

Describing locations in English and Japanese after real-world navigation

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Keywords Language • Navigation • Description culture

Previous research on descriptions of scenes (e.g., Mainwaring, Tversky, Ohgishi, and Schiano, 2003) relied on drawings that were interpreted as maps. The present research involved two variations on previous studies. First, students navigated in the real world. Second they discovered, rather than being shown, the locations that were the object of the experiment. Four waypoints and an example location were programmed into a GPS device. Students were shown how to use the device to navigate to the example location. Using the GPS device for navigation, students discovered the locations of three waypoints. After freely navigating on campus to the

locations, students identified the locations by drawing them on a map, and then again by pointing to the locations from various assumed positions. Response time and direction of pointing were recorded. Finally, students were asked to describe in writing the discovered locations from other assumed locations, using either English or Japanese

Results showed that, although students found pointing to different locations from assumed locations approximately equally difficult, they showed a preference for using absolute terms of reference when writing English directions. When writing in Japanese, intrinsic and relative terms of reference were more frequent than when writing in English.

