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Teshome, Martin

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Make-causatives in Japanese EFL Learner English: A Corpus-based Study

TESHOME, Martin (Nippon Bunri University)

Abstract

Structural and semantic features of learners' L1 can affect L2 acquisition. This study examines and compares ICNALE data composed of language produced by Japanese EFL learners and native English speakers, focusing on make-causatives with various parts of speech to determine whether there are signs of L1 interference in its use by learners. Its findings suggest that learners are sensitive to the semantic features of the patient, such as animacy. Some findings also imply that Japanese EFL learners may conceptualise English make-causatives as describing a naturally occurring change of state rather than an agent-caused event. The study proposes analyses of causatives and *naru* constructions in Japanese and examining learning materials to determine whether the different findings are, indeed, due to L1 interference.

Keywords

Semantics, Cognitive Linguistics, Syntax, Interference

1. Introduction

Language learners' L1 can influence how they express themselves in their learnt language. These differences can stem from observable semantic, syntactic, cognitive, and other factors.

Indications of L1 interference in English produced by native Japanese speakers have been observed when examining the use of passive constructions (Teshome, 2023). Particularly, the use of the passive make-causative construction appears to differ largely between Japanese learners and native English speakers. This paper examines the use of the construction in more detail, putting forward the following research questions:

What are the differences in the use of the make-causative construction between Japanese EFL learners and native speakers? To what extent do these differences indicate that any semantic and syntactical features of Japanese causativisation interfere with learners' English production?

Section 2 outlines the theoretical framework for examining causatives in both languages and relevant previous research. Section 3 presents the data and method used for this study. Section 4 presents the results, and section 5 discusses them in more depth.

Section 6 concludes the paper. First, I will lay out the theory of causatives in both languages and research on L1 interference.

2. Theoretical Framework and Previous Research

This section shows various analyses of causativisation in Japanese and English. It also shows previous observations on make-causatives and research that indicates how syntactic, semantic, and cognitive factors can affect the perception of causativity and argument structure in a learnt language.

2.1. Causatives in Japanese and English

A common way of causative formation in Japanese is using the *(s)ase* morpheme. Shibatani describes the meaning of this construction as follows:

X causes Y to do Z by doing something.
(Shibatani, 1973, p. 329)

He gives the following example (Shibatani, 1973, p. 329, emphasis added):

(1) Tarō-ga Jirō-o hashir-*ase*-ta
Tarō-NOM Jirō-ACC run-CAUSE-PST
"Taro caused Jiro to run."

Ikegami (1981, p. 193) argues that there is a fundamental difference between English and Japanese causatives because, in English, they can be formed with the verbs "have" and "get" (as in "have someone do something" or "get someone to do something"). Although these verbs by themselves indicate reception, their causative use implies the action of an agent. The Japanese construction, conversely, retains the passive role expression, as shown in the following example (Ikegami, 1981, p. 192, emphasis added):

(2) Kondo-no sensō-dehutari-no musuko-o shin-*ase*-ta haha
This-DAT war-LOC two-DAT son-ACC die-CAUSE-PST mother
"mother whose two sons were killed in the war"

The mother in this sentence was not the cause of her two sons' deaths but was affected by them. Referring to Benedict (1946), Ikegami says that Japanese allows the affected person to be in the agent position (1981, p. 192).

Discussing causatives formed without the *(s)ase* morpheme, Tsujimura points out that English and Japanese resultative constructions have different structures, but the Japanese ones are "parallel to English in that the subject of the inchoative verb is the object of its causative counterpart" (1990, p. 282). For example, the causative *shimeru* and the inchoative *shimaru* can both be translated as "to close" into English, as in "the door closed" or "I closed the door." She says that while the verb forms are different in Japanese, the function of the sole argument in the inchoative is the same in both languages (Tsujimura, 1990, p. 282).

However, Yamaguchi (1998) points out a different sensitivity to the causative/inchoative alteration in Japanese and English depending on the animacy of the agent. She demonstrates it with the following example (1998, pp. 3-4):

(3) a. English:
The earthquake broke the vase.

b. Japanese

*Jishin-ga	kabin-o	kowashi-ta
Earthquake-NOM	vase-ACC	break-PST

The Japanese sentence is not acceptable due to the semantic value of the agent, its inanimacy, and the verb *kowasu* ("break") being a transitive change of state verb. It would be possible to express this event using an intransitive verb (*kowareru*, "break") with *de*, meaning "by" or "because of," as shown in (4) (Yamaguchi, 1998, p. 5).

(4)

Kabin-ga	(jishin-de)	koware-ta
vase- NOM	(earthquake-INST)	break-PST

"The vase broke as a result of/because of the earthquake."

Furthermore, while Tsujimura finds common syntactical features of the causative in both languages, Pylkkänen (1999) attributes the possible placement of the patient in the agent position in Japanese to a difference in argument structure. She says that the ability of Japanese causatives to take on two external arguments makes it possible for agentive verbs to causativise, which is not the case in English. She gives the following example (1999, p. 162):

(5) a. English
*John laughed Mary.

b. Japanese
Tarō-ga Hanako-o waraw-ase-ta
Taro-NOM Hanako-ACC laugh-CAUSE-PST
"Taro caused Hanako to laugh"

She also points to the ambiguity of adversative causatives in Japanese (cf. Ikegami's example in [2]), where the same participant can be interpreted as the agent causing an event or someone affected by it. For instance, the sentence in (6) can be understood in two ways (Pylkkänen, 1999, p. 165):

(6) Tarō-ga musuko-o korob-ase-ta.
Taro-NOM son-ACC fall.down-CAUSE-PST
(a) "Taro caused his son to fall down."
(b) "Taro was affected by his son falling down."

Regarding English causatives, Wierzbicka says that "[i]n English the causative *make*-construction implies either an unwillingness or that they are passive and submissive" (2006, p. 180-1). She gives the following examples to demonstrate these two types, respectively:

(7) a.
When we were small Mai used to make us kneel on graters for a thing like that. (Naipaul, 1969, p. 236)

b.
My wife made me go to the doctor. I was planning to go anyway, but I kept putting it off, so she rang and made an appointment for me. (Wierzbicka, 2006, p. 182).

Wierzbicka also describes the "X makes Y feel something" construction as X causing Y to do something involuntarily and, "presumably, […] triggered by something happening in the person's body" (2006, p. 181).

Minagawa points out that Japanese can represent an event that makes someone feel something as a natural occurrence using the verb *naru,* "to become," without mentioning

the agent. She gives the following example (Minagawa, 2016, p. 20):

(8) Munashi-ku nari-ma-su.
be.empty-CONJ become-POL-NPST
"(I) become empty and hopeless."

This construction may be used in situations where the English equivalent "[It] makes me feel…" would be suitable.

The verb *naru* has been prominent in discussions on event description. Japanese has been referred to as a language of "becoming" rather than "doing" compared to English, and the usage of the verb *naru* to express a change of state has been documented (Ikegami, 1981, p. 283; Ando, 2016, p. 256; Itasaka, 1971, p. 78). However, it appears that this verb's causative use ("X makes Y become Z") is represented less in literature, perhaps due to its infrequent use in Japanese. Ikegami argues that in languages such as English, this type of causative is formed in the order "X makes Z out of Y"→"X makes Y Z" and is, therefore, indicative of a preference for expressions of "doing" rather than "becoming" (Ikegami, 1981, p. 132).

These differences may affect how learners make these constructions in their learnt language. The following subsection presents previous research documenting such interference.

2.2. Research on L1 Interference

Interference can be described as one of the cognitive processes that affect language acquisition. Littlemore (2009, p. 33-34) points out that while L2 acquisition resembles L1 acquisition in that pattern-finding skills are involved, there are cognitive processes that distinguish the two acquisition types. L2 is acquired when the speaker has already learnt concepts and patterns in their L1. Referring to Ellis (2002, 2006a,b,c), Littlemore says that interference is a process through which memory traces entrenched through repeated activation in L1 interfere with the acquisition of new concepts and patterns in L2 (2009, p. 34).

Signs of such interference when examining passive use in Japanese EFL learners' English have been observed (Teshome, 2023). Particularly, the passive form "made" appears to be used differently from native-speaker English. The study showed a broader range of use of the verb's passive form by learners, possibly due to the overall wider use of the passive in Japanese. It also pointed to possible differences in make-causative use by Japanese EFL learners from that of native speakers, calling for an examination of

this type of structure.

L1 interference due to the syntactic restrictions of L1 and the learnt language has also been observed. Yamada and Miyamoto (2017) have researched the interpretation of null arguments in learners of Japanese whose native language is English and Spanish. They observed that because Spanish is a *pro-drop* language, its native speakers do not allow an ambiguous interpretation of a null argument in Japanese. Conversely, native speakers of English, a *non-pro drop* language, did not show such restrictions. Their study concludes that it is impossible for learners to delearn syntactic features such as argument structure, which can be a factor to consider when examining the acquisition of new structures in a learnt language.

Such differences in perception were also examined by Nakayama et al. (2019), who observed differences in how Japanese EFL learners identify antecedents of object-control sentences as opposed to subject-control sentences. In their study, it appeared easier for learners to identify the referent of a reflexive pronoun if it is the subject rather than the object of a clause. Their findings point to a different sensitivity to various elements of English argument structure, possibly carried over from the learners' L1.

The semantic value of argument components has also been observed to affect causative use. A different perception of transitives has been shown through semantic and syntactic testing. Huang et al. (2019) have observed that, compared to English speakers, Japanese speakers may show a weaker preference for an intransitive description of novel internally caused verbs, similar to "descend", as opposed to externally caused verbs, similar to "rock". Huang et al. attribute this to a possibly higher sensitivity to "semantic cues" that indicate "external events" (2019, p. 9). This influence of the semantic value of argument components may complement the observations by Yamaguchi (1998) presented above and were considered in this study.

The following section lays out the method and presents the data used to examine indications of L1 interference at a syntactic, semantic, and cognitive level.

3. Method and Data

This study used data from the International Corpus Network of Asian Learners of English (ICNALE), developed by Ishikawa (2023). The data is divided by CEFR level into the following categories: A2 (Waystage), B1_1 (Threshold: Lower), B1_2 (Threshold: Upper) and B2+ (Vantage or higher). All texts are writings and speeches on one of two topics: "It is important for college students to have a part-time job" and "Smoking should be completely banned at all the restaurants in the country."

The application AntConc, developed by Anthony (2022), was used for compilation,

using data from the speeches and writings of native English speakers and Japanese learners (rather than learners from all Asian countries included in the ICNALE). The resulting English native speaker (ENS) and Japanese learner (JPN) corpora contain 230,082 and 368,590 tokens and 7,739 and 7,097 types, respectively, meaning token-type ratios of 0.0336 and 0.0196.

The statistical significance of the difference between findings in each corpus was calculated using the *chi-squared test* (X^2) as suggested by Hoffman et al. (2008, pp. 80-86). According to Hoffman et al., critical values for X^2 are as follows: 3.841 (95% confidence, "minimum level of significance"), 6.635 (99% confidence, "better confidence in result") and 10.827 (99.9 % confidence, "widely accepted as 'almost certain'") (2008, p. 85). This evaluation assesses confidence that there is no statistical error and the result may be considered statistically significant rather than coincidental. To account for the differences in corpus size, the total number of tokens in each corpus was given in the "Corpus size" section of the calculation for each value on the X^2 calculation website.

Although statistical significance was calculated, this paper does not focus on quantitative corpus research. The approach is similar to a study conducted by Kawanishi and Iwasaki (2018), in which they compare spoken and written Japanese grammars. Like their study, this paper focuses on qualitative differences in the uses of a linguistic feature. The corpus serves as a relatively large resource to observe them, while statistical significance and the proportional differences between collocate types helped to determine the extent to which these differences may be accidental and which features to examine in more detail. Therefore, X^2 results will be presented and considered separately for each category rather than as contrastive statistical data.

Due to the structure of English causatives, I researched each form of "make" with personal pronouns (e.g., "makes me"), possessive pronouns (e.g., "made your"), and reflexive pronouns ("make myself").[1] A total was calculated of the occurrences of all forms of the verb "make" combined and various parts of speech as collocations. "Parts of speech" were classified according to the head of the phrase. This procedure divided them into three types of collocations:

a) noun phrases, "X makes Y Z", where Z is a noun
b) adjective phrases, "X makes Y Z", where Z is an adjective
c) verb phrases, "X makes Y do Z"

For instance, the combination "made me a much more mature and contributing member of society" was classified as a noun phrase collocation with "member" as its head.

This classification was followed by calculations of statistical significance, a qualitative examination of the results in context and a discussion of possible reasons for the differences.

4. Results

The total frequency of all three forms of the verb "make" was significantly higher in the JPN corpus ($X^2 = 15.97938$), as was the use with pronouns ($X^2 = 5.77114$), indicating that the difference is almost certainly not coincidental. Table 1 shows the total number of occurrences of "make," "makes," and "made" in total and with personal, possessive, and reflexive pronouns. Figure 1 shows the percentage of parts of speech that followed the make-causative. Table 2 shows the statistical significance of the number of occurrences of the word "make" used with pronouns a) compared to its total use and b) the distribution of its use across both corpora.

One structure was not included because its use by learners seems to stray from causativisation and is, therefore, beyond the scope of this study. The ENS corpus contained 10 examples of the form "making" used with the examined structures; the JPN corpus contained two. Both examples in the JPN corpus were somewhat unnatural ("making my friends" and "making their career"), suggesting they were used meaning "to create something" rather than as causatives. This learner usage may warrant further examination. However, the low number of occurrences, the different function of gerunds, and the focus of this study led me to exclude this form from the analysis.

Table 1

Number of occurrences of "make"

ENS		JPN	
Total	With pronouns	Total	With pronouns
504	118	*1,005*	139

Figure 1

Percentages of parts of speech as collocates with pronouns

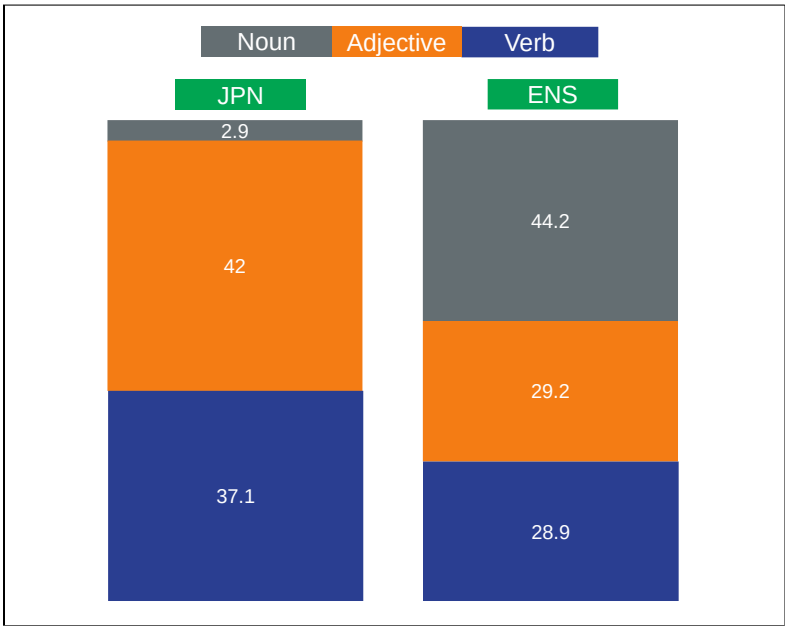

Table 2

Differences in frequency of make-causatives with pronouns by collocate part of speech

(a. percentage of all occurrences of "make" with pronouns, b. frequency in each corpus)

	No. of occurrences		Noun phrases	Adjective phrases		Verb phrases	
a. Percentage of "make"	ENS	29	X^2 = 30.06558 (ENS sig. higher)	49	X^2 = 18.58157 (JPN sig. higher)	75	X^2 = 6.47728 (JPN sig. higher)
	JPN	2		96		44	
b. Corpus total	ENS	29	X^2 = 37.50585 (ENS sig. higher)	49	X^2 = 1.13025 (not significant)	75	X^2 = 0.05410 (not significant)
	JPN	2		96		44	

4.1. Noun Phrases

Learners used noun phrases with all forms of the verb significantly less

than native speakers ($X^2 = 37.50585$, almost certain). The only two examples in the JPN corpus occur with the form "make" and are shown in Table 3a. The numbers in bold in each column represent the student ID of each speaker. This data was not available in the "Spoken dialogue" part of the corpus. Table 3b shows two random examples from the ENS corpus. (For brevity, Tables 3-5 show only randomly selected examples. However, all findings were examined during the study.) No examples were found with "us" in that corpus.

Table 3a "Make" with noun phrases - JPN corpus

186	bases will help them when they start to work and	make them	people who have depth of humanity. I think
248	us many important things, and I think that it can	make us	a good person, too. We are student now.

Table 3b "Make" with noun phrases - ENS corpus

093	fit into social clicks, avoid drugs and social rejection will	make them	a better person. If it is at all
103	job, we often spend our time with our coworkers and	make them	friends but many of these friends are not

The structures of the examples in both corpora are similar, indicating no unnatural use by learners. Both JPN corpus occurrences were produced in writing by learners at an A2 level, the lowest in the corpus, indicating that the significantly lower number of occurrences is not linked to the learners' level. Using the structure may not be difficult for learners; they only rarely choose to do so.

These findings may point to a possible obstacle when acquiring the structure "make X become Y" with probable links to Japanese being a language of "becoming." Following Ikegami's observation on the "make X become Y" structure, it could be suggested that expressions causing the change of a patient expressed by a noun phrase are a feature of English, a

language of “doing,” that entrenched Japanese structures may interfere with.

4.2. Adjective Phrases

Conversely to noun phrases, the learner corpus contains a statistically significantly higher number of collocates with adjective phrases when comparing the percentages of instances of “make” with pronouns (X^2 = 18.58157, almost certain). In both corpora, the form “made” appeared to be dispreferred compared to other forms. Tables 4a and 4b show randomly selected examples from the JPN and ENS corpora, respectively.

Table 4a “Make” with adjective phrases – JPN

128	I agree with that statement. Having a part time job	make our	life fruitful!! A part time job is loved
018	pregnancy women. Smoking people don't have the right to	make their	health bad. Smoking has these two bad things.
397	nonsmokers. Such systems are enough to eat good food and	make us	comfortable. In fact, in a restaurant where
N/A	Because umm swimming is healthy for me and doing exercise	makes me	happy. Yes. Umm, when I --- when I was
248	drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes is very bad pair. It	makes their	health bad gravely. I think that this idea
072	t agree with this statement. It is true that smoking	makes our	body bad as we can absorb the bad
077	to learn operating machines and PC. Finaly, part time job	makes us	healthy because it is good exercise for our

Table 4b “Make” with adjective phrases – ENS

021	it will take up a lot of their time and	make them	very tired um, and this will distract them

065	going to school. Our job as college students is to	make our	parents proud and get good grades so that
095	the average smartphone user develops any brain cells. Doesn't	make him	very smart, does it? Yeah. Yes. To get
027	cigarette smoke which accumulated indoors would aggravate my condition. This	made me	very hateful of smoking and smokers in general,
031	and their parents before them were all smokers. Sometimes it	makes me	sad that I come from a family of
041	bad stuff and makes your mouth very dry. It also	makes your	teeth yellow and makes your clothes stink. Even
169	should band together make a stand against this nonsense that	makes our	lives more difficult every year. Why don't

A closer look at the examples suggests that the statistically significant difference in frequency of this construction does not correlate to unnatural use at a structural level. However, the semantic value of the adjectives that occur with the construction in the JPN corpus (e.g., “tired,” “comfortable,” and “happy,” verbs describing the state of mind of a person rather than inanimate an object) suggests that the higher frequency may be an indication of expressions of “becoming” being preferred by Japanese EFL learners. If changes of state are referred to as occurring naturally or involuntarily, it can follow that such expressions will be preferred when referring to states of mind.

This would be consistent with observations by Wierzbicka (2006) and Minagawa (2016) referred to in subsection 2.1. If make-causatives typically indicate an involuntary change of state, such as state of mind, and Japanese prefers to use *naru* constructions more than *(s)ase* expressions in such situations, learners may identify *naru* constructions with make-causatives during language acquisition. However, it is also worth considering whether this overlap is not taught overtly in Japanese EFL classes and to what extent learners are, due to vocabulary restrictions, more likely to use make-

causatives rather than other types of causativisation, i.e., “It makes me happy,” as opposed to, “It pleases me.”

4.3. Verb Phrases

The percentage of “make” used with verb phrases as collocates is significantly higher in the JPN corpus ($X^2 = 6.47728$). Tables 5a and 5b show randomly selected examples from the JPN and ENS corpora, respectively.

Table 5a “Make” with verb phrases – JPN

137	this skill is really important. Second, having part time job	made me	realize how hard earning money was. My mother
N/A	I found it is necessary to --- to make --- to make ---	made him	stop smoking. Hmm. Uh mother. Uh, friend mother ---
120	will feel uncomfortable. The owners who manage restraints should not	make them	feel such uncomfortable feelings and they will not.
219	the friendship will be very precious thing. These three reasons	make me	agree with this assignment's theme. Now, I
278	is bad for children educationally. Parents have an obligation to	make their	children have good manners in the future. For
055	good for smokers. Second reason is that smoking doesn't	make us	enjoy eating. If we smoke during eating, we
121	time job The act of earning money by working would	make you	feel a satisfaction that you can act as

Table 5b “Make” with verb phrases – ENS

138	it – it helped me value my degree more. It – it	made me	concentrate on time management which is something that

N/A	up slide and throw them down slides and everything to	make them	feel adult-ish, basically yeah. Recently, it's
N/A	but - uhm - you know, if I can do something to	make myself	feel more comfortable, I think I would be
141	to pay for their college bill itself and that would	make their	parents feel good as well. Number two, they
043	enhance the image of the restaurant to ban smoking and	makes it	seem higher class. If Japan were to ban
041	this question. Smoking is also bad for your clothes. It	makes them	smell bad, and if you get ash on
032	smell and taste the food properly, and it also	makes your	clothes smell and your hair smell and sometimes

Despite the more frequent use, pronouns used in the JPN corpus are less varied. The only example of a possessive pronoun in the JPN corpus is in the phrase “their children”. This differs from the ENS corpus, where possessive pronouns are used with inanimate objects, such as “your clothes” or “our states,” and body parts, such as “your eyes.”

Looking closer at the pronoun “them,” learners use “them” in “makes them” to refer to human patients in all four occurrences with verbs. In the ENS corpus, “them” refers to people once and to “clothes” in the other of the two occurrences with “makes.” All five examples of “make them” in the learner corpus refer to human patients. The only example of “made them” in the ENS corpus is “made them realize” when referring to the government. There is no occurrence of “made them” in the learner corpus.

Japanese learners appear to prefer human patients, suggesting a sensitivity to animacy. In addition to Yamaguchi’s observation on the agent position, this sensitivity appears to extend to the patient during English acquisition. Japanese EFL learners prefer to fill the patient position with an animate patient or an abstract concept if it affects an animate patient.

To sum up make-causative use with various parts of speech examined so far, Japanese learners of English appear, compared to native speakers, to have a higher preference for describing an animate patient or a change of state affecting an animate patient when using adjective and noun phrases and disprefer using noun phrases as patients altogether. Also, the higher use of adjective phrases and the higher use of verb phrases, preferably with human patients, may indicate an overlap with expressions of "becoming." The following subsection briefly looks beyond part-of-speech categories.

4.4. Across Parts of Speech

This subsection deals with some findings that were examined without division into part-of-speech groups as that division did not appear useful to observe some tendencies.

There were three occurrences of the combination "makes it" in the JPN corpus and 20 in the ENS corpus, making the total frequency difference within each corpus significant (X^2 = 20.88363, almost certain). The occurrences in the JPN corpus were produced by speakers at B1_2 to B2 level, suggesting the construction may pose difficulties for less advanced learners. Furthermore, the JPN occurrences all appear with an adjective phrase, whereas the use in the ENS corpus is more varied (e.g., "makes it almost like my hobby," "makes it seem"). Two of the three occurrences in the JPN corpus are used with a form of "easy," while one appears to be a repetition of "makes" before a self-correction. It is followed by "makes dishes."

Sensitivity to animacy can be observed when examining "makes it" in contrast with the use of the combination "makes me," which appears 10 and 26 times in the ENS and JPN corpus, respectively. Due to the different sizes of each corpus, this difference is not statistically significant at X^2 = 0.19865, implying it is easier for learners to acquire this construction than "makes it."

The combinations "makes us" and "makes you" appear six times each in the learner corpus and twice and three times in the native corpus (X^2 = 0.00517, not significant). The first and second persons are typically animate, further suggesting that learners are more likely to causativise changes of

state of a person rather than a change of state in a more abstract sense or the change of an inanimate patient.

These constructions will be discussed further in the following section. However, it is also worth considering that genre restrictions may be at play here. Writers and speakers were asked to give their opinions on two topics, which will have encouraged them to describe their own personal experiences and feelings. While such an influence would not contradict some difficulty acquiring the "makes it" construction, it is a factor that can influence its use in the context of essays and debates.

5. Discussion

This section summarises the study's findings and discusses them in more depth in relation to the points made in section 2.

A significantly lower number of occurrences with noun phrases and higher with adjective phrases in the JPN corpus may suggest that Japanese EFL learners prefer to express changes of state of mind or abstract concepts rather than real-life objects. Furthermore, the type of patients with which possessive pronouns are used in the JPN corpus show a preference to describe changes of states that affect human or animate patients rather than inanimate patients.

If this observation reveals a sign of L1 interference, it could be that, in the learners' minds, the make-causative construction overlaps with *naru*-based constructions in their L1 rather than the *(s)ase* causative. It could also reflect on a general Japanese L1 speakers' preference to refer to events in terms of "becoming" rather than "doing." These points would also explain the overall more frequent use of make-causatives by learners than by native speakers.

Furthermore, the significantly lower number of occurrences of the "makes it" construction in the JPN corpus can indicate interference due to semantic restrictions on argument structure. In Yamaguchi's example, *Kabin-ga (jishin-de) kowareta* ("The vase broke because of an earthquake") mentioned in section 2, the inanimacy of the agent makes it impossible to causativise the change of state verb. The construction with *de* may be a possible way to avoid causativisation by an L1 Japanese speaker. The example in (9)

demonstrates this feature on an utterance taken from the ENS corpus with a possible Japanese translation. The speaker is describing a smoky pool hall:

(9) a. English:

It makes it very hard to concentrate[...]

b. Japanese

(Kemuri-de)	*shūchū shi-zura-ku*	*na-ru*
Smoke-INST	concentrate-be.difficult-CONJ	become-NPST

The English sentence describes the change of state with "it," referring to the inanimate "smoke" or "the smoky room" as an agent. Japanese does not allow such an agent, and the translation uses a "become" expression instead. If desired, the causer may be expressed using *de*. There is no equivalent here of the patient "it," which, in this case, refers to the abstract concept of concentrating. Such an analysis may point to an explanation for the reluctance of Japanese learners to use the "make it" construction. It is also possible that, due to the ability of Japanese to take on two arguments in causative constructions and the possible ambiguity in interpretation that may arise, the sensitivity to agency applies to the patient as well as the agent position during English causative acquisition.

If there is L1 interference due to such constraints in Japanese, it is also possible that, in some contexts, learners will tend to avoid the make-causative altogether. For example, they may use an equivalent transitive verb or unnaturally transitivise an intransitive verb due to their L1 causatives' ability to take on two arguments (cf. Pylkkänen's observation on the causativised Japanese verb *warau*, "laugh"). However, no evidence for that was found in this study as it only examined instances when this construction did occur.

The overlap between expressions of "becoming" and causatives in the learnt language may seem to contradict Ikegami's observation on English make-causatives being, in fact, expressions of "doing." However, it could be argued that the overlap itself is a sign of interference. If the structure can

function similarly to a *naru* construction in the learner's mind, and the learner's L1 uses such constructions extensively, it follows that interference will lead them to use *naru*-like constructions extensively in their L2, too. Conversely, there is the possibility that learners acquire structures such as, "makes me happy" idiomatically and, rather than interference, this difference may point to a blind spot in teaching methods. Further research on this factor is needed.

6. Conclusion

Japanese EFL learners use make-causatives more frequently than native English speakers. This study has found signs of its overlap with *naru* constructions in Japanese rather than the typical *(s)ase* causative construction, indicating learners may conceptualise make-causative constructions differently from native speakers, i.e., as natural occurrences rather than events caused by an agent. This overlap may explain the signs identified in this study of higher sensitivity in the JPN corpus to animacy in the patient position with a preference for human patients.

By examining exclusively occurrences with the verb "make" in two English-language corpora, this study could not fully establish the extent of L1 interference. Also, the scope of structures examined due to technical restrictions, i.e., only constructions with pronouns, is a limitation to any conclusions drawn from the study's results.

Further research on the matter may include using Japanese-language corpora and examining the frequencies and context in which *naru* is used to describe a change of state of animate and inanimate participants. These findings could be compared to causatives formed with the *(s)are* morpheme and other constructions to determine how animacy, inanimacy, argument structure, and other factors may influence causativisation in Japanese and how these influences correlate with the observations made in this study. Furthermore, examining course materials used in Japan's English education system could determine the extent to which these differences may stem from how causatives are taught.

List of Abbreviations

ACC - accusative

CAUSE – causative

CONJ – conjunction

DAT – dative

INST - instrumental

LOC – locative

NOM – nominative

NPST – non-past

POL – polite

PST – past

[1] Some combinations such as “make people,” “make students,” or the passive “be made feel” were found too. However, I decided to omit these findings due to the wide range of options. For instance, if “make people” were included, it would be necessary to search for combinations such as “make other people” or “make more people,” leading to a pursuit of exhausting all possible combinations for which AntConc does not have the tools at the time of writing. While the inclusion of possessive pronouns may appear somewhat arbitrary, too, it is still suitable for the purpose of evaluating differences when examining the same means of expression across the corpora.

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