

Usage of “と思う” and “と考える” in Opinion Sentences of Upper-Intermediate Japanese Learners

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This paper considers how upper-intermediate learners of Japanese tend to use “と思う” and “と考える”, and compares their usage with that of native speakers of Japanese.

It was found that Japanese learners use “と思う” twice as often as native speakers and rarely use “と考える”. And whereas native speakers tend to use “と思う” when expressing an opinion or insistence, learners tend to use it when expressing an opinion or guess. A native speaker’s opinion sentence has a pronounced tendency to use both “私は～と思う” and “私は～と考える”, either at the beginning or the end of the opinion sentence, but Japanese learners tend to use only “私は～と思う” and to use it over the whole sentence. In addition, native speakers rarely use “と思っている” but Japanese learners use it a lot when expressing opinion or insistence and thus produce many unnatural sentences. In order to improve the composition ability of Japanese intermediate and upper-intermediate learners, they should be made aware of the differences among these items in the second half of the elementary stage, as well as of the differences between the spoken and written language. By recognizing that expressions at sentence-ends change the meaning of the sentence significantly, the superfluous use of “と思う” by intermediate and upper-intermediate learners will be reduced.