Compiling and Analyzing English E-mail Responses from Japanese and Korean Hotels for Use in Writing Classes

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People have become more aware of the importance of English skills in the hospitality and tourism industries. In Hokkaido, a career in tourism such as the hotel industry is one of the significant career opportunities for students. According to Iwai (2010), 84 percent of the Japanese hotels in the study suggested that they needed English training, but only 23.4 percent of the hotels actually provided English training to their employees. Furthermore, the results showed that the content of the training focused mainly on oral English communication skills and little attention was paid to writing skills. However, e-mail correspondence has become of crucial importance for hotels with the development of ICT. Communicating by e-mail is the first “touch point” with customers, so responding to English e-mails effectively is very important to enlarge their business opportunities.

In university English classes, teaching about the English used by hotels in the context of their daily correspondence is meaningful. Learning how to write efficient e-mail responses is an urgent necessity for university students. If they have good writing skills, their job opportunities will be widened. Therefore, this study focuses on the English used in e-mail correspondence.

In this study, an English e-mail was sent to 138 Japanese hotels and 89 Korean hotels on the lists of official tourism websites. Within a week 50 Japanese hotels and 37 Korean hotels responded. Then e-mail responses were compiled in a corpus and analyzed by using Kensaku, a concordancer software. The corpus contains 5,298 words from Korean hotel e-mail responses and 7,027 words from Japanese responses. This paper focuses on English words and expressions which were frequently used in hotel e-mail responses. Characteristics of professional and attentive e-mail responses are also reported. These results will be of great use for teaching in university classrooms.
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