



## Composition in the Japanese error analysis of sentence essay

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### Abstract

This study is intended to identify and analyze the errors in the sentence transformation from Indonesian into Japanese. This study involves 4<sup>th</sup> semester students from USU's Japanese Department. Sample of the study consist of translated essay in Japanese on 200 words. Qualitative and quantitative have been used as analysis method based on misselection error definition by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982). Also, Yoshikawa's (1982) Japanese error analysis definition. The findings provides 30% errors were produced by learners on composing passive voice. As much as 20% errors occurred when applying particle and 20% in using tense/aspect form, 16% errors is seen on composing *yari-morai* sentences. Then, 14 % errors occurred on Japanese conjunction. The overgeneralization by the students is known as the error result. The students tend to make literal translation from Indonesian into Japanese. They prompted to search for the words which have close meaning with targeting words due to the lack of understanding the proper Japanese grammar. The aim of this study also gives illustration to Japanese teacher about learners' acquiring process in learning Japanese to improve teaching methods.

**Keywords:** error analysis, word misselection error, overgeneralization, Japanese learner, translation

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Background

Studies by linguists on acquisition of a second language show cases of interferences made by language learners when they learn second language. Yoshikawa (1982)<sup>[10]</sup> argued that the main barriers for students to learn Japanese grammar are not solely caused by the nuisance of mother tongue. He stressed that other foreign languages that have been previously studied, or other mistakes in understanding the Japanese grammar itself, become the triggering factors of error. Therefore, he advocated comparative researches between the mother tongue and the second language with a purpose to ensure that the characteristics of second language were not found in the mother tongue.

Cross linguistic influence, or also known as language transfer (see Odlin, 1989; Ozeki, 2005; Shirahata, T, Wakabayashi, S, & Muranoi, H, 2005). Odlin (1989) stated that language transfer comes from the result of similarities and differences between second and foreign languages that are previously learned. This is due to the assumption of equality between learner's mother tongue and his second language (Odlin 1998: 27). Furthermore, Odlin argued that if between mother tongue and second language have some similarities in their grammars, positive language transfer tends to occur. But, when the learner's background of mother tongue differs from the second language system, this can be called negative language transfer, for example, when learners of Bahasa Indonesia (BI) try to apply their mother language rules into Japanese, as shown in (1):

(1) Masa kecil saya adalah masa yang menyenangkan.

*Kodomo – no- toki, watashi- wa- hontou- ni- ureshii deshita. (?)*

*child-particle-when, 1SG-particle-really-particle-happy-*

*Past form 'My childhood was happy'.*

The Japanese sentence in (1) is translated by a learner from the BI 'Masa kecil saya adalah masa yang menyenangkan' sentence. This translation may be understandable, but, it does not follow the Javanese system of grammatical rules. The learner tends to translate words by word by choosing words having similar meanings, but he ignores the grammatical rules in Japanese; as a result, the translation causes negative transfers.

The practice of word-by-word translation from Japanese into BI using words with the same meaning/similarity as that of the learner did has been mentioned by Harmer (2001) in his book, who argued that the activity of translating can not be avoided within foreign language learning. Moentaha (2006) argued that translation theory has a direct relationship with comparative linguistics. Researches on the teaching of foreign languages with the involvement of translation theory can solve the problem of interference in the foreign language learning.

#### 1.2 Formulation of the Problem

This study discusses difficulties and mistakes faced by Japanese non-native learners who translate Indonesian sentences into Japanese counterparts. The differences of grammatical rules between these languages create positive transfer as well as negative one in the process of learning Japanese. Some differences might be addressed to Japanese particles, verb-forms, and adjectives. Because of limited knowledge, Japanese non-native learners undergo language transfer from their mother tongue. This of course becomes an obstacle for learners to master the proper Japanese language and this condition has ever been described by Yoshikawa (1997).

### 1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to define errors and to analyze the forms of errors in the translation activities conducted by Japanese non-native learners.

### 1.4 Research Scope

This research only analyzes errors and forms of errors that appear in the translation activities of composition from BI into Japanese language conducted by Japanese non-native learners.

## 2. Literary Reviews

With regard to error analysis, Brown (2000) stated that the errors in the second language acquisition may come from inter-lingual error and intra-lingual error which are caused by elements of the language itself and they have nothing to do with mother tongue. Researchers paying their attention to error analysis argued that, in case of second language learning, learners are more likely to make mistakes because they have lack of understanding and of exercises to second language (Dulay, Burt & Krashen: 1982). They categorize foreign-language errors into four categories and one of them is error of selection that may cover the errors of using morphemes or any other forms such as verbs, adjectives in sentences and as a result, they become wrong sentences. Choosing the correct words and generalizing the use of words are the primary causes of errors.

All semantic issues can be attributed to translation which is not only focused on meaning. The translation activity is related to the displacement of meaning and of the original author's thoughts wholly in composition in different languages (Haslina Haroon, Hasuria che Omar 2013). An interpreter is required to focus on meaning or message in the source language when conducting translation activities.

Yoshikawa (1982)<sup>[10]</sup> described the types of errors that are always found, for example, particles, connections, forms of desire or ability, yari-morai form, passive form, and tenses and aspects. He argued that research on comparative analysis between mother tongue and second language is necessary to ensure the characteristics of the second language grammar rules that do not exist in mother tongue. He also added that the research is very useful to improve the quality and method of second language teaching. In this study the definition of error of selection/formation is based on Daulay, Burt & Krashen (1982) and on Yoshikawa (1982)<sup>[10]</sup> to achieve the objectives of the study.

## 3. Research Method

This study uses quantitative method which is adapted from Brown and Rodgers (2002) to analyze errors in terms of quantity and to provide descriptive statistics for qualitative analysis. The respondents were chosen from second year students (Semester 4) of Japanese Literature Department and

were requested to translate their Indonesian composition consisting of 200 words into Japanese. Their translation was analyzed using Japanese grammatical rules proposed by Yoshikawa (1982)<sup>[10]</sup> and by Daulay, Burt & Krashen (1982).

## 4. Data Analysis

There were found 676 errors in the translation of Indonesian into Japanese sentences. Figure 1 shows that the highest percentage of errors falls on the Passive or Causative (30%), on the Particle (20%), and next on Tense/Aspect (20%). The errors in using the forms of Yari-morai reaches 16% and of word 14% which becomes the lowest percentage.

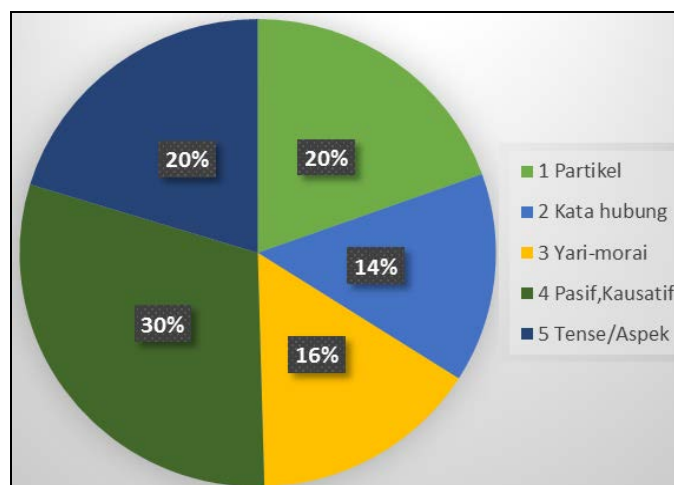


Fig 1: Error Percentage in the Indonesian-Japanese translation

### 4.1 Errors in the Use of Passive Voice

The Table 1 describes examples of errors in the translation of passive sentences in BI into Japanese in which learners failed to use the Japanese passive form of verbs appropriately. As seen in translation No. 1 (P.1), No. 2 (P.2) and No.3 (P.2), learners' translation tend to resemble the verb form *shieki* (causative). Lack of understanding and training in applying a passive form of verb is suspected to be the trigger for this error.

In translating (No.1, P.2) the learner translates the Indonesian passive sentence *saya disayangi oleh orang tua saya* 'I am being loved by my parents' by using Japanese regular statement (*watashi wa chichi to haha o aishimasu*) which might be caused by learner's generalization about the Japanese grammar to produce such sentence. About No. 3 (P.1), the learner also fails to determine the exact particle according to the Japanese passive sentence structure. The translation activity brings negative transfer and this activity can be said to be the suspect of the errors.

Table 1: Errors in Passive Form in the Japanese Translation

No	Indonesian Sentences	Student (P)	Japanese Translation
1	Saya disayangi oleh orang tua saya.	P.1	Ryoushin ni awasaremasu.
		P.2	Watashi wa chichi to haha o aishimasu.
2	Saya keujanan.	P.1	Watashi wa ame ga fumaremasita.
		P.2	watashi wa ame no naka.

3	Diari saya diambil oleh kawan.	P.1	Watashi no nikki ga tomodachi ni torareta.
		P.2	Watashi no nikki o tomodachi o tomarasemasu.

Based on Table 1, it is generally seen that the errors in applying the Japanese passive sentence appear because the learners fail to change the verb into the normal form of the proper passive verb. The errors of word formation for the word *hampir* 'almost' is generally found in all sentences of the learner's translation. When the learners are able to apply the passive verb form (~rareru) appropriately and precisely, but the errors occur in the selection of the right particle (No. 3 P.1).

In Japanese grammar, in broad terms, passive sentences are divided into two broad categories, namely direct passive phrase, 'chokusetsu ukemi' (直接受け身) and indirect passive sentences, 'kansetsu ukemi' (間接受け身). Then, between these two passive Japanese passive categories, there is also a passive passage under the ownership category 'mochinushi ukemi' (持ち主の受け身). The basic formation of a passive sentence is indicated by the ordinary verb change, (~ru) to (rareru). Direct passive sentence (chokusetsu ukemi) is a passive sentence in which the subject is subjected to direct deeds, eg sentences (2). The indirect passive sentence (kansetsu ukemi) is a passive sentence where the subject is not subject to action / action directly, eg sentence (3). While the passive sentence with the category of ownership (mochi nushi) shows subjects subjected to actions / actions on objects, body parts, sentence example (4). Generally speaking, the structure of the Japanese passive sentence is characterized by the particle (wa) as the person charged, while the performer is marked with the particle (ni) and the part of the object, the actioned limbs are marked with the (o) particles:

- (1). Saya dimarahi oleh ibu.  
*Watashi – wa- haha- ni- shikarareta*  
 Saya -partikel -ibu- partikel – dimarahi
- (2). Saya ditangisi oleh adik.  
*Watashi – wa- imoto- ni- nakareta*  
 Saya -partikel -adik- partikel – ditangisi
- (3). Kaki saya diinjak oleh seseorang.  
*Watashi – wa- dareka- ni- ashi – o -fumareta*  
 Saya -partikel -seseorang-partikel – kaki-partikel-diinjak

For that, the exact sentence translation for sentences 1, 2 and 3 is as follows:

1. *Watashi wa ryoushin ni aisareteimasu.*

2. *Watashi wa ame ni furare mashita.*
3. *Watashi wa tomodachi ni nikki o torare mashita.*

**4.2 Particle errors**

Table 2 below shows an example of a Japanese translation error performed by the learner in the category of particle selection error. In translation no.1 (p.1), students use the ga particles to connect the words kaze and hikimashita. In fact, in the first sentence (p.2), in addition to using the student's ga particles it also performs a literal translation, namely: '(so = narimasu), (enter = hikimasu), (wind = kaze)' which causes the translation sentence to be not grammatical. The precise particle to describe the colds is o, until the exact translation for this sentence.1 is: kaze o hiite shimaimashita (becomes a cold).

For sentence no.2 (p.1), the student uses the ga and ni particles (p.2) to denote the word 'also' in the Indonesian language. Both of these particles are not exactly used as translation of the phrase 'there are also naughty friends'. The influence of the Japanese language itself is suspected to be the cause of the learner choosing either the ni or ga particles for the sentence no.2. This is because, generally, for a verb that shows belonging or existence (arimasu / imasu) the particles used are ga or ni. To produce a grammatical translation, the particles used for sentence no.2 are mo, as follows: demo, itazura na tomodachi mo imasu (but, there are also naughty friends).

Next, when asked to translate the phrase 'I have a lot of friends', the learner adds particles as connecting every word, which causes the translation to sound strange. The learner tends to think that to connect word for word in the Japanese grammar, particle is required. This can be seen from the translation of sentences no.3 (p.2), watashi wa tomodachi ga takusan ni imasu, the addition of ni particles before the word imasu make this translation is not in accordance with the rules of proper Japanese grammar. The addition of this particle may be due to the learner affected by the rules on the Japanese grammar itself, ie the imasu verb (existing), which describes where one is located, requires the particle ni placed before the imasu verb. The error in choosing an improper particle is also caused by the learner making an exaggerated generalization that the particle placed before the arimasu / imasu verb should be ga / ni. Nevertheless, student translations may be acceptable if, the particle before imasu word is omitted, to become: watashi wa tomodachi ga takusan imasu.

**Table 2:** Errors in the Translation of Particle into Japanese

No	Indonesian Sentence	Student (P)	Japanese Translation
1	Jadinya masuk angin	P.1	Kaze ga hikimashita
		P.2	Kaze ga hiku ni narimashita
2	Tetapi, ada juga kawan yang nakal	P.1	Demo, itazura ga arimasu
		P.2	Demo, itazura ni imasu
3	Saya punya banyak kawan	P.1	Watashi no tomodachi ni takusan ga arimasu
		P.2	Watashi wa tomodachi ga takusan imasu

**4.3 Error in Tense/Aspect**

The following table 3 describes the results of the student

translations indicating failure in choosing speech forms such as verbs, adjectives, phrases and more. As can be seen in

Table 3, for sentences no.1 (p.1) and (p.2), students make sentences that are inconsistent with Japanese grammar rules, i.e. the formation of the tanoshii adjective (fun) for the description of a past event: No.1 (p.1): Kodomo no toki, tanoshii deshita (?). No.1 (p.2): Kodomo toki wa, totemo tanoshiikatta deshita (?).

According to Japanese grammar, to describe past events, adjectives [i] need to be changed first into the past tense. For the tanoshii adjective, the past form becomes tanoshikatta. However, students choose tanoshii deshita and tanoshiikatta deshita intended to show the past form of the tanoshii

adjective.

The form of the word deshita at the end of the student's sentence phrase describes the event in which the sentence has already passed and deshita shows the past tense used in some kind of word such as the noun used to describe the events that have passed but deshita does not apply to adjectives [i]. The learner makes an exaggerated generalization by using the word deshita as a description of past events for the tanoshii adjective that causes the error. For that, the sentence translation no.1 should be: Kodomo no koro wa totemo tanoshikatta desu.

**Table 3:** Errors in Tense/Aspect in the Japanese Translation

No	Indonesian Sentence	Student (P)	Japanese Translation
1	Masa kecil saya adalah masa yang menyenangkan	P.1	Kodomo no toki, tanoshiideshita
		P.2	Kodomo toki wa totemo tanoshiikattadeshita
2	Sekarang, mi istant dikonsumsi di seluruh dunia	P.1	Ima wa, raamen o sekai o tabetteimasu
		P.2	Ima wa ramen wa sekai o taberaremashita
3	Saya pernah dibuli kawan	P.1	Watashi wa ijimemashita
		P.2	Tomodachi ni ijimeru arimashita

**4.4 Errors in Conjunction**

The failure to apply the appropriate Japanese language link made by the learner can be seen in Table 4. Based on Table 4 below, misuse of the hyphen occurs when the learner combines two adjectives, and when translating the Indonesian 'when' to ~ toki. In the sentence no.1 (p.1) and (p.2), the student uses particles to (ii to yasashidesu) and the pattern of the ~ shi (ii shi, tanoshiidesu) sentences to combine two adjectives [i]. Whereas in Japanese language grammar rules, to combine two adjectives [i], the ~ te forms, meaning 'and', until the no.1 translation should be: watashi no tomodachi wa yasashikute shinsetsu desu or Tomodachi wa yasashikute shinsetsu na hito desu.

In Table 4, it is also seen that the word 'when' in Indonesian is translated to ~ toki by the learner, such as sentence no.3 (p.1), Shiken ga ii toki, sensei ni homesaremashita and sentence no.3

(p. 2), Shiken ga ii kekka ni naru toki, watashi ga sensei ni homerareta. However, the use of the ~ toki link for sentence no.3 is less precise when viewed from the proper Japanese grammar rules. This is because the sentence no.3 illustrates an unexpected event by the subject, which receives praise when the subject gets a good grade. Therefore, the corresponding word with the sentence description of no.3 is ~ tara. Students allegedly translate words per word from Indonesian into Indonesian, but, disregard the appropriate use of the word ~ toki to cause errors.

The sentence translation of no.3 can be a sentence that conforms to the Japanese grammar rules by substituting the ~ toki to ~ tara. In addition, the mistranslation of verb form passive homesaremashita is transformed into homeraremashita. Until proper translation should be: Shiken ni yoi ten o tattara, sensei ni homeraremashita.

**Table 4:** Errors in the Use of Conjunction in the Japanese Translation

No	Indonesia Sentence	Student (P)	Japanese Translation
1	Kawan saya baik dan ramah	P.1	Watashi wa tomodachi wa ii to yasashidesu
		P.2	Tomodachi ga yasashii shi, tanoshii desu.
2	Ketika pulang dari sekolah, saya kejujuran	P.1	Gakkou e kaeru no toki, ame ga fumaremashita
		P.2	Gakkou no kaeri toki, ame ga furimashitakara
3	Ketika hasil ujian bagus, saya dipuji oleh guru	P.1	Shiken ga ii toki, sensei ni homesaremashita
		P.2	Shiken ga ii kekka ni naru toki, watashi ga sensei ni homerareta

**4.5 Errors in Yari-Morai Form**

Below is Table 5, which shows the student's failure to translate Indonesian sentences into Japanese Yari-morai forms. Based on the translations produced by the learner, it is known that the learner tends to translate words per word from Indonesian sentence to Japanese language as the effect of language transfer to cause misunderstanding of translation. The Indonesian sentence on no.1, no.2, and no.3 actually describes the pleasure, the speaker's thanks to what the offender's object does to him. For that, the shape of Japanese sentence patterns that match the Indonesian sentence is a yari-morai form. However, the learner has mistakenly attempted to translate it to a passive Japanese sentence that necessarily

causes the sentence's nuances to change, such as:

- No.1 (P.1): *Haha ni oishii suupu o tsukurare mashita.(?)*  
 No.2 (P.1): *Sensei wa watashi ni iroiro na chisiki o oshierare mashita. (?)*  
 No.3 (P.2): *Chichi ni ippai omocha o kaware mashita.(?)*

Lack of student comprehension about Japanese passive sentence form and yari-morai form is thought to be the cause

of this error. The translations produced by the learner can be a sentence that conforms to Japanese grammar by applying the yari-morai form in sentences no.1, 2 and 3, as follows:

- No.1: *Haha ga oishii suupu o tsukutte kure mashita.*  
 No.2: *Sensei ga iroiro na chisiki o oshiete kure mashita.*  
 No.3: *Watashi wa itsumo chichi ni omocha o katte moraimashita.*

**Tabel 5:** Errors in yari-morai in the Japanese Translation

No	Indonesia Sentences	Student (P)	Japanese Translation
1	Ibu <u>membuatkan</u> saya sup yang sedap	P.1	Haha ni oishii suupu o tsukurare mashita
		P.2	Oishii suupu o haha ni tsukurare mashita
2	Guru <u>mengajarkan</u> saya banyak ilmu	P.1	Sensei wa watashi ni iroiro na chisiki o oshierare mashita
		P.2	Watashi wa sensei ni chishiki oshiemashita
3	Saya selalu <u>dibelikan</u> mainan oleh ayah	P.1	Watashi wa chichi ni omocha o kawarasemashita
		P.2	Chichi ni ippai omocha o kaware mashita

**5. Formulation**

Overall, the study has adapted the definition of Japanese use errors by Yoshikawa (1982) [10] and the definition of election error, Daulay, Burt & Krashen (1982). Based on the results of data analysis through the batch of student translations, the forms of Japanese language use errors made by the learner have been identified.

The results of the study showed that students made mistakes in the use of Japanese language due to several factors. First, the learner does not pay enough attention to the rules of the Japanese grammar, such as the importance of remembering rules in making verbal changes, adjectives, nouns and others adapted to the time and sentence patterns that follow the words the. Lack of student attention to this causes the learner to generalize when asked to change the verb, adjective and noun according to the rules of use in the Japanese sentence.

Secondly, students do not understand well the rules of using Japanese grammar. The learner tends to translate words from Indonesian to Japanese by looking for equivalents of words that are considered to be close to their meaning. However, students ignore the rules of grammar use in Japanese language itself which should be different from the rules of grammar in the Indonesian language. Lack of comprehension and practice on the rules and shapes of Japanese sentence patterns causes the learner to move the language until a negative transfer occurs. This supports the opinion of Odlin (1998) which reveals when the rule system between mother tongue and target language is different or not the same, then the negative transfer tends to occur.

Third, the tendency of error to occur is caused by the rules in the language itself in which the rule is first learned by the learner. This explains the student's mistake applying the particles to a verb that is generally always paired together. In fact, this can be overcome if the learner understands the proper use of Japanese grammar rules until the same error does not recur.

Through the results of this research analysis, it is expected that the process of learning Japanese language among Japanese language learners can run better. For that reason, the application of repetitive exercises with regard to verb changes, Japanese adjectives need to be emphasized to the learner so that they become familiar with the shapes of word changes in

Japanese.

Then, what should also be a concern for teachers is to focus the teaching on the differences of the grammatical rules system between Indonesian and Japanese and awaken learners about the different rules of grammatical use between the two languages so that learners think more critically in using Japanese.

With that, it is expected that Japanese language learners do not over-generalize when they face difficulties in applying the Japanese language because they have been able to realize what they have used to learn.

For that, in the future research will be conducted more in-depth review of the learning activities of Japanese language learners by using a more general reading discourse to find out more details again other factors that affect the translation into Japanese.

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