includes the meaning of refusal (Leech & Svartvik, 1977, P. 250). Thus, the respondent’s “yeah” means that the respondent agreed with the presupposition of the interrogator with a strong negative bias when the respondent recognized that the question has a negative bias in the interrogator’s presupposition.

3. “... and bring it all down and get one of these for your bedroom and keep it all in ... started your homework yet, Lee?” “What?” “Started your homework yet?” “No.” “Didn’t you do it while I was out?” “Yeah, when you come in.” [BNC #365]

In the case of Dialogue 3, the context implies that the response “Yeah, when you come in” means “no” even though the respondent responded with the positive word “yeah.” In addition, although the respondent was asked in the past tense “Didn’t you do it while I was out?,” the

respondent answered in the present tense, which is grammatically incorrect. Since the respondent has not finished his/her homework yet, the situation caused the respondent to be uncertain as to whether he/she should answer “yes” or “no.” In this situation, the respondent wanted to evade the question to avoid being scolded. The interrogator used a negative question to give the presupposition that the homework should have been done. The negative question shows that the expectation of the presupposition was true (Terakado & Sato, 2008, p. 85).

4. “Princess Diana and Prince Charles were married.” “Right, so then you’d guess that” “It was Saint Paul’s Cathedral.” “Right I ... I’ve taken one of the more obvious ones.” “You needn’t do that.” “Yeah, yeah, no.” [BNC #21]

In Dialogue 4, since the sentence “You needn’t do that” has no question mark, it seems that this is not a question. However, this sentence is understood to be a declarative negative yes/no question in this conversation because the respondent answered “Yeah, yeah, no,” which means that the respondent first answered “Yeah, yeah” as agreement with the interrogator’s statement, and then answered “No” as his/her real intention. When declarative questions are used with negation, “no” is expected (Leech & Svartvik, 1977, p. 184). Therefore, the respondent perceived a negative bias from this question.

5. “Er, he’s not gonna give it to you twice, though is he, cos I don’t reckon he would give it to you twice.” “What?” “Don’t you reckon?” “No he could, but he’s not gonna want to.” [BNC #78]

In Dialogue 5, although the response “No” should grammatically be followed by a negative sentence, in this example, it is followed by an affirmative sentence. If “Don’t you reckon? (which means “Don’t you think so?”) was asked about the statement “I don’t reckon he would give it to you twice” (i.e., “I don’t think he would have given it to you twice”), the grammatically correct response should have been “Yes, I do. (i.e., “I think so”) or “No, I don’t. (i.e., “I don’t think so.”) If the respondent responded to the proposition “He would have given it to you twice”, he/she should have answered “Yes he would” or “No, he wouldn’t.” However, the respondent answered “No” because he/she does not agree with “Don’t you reckon?” Then the respondent said “He could” to express agreement about the proposition “He would have given it to you twice.”

Imai and Nakajima (1978) explained from a pragmatic point of view that if a word or a phrase has contrastive stress and is focused on in yes/no questions, responses are formed by repeating the same word or phrase (p. 84). Contrastive stress cannot be determined because the sound sources were not found. However, if we were to suppose that the phrase “he would” has contrastive stress and was focused on, then Dialogue 5 can be explained as a response

which is formed by repeating the phrase “he would” or by repeating with proper words that are placed after yes/no. However, there are two problems with this interpretation. First, the only question is “Don’t you reckon?” and the questioner’s presupposition is “You agree with what I don’t believe, that he would give it to you twice, don’t you?” (“Yes” is expected.) “No he could” is an unacceptable answer according to prescriptive grammar. The other problem is that the person who transcribed this script in BNC forgot to insert a comma or a period between the two words such as “No” and “he.” Perhaps the transcriber recognized the response “No he could,” as a set of words so bundled up together that he/she felt that there was no need for a comma or a period between “No” and “he.” Like 1, 3, and 4 above, many commas and periods were found in responses that enabled yes/no to be an independent word because the transcriber believed that yes/no should be recorded as an independent word and a response.

Let us now analyze the response “No.” The purpose of the sentence “Don’t you reckon” is to confirm an affirmation, and it has the equivalent meaning of the question “You agree with me that you don’t think he would give it to you twice, don’t you?” The expected answer is “Yes.” (Terakado & Sato, 2008, p. 82) The respondent responded to a negative bias in the interrogator’s presupposition because the respondent was asked “Don’t you reckon?” The answer was “No” because the respondent responded to the interrogator’s presupposition that included a negative bias. This situation often occurs in active conversation. The respondent responded not to the proposition but to the presupposition. This is very similar to the Japanese communication style.

6. John: I’ll be darned! We’ve run out of gas! Sally: And it’s dark and it’s snowing. No one’ll be coming along at this time of night. John: No. Tom’s coming to the party, so he’ll be coming this way. [Fukasawa, 2000]

Although Dialogue 6 has no question mark, when Sally said “No one’ll be coming along at this time of night,” it caused John to answer, so this sentence is similar to a negative yes/no question. “No” was the response, even though “Yes” would have been the grammatically correct answer. Because a question using the negative determiner “No” has a strong negative bias (Leech & Svartvik, 1998, p. 424), the respondent emphasized a strong negative bias by using the word “No.”

This is the same as Japanese rules, in which the respondent responds to the presupposition, so it is a deviation from English rules.

7. KING: When I’m awake. Fame. One other thing. Last question. Not many people can say that, that they walk down the street and everybody knows that face. HOPE: Yeah, it doesn’t help you. KING: It doesn’t? [LKL, June 1, 2003]

In this dialog, “Not many people can say that, that they walk down the street and everybody knows that face” is a question, even though it does not end in a question mark, because Larry King first said “last question.” From what the context indicates, the respondent should have answered “No,” but he/she answered “Yeah.” The question “Not many people can say that ...” is the form of question which emphasizes a negation (Leech & Svartvik, 1998, p. 230). It seems that the respondent does not respond to the proposition “Many people can say that everybody knows me” but to the negative statement “Not many people can say that ...,” and responded “Yeah” to mean “You are right.” This case is an instance in which the respondent responded to a negative statement instead of responding to the proposition. So in this case, it can be said that the response deviated from normal English grammar.

8. KING: We're back with the first lady. Weren't you quoted early on as saying you'd want to spend as much time in Crawford as possible? BUSH: Yes.
 KING: ... and they called you the quietest first lady since Bess Truman?
 BUSH: Well, I was not quoted as saying I wanted to spend as much time in Crawford as possible. [LKL, October 2, 2001]

In this dialog, the respondent denied the proposition “Weren't you quoted early on as saying you'd want to spend as much time in Crawford as possible” because of a sentence appearing later on that clearly denies the proposition made by the interrogator. However, the respondent responded “Yes.” What does the word “Yes” refer to in this case? The meaning of “Yes” in this dialog could have simply been a pause filler which served the function of saying “I am paying attention to you” (Leech & Svartvik, 1998, p. 24). Because the respondent was the First Lady of the United States at the time, she listened to the interrogator carefully, kept the basic rules of conversation and etiquette and maintained her dignity as the First Lady. Therefore, I think that she probably uttered “Yes” while back channeling calmly to indicate “I'm listening” or “Please go on” because Larry King sometimes throws tricky questions which put the respondents in trouble with negative information to reveal the respondent's real intention. I regret that no sound sources were obtained from this data. This “Yes” was probably pronounced with a high rising intonation, which means “Is it right?” or a low rising intonation, which means “Please continue talking” (Otaka, 1998, p. 189).

9. KING: Don't you -- in your heart, you want to win? WILKINSON: No. Well, I want to win, but it's a lottery and everybody knows it's a lottery, and who knows which name is going to come out of the hat. [LKL, June 1, 2003]

In Dialogue 9, the respondent showed clearly his/her real intention after answering “No.” He/she believed that it was not very likely that he/she would win. Therefore, the respondent answered “No” even though “Yes” would have corresponded with his/her real intention

because he/she had little confidence that he/she would win.

It was found that there were nine examples of conversations in which English native speakers did not respond according to the rules of English grammar. These examples from corpora and from a textbook make it clear that native speakers of English sometimes use sentences that do not follow prescriptive grammar rules when they answer negative questions in normal conversations. Therefore, the hypothesis “English native speakers respond to negative questions with sentences that are not grammatically correct in their conversations” has been demonstrated to be true. It was found that there are some English yes/no questions which were not answered with yes/no to the given proposition, but instead to the interrogator’s presupposition. This irregular method of responding to negative questions is similar to the Japanese method of responding.

The results of Dialogs 1 to 7 above show that irregular responses occurred when native speakers responded to negative yes/no questions which have a negative bias as a presupposition. Most cases of negative questions were questions that have an affirmative bias (Imai & Nakajima, 1978, p. 84 - 85). There were very few cases of negative questions that had a negative bias. A negative question with a negative bias can affect one’s value judgment. It seems that a negation expresses a lie, an inconsistency, an irony, or a falsehood, and affects a person’s emotions (Horn 1989, Takahara 2003a).

The way that people respond to negative questions in English is fundamentally different from that in Japanese (Leech & Svartvik, 1977, p. 187). However, many examples were found of English responses in which the respondent answered to an interrogator’s presupposition, which is similar to the Japanese way of answering negative questions.

In English, conversations consist of various rules which deviate from English grammar, and these rules are common rules which native speakers share (Milroy, 1998, p.98), even though these rules seem to be errors in term of prescriptive grammar.

I showed the above nine samples to English native speakers, and they asserted to me that these dialogs are not strange and the respondent responded to the interrogator’s presupposition. They understood naturally that the way to respond to English negative questions is not only to respond to the proposition, but also sometimes to respond to the interrogators’ presupposition, which is similar to the Japanese way of replying.

Milroy (1998) explained that the rules of mental grammar are obeyed naturally among adult English native speakers without their self-consciousness knowledge, even though these rules are not written in grammar books. Therefore, these results show that conversations among English native speakers cannot always be explained by the rules of prescriptive grammar. Instead, it is important for second language learners of English to learn grammar rules by observing natural conversations instead of memorizing prescriptive grammar rules (p. 98 - 99).

From these results, we can see that conversations by native English speakers cannot always be examined by prescriptive grammar rules. This is because native English speakers also consider people's thoughts, opinions, and situations when participating in a conversation.

5. Conclusion

In this study, we found nine examples of irregular responses among corpora of natural English conversations. By analyzing these irregular responses from the viewpoint of communication, many English negative yes/no questions were found which were answered with neither "yes" nor "no" to the given proposition, but instead, as an answer to the interrogator's presupposition. Also, it was revealed that irregular responses occurred when native speakers responded to negative yes/no questions which had a negative bias.

English negative yes/no questions never have a neutral presupposition. Instead, the presupposition of negative yes/no questions is always biased either affirmatively or negatively. The answer to negative English yes/no questions is usually an answer to the proposition, not to the presupposition. However, some responses were found in which the respondents answered to the interrogator's presupposition, which is similar to the Japanese way of responding to negative yes/no questions.

The interrogator's presupposition might semantically appear in the sentences. For example, questions with negative words such as "Haven't you done your homework yet?" have a negative bias (Leech & Svartvik, 1998, p. 187). However, in some cases, the interrogator's presupposition is not expressed directly and can only be determined from the context.

So it turns out that sometimes, Japanese and English are similar in terms of the way to respond to negative yes/no questions because English speakers may answer the interrogator's presupposition based on the interrogator's presupposition, although Japanese and English differ in whether or not the presupposition is semantically expressed.

Although these responses at first seem to be grammatical mistakes and irregular responses, they are the result of the respondents' adjustments that are made according to the interrogator's presupposition. It can be said that the interrogator's presupposition is "people's values" (Terakado & Sato, 2008, p. 97). In a natural conversation, the respondent's responses are affected by the interrogator's values. The capability of adjusting to value judgments while proceeding in a conversation is a communicational ability which is a common set of rules which adult native speakers have unconscious knowledge of.

A topic which I will conduct future research is the analysis of negative propositions. I also plan to include more data corpora, such as Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and movie transcripts. In addition, I plan to investigate the effects of politeness and pragmatics (e.g., locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts).

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