

A PHONOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE JAPANESE NUMBERS AND THE COUNTERS

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This research discusses about Japanese numbers and counters. There are Native Japanese numbers and Sino-Japanese numbers. When counting, numbers are attached with counters. Then, the pronunciation of the number and the counter is changed. The aim of this research is to find out, how pronunciation changes and whether it has a theoretical pattern to do so. There are different varieties of counters in Japanese language which Japanese second language speakers find it hard to understand the correct pronunciation. As an example, when counting using ‘hon’ counter, there are some numbers that sounded different to how they usually sound, for number 1, it’s i-ppon, not ‘ichi-hon’, for number 6, it’s ‘ro-ppon’, not ‘roku-hon, for number 3, it’s ‘san-bon’, not ‘san-hon’, only number 3 takes ‘bon’. Data were collected through a questionnaire and secondary sources. This research was conducted through using a dictionary of basic Japanese grammar by Seiichi Makino and Michio Tsutsui and referring useful websites. The results of this research shows that by learning the euphonic combinations / sandhi, Japanese second language speakers can achieve the pronunciation of Japanese numbers and counter terms correctly. The data analysis proved that, depending on the initial sound of a counter, the pronunciation of the number and the counter may change with the phonetic modification. Moreover, some counter categories were found as regular counter terms and some as irregular counter terms, with their pronunciation.

Key words: Japanese, numbers, counters, phonetics

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