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Expressing an Apology and Proposal in the Personal Apology Letters in Czech as SL

The goal of the paper is to present analysis of a personal apology letter with formal features written by Ukrainian examinees during the Examination of the Czech Language for Permanent Residence in the Czech Republic**.** The study does not present a complex analysis of the letters, but it concentrates on selected linguistic phenomena tied up to the functions of an apology and proposal. Our analysis is based on the total amount of 141 letters originating in the Ukrainian speakers and the comparative sample of 20 letters originating in the Czech native speakers.

The paper is structured as follows: (i) the first section introduces the context and format of writen part of the exam from Czech as a Second Language on the A1 level according to the CEFL; (ii) the second section reviews the stance of writing and grammar theorists regarding the role of linguistic means for expressing a polite excuse (including the reasons explaining the situation) and suggestion in written Czech. (iii) The third section presents the research questions. (iv) The fourth section describes the origin and composition of the corpus compiled for the purposes of the investigation as well as the theoretical framework for the study. (v) The fifth section discusses the findings and contrasts them to the means used by native speakers. (vi) The sixth section is the conclusion and it also summarises the implications of the study for teaching and presents a concordance-based classroom activity for the teaching of formal apology letter writing.

Methodology of the research includes quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Research questions

The investigation presented in the paper aims to (1) make an inventory of linguistic means used by non-native speakers to achieve the task given, (2) analyse their use and to (3) compare the results with those reported on the basis of a similar analysis conducted on a native speaker corpus.

It seeks to answer the following questions:

(1) What type of grammatical and lexical means do non-native speakers on A1 use to express a polite excuse and proposal?

(2) What type of grammatical and lexical means do the learners use to express the reason of the excuse?

(4) How do the non-native speakers express the formal polite excuse and suggestion in comparison to the native speaker use?

Methods

The corpus built for the analysis consists of letters selected during the Examination of the Czech Language for Permanent Residence in the CR in years 2010 – 2012. It includes 141 samples. The participants selected were all Ukrainian native speakers; all living and working in the Czech Republic for 5 years at least; none of them attended a course of Czech as a foreign language or used a textbook of Czech. All of them were on the position of manual workers.

The letters were written on the basis of a short printed verbal and visual prompt in an essay examination.

The same task was given to a group of native speakers. This group included 20 Czech native adult speakers of various working positions. We analysed the letters of this group at the same way as the letters of the examinees; the result served as the prototype of the Czech native speakers and allowed the comparison and the frame for description of variants in the learners' language.

The letters are of an average length of 20 words, the full corpus contains 1,380 words of non-native speakers and 963 words of native speakers.

There were two parts evaluated in the letters: The first part with the communicational function of an apology for not coming including the reason; and the second part of the suggestion of a new meeting.

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