

The Function of Humour in British English and Japanese

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論 文 審 査 の 結 果 の 要 旨

This thesis focuses on the function that humour appears to serve in Britain and Japan by looking at incidences of humour usage in both casual and political discourse in British English and Japanese, which is relevant from the perspective of cross-cultural communication on an interpersonal level as well as a broader political one. This does not appear to be an area that is commonly explored, so hopes to bring a degree of originality to the field.

In both languages, humour was widely used in casual conversation, primarily to strengthen the bonds between the participants by creating a shared sense of solidarity. The humour used in the British English conversations were more likely to have a malicious element compared to the Japanese. In the Japanese conversations, teasing was more frequently used as the genesis of humour than in the British English ones.

In the British Parliament, the use of humour similar to that which was seen in the casual conversations. It mostly functioned as a means of creating conflict and can be considered to be weaponised. Humour in the Japanese National Diet was virtually non-existent. This difference was further backed up by considering the presentation of a number of candidates in the 2017 elections, where there appeared to be more joke candidates in the British one than the Japanese.

From this, it would appear that British humour has a more malevolent edge to it, which presumably connects to it being used in political situations to a similar degree as in casual ones. In comparison, Japanese humour is more closely connected with casual situations, with some arenas being to an extent inappropriate, and is not generally antagonistic in nature.

This thesis therefore clarifies the differences in humour function between British English and Japanese through the collection and analysis of everyday and parliamentary discourses, which has not previously been considered. As such, the committee has decided that the dissertation concerned deserves to be awarded a doctorate in art and science.