

Grammatical Errors in EFL Students' Essays: Insights for English Language Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the types of grammatical errors and their causes and provide examples of the errors present in the essays of Japanese students in a senior high school in Kagawa, Japan. It also discusses the pedagogical implications of these grammatical errors for English language education. A total of 25 essays were collected and analyzed through procedural analysis. The errors found were classified, and explanations were provided. The results showed that the students' essays contained grammatical errors in verbs, nouns, adjectives, prepositions, pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, and spelling. Most errors are related to verb usage. Based on the findings, it is recommended that an intensive English grammar review be conducted, and teachers are encouraged to explore strategies for teaching and correcting students' grammatical errors to address the problem

INTRODUCTION

English is widely regarded as a global language, serving as a first, second, or foreign language across many nations. However, non-native English learners, including those studying English as a foreign language (EFL), often struggle with grammatical accuracy in their writing (Adam, 2019). Many students are unaware of their errors or lack the necessary skills to correct them (Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2020).

Among the four macro skills of language learning—reading, listening, writing, and speaking, writing is often considered the most challenging (Gautam, 2019; Husain, 2015; Nasser, 2016; Patience, 2020). Writing requires a combination of goal setting, grammatical accuracy, problem-solving, planning, idea generation, self-monitoring, and language assessment (Hattab, 2018; Kellogg, 2018; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). Due to its complexity, students frequently commit grammatical errors and struggle to structure their ideas effectively in English (Ngangbam, 2016).

EFL learners commonly make two types of grammatical errors: interlingual errors, which stem from the influence of their first language (*L1*), and intralanguage errors, which arise from difficulties within the second language (*L2*) itself (Adila, 2019; Jawad, 2019). While numerous studies confirm that *L2* errors constitute a significant portion of mistakes made by EFL learners (Planken, 2019; Sari, 2016), *L1* interference often causes greater disruptions in communication, making comprehension more challenging for native English speakers (Ghabool et al., 2012; Kirmizi & Karci, 2017; Dipolog-Ubanan, 2016).

In Japan, English teachers often notice that Japanese students make the same kinds of mistakes in both speaking and writing. These recurring errors are not simply a result of carelessness, lack of ability, or effort, but rather stem from the fundamental differences between Japanese and English (Bryant, 1984; Dykes, 2016; Ohata, 2004). While many teachers are aware of these challenges, effectively helping students overcome them requires a deeper understanding of why these errors happen in the first place.

This language challenge exists because Japanese and English come from completely different language families, making it even harder for Japanese learners to acquire English. Japanese is a distinct and self-contained language that does not belong to a major linguistic family, whereas English is an Indo-European language. The structural differences between the two languages present several grammatical challenges for Japanese learners of English. Unlike English, Japanese lacks a distinct future tense, does not inflect nouns or verbs for number, modifies adjectives based on tense, and follows a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) sentence structure.

Additionally, Japanese has a complex pronoun system and a unique counting system, both of which can contribute to grammatical errors when translating thoughts into English. It is also a highly politeness-oriented language, where verbs are categorized based on their level of formality. The language includes numerous respectful expressions to convey deference. Furthermore, certain linguistic forms are specifically associated with either men or women, reflecting traditional gender distinctions in speech. Given the structural

differences between English and Japanese, Japanese students are likely to transfer features from their *L1*, leading to errors as they strive for English proficiency.

While a great deal of research has been conducted on grammatical errors, most studies focus on how often these errors occur rather than exploring their structure or context. As a result, much of the existing research provides statistical data but does not fully explain why students make certain errors. There is still a need for studies that go beyond numbers and take a deeper look at how these errors emerge, particularly in the writing of Japanese learners of English. Although many studies classify errors into different types, they often do not examine the underlying causes in detail.

This study fills that gap by examining grammatical errors in Japanese students' writing. Instead of focusing on numbers, it looks at how these errors appear in real student work and what they reveal about the learning process. By analyzing both common errors and deeper language patterns, this research provides a clearer picture of the challenges Japanese learners face when writing in English.

Grammar is key to effective writing, and understanding where students struggle helps teachers refine their approach. By studying actual student work, this research identifies recurring errors, explores their causes, and suggests practical ways to address them in the classroom. The goal is to help teachers adjust their instruction and provide students with the support they need to write more accurately and confidently.

The findings of this study will help improve grammar instruction. By recognizing the most common difficulties Japanese learners face, educators can develop targeted strategies to address them. Strengthening grammar instruction not only enhances accuracy but also helps students express their ideas more clearly and naturally in English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contrastive Analysis Theory (CA), (Lado, 1957)

Contrastive Analysis Theory (CA) was primarily developed and promoted by Robert Lado in 1957 with the publication of his book *Linguistics Across Cultures*. It argues that students' errors result from interference from their mother tongue. In this regard, instructional materials should emphasize the differences between the target and native languages.

As a linguistic theory, CA examines the similarities and differences between two languages, typically a learner's native language (*L1*) and the target language (*L2*). In the context of this study, Japanese is *L1*, and English is *L2*. The main idea behind CA is that by comparing these languages, educators and linguists can predict areas where learners might struggle due to differences in linguistic structures.

The key concepts of CA include language transfer, the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), error prediction, and hierarchical difficulty. Language transfer occurs when learners apply structures from their first language (*L1*) while learning a second language (*L2*). This transfer can be positive, when similarities between *L1* and *L2* facilitate learning, or negative

(interference), when differences result in errors. The CAH suggests that *L2* difficulties arise where *L1* and *L2* differ, with greater differences leading to a higher likelihood of errors.

Error prediction plays a crucial role in CA, as analyzing linguistic structures can help predict which grammatical, phonological, or syntactic mistakes learners are likely to make in speech and writing. Hierarchical difficulty, proposed by Stockwell et al. (1965), categorizes learning challenges based on the relationship between *L1* and *L2* structures. Some aspects of language transfer are relatively simple when *L1* and *L2* structures align, whereas greater difficulty arises when *L1* features do not exist in *L2*, require reinterpretation, or are entirely different in structure.

Despite its usefulness, CA has been criticized for overemphasizing *L1* interference. Many errors are developmental and universal in *L2* learning rather than solely caused by *L1* influence. Additionally, CA does not fully account for universal grammar, as some errors are common across learners from different *L1* backgrounds. Another limitation is that not all predictions made by CA are accurate – some expected errors do not occur, while unexpected errors do.

Despite these criticisms, CA remains valuable in understanding error sources and designing targeted instruction, particularly in areas such as pronunciation and grammar-focused learning. By recognizing how *L1* structures influence *L2* learning, educators can develop strategies that help learners overcome challenges and improve their proficiency.

Error Analysis (EA), (Corder, 1967)

Error Analysis (EA) is a linguistic approach used to study the types and causes of errors that learners make while acquiring a second language (*L2*). It was developed as a response to CA and became widely recognized in the 1970s, particularly through the work of Stephen Pit Corder (1967) and Jack Richards (1971). Unlike CA, which primarily focuses on predicting errors based on differences between the first language (*L1*) and *L2*, EA examines actual learner errors to understand their sources and implications for language teaching.

EA differentiates errors from mistakes. Errors are systematic and caused by a lack of knowledge (i.e., due to incomplete learning). They indicate a learner's developing language system. On the other hand, mistakes are random and non-systematic and often result from temporary lapses in attention, fatigue, or carelessness.

The types of errors include interlingual, intralingual, developmental, and communication-based errors. Interlingual errors are influenced by *L1* interference (e.g., "*He go to school*" due to the absence of verb conjugation in some languages). Intralingual errors are caused by difficulties within the *L2* itself, often due to overgeneralization (e.g., "*He goed*" instead of "*He went*"). Developmental errors are similar to those made by native-speaking children learning their first language (e.g., "*She can sings*"). Communication-based errors result from the learner's strategies to express themselves, such as simplification (e.g., "*Yesterday I go shop*" instead of "*Yesterday I went to the shop*").

There are five stages in the EA approach, which include identification, description, explanation, evaluation, and correction with pedagogical implications. Identification involves recognizing an error in the learner's output. The description stage categorizes the error based on type (e.g., grammatical, phonological, lexical). Explanation determines why the error occurred (e.g., *L1* transfer, overgeneralization). Evaluation assesses the impact of the error on communication. The final stage, correction and pedagogical implications, involves using the findings to improve teaching methods and help learners avoid similar errors in the future.

EA plays a crucial role in understanding the second language learning process. It provides insight into how learners construct knowledge of a second language and helps teachers identify common problem areas to adjust their instructional strategies. EA challenges the idea that errors should be avoided, instead emphasizing their role in language development. It supports the design of effective error correction techniques that promote learning rather than discouraging students.

Traditional Grammar Theory (Thrax, Circa 100 BCE; Priscian, Circa 500 CE)

Traditional Grammar Theory refers to the prescriptive, rule-based approach to language structure that has been used for centuries, primarily influenced by Latin and Greek grammar. It does not have a single proponent or author, as it evolved over time from the grammatical traditions of Ancient Greece and Rome. It focuses on categorizing words, analyzing sentence structures, and establishing grammatical correctness based on fixed rules rather than usage patterns. Traditional grammar is often contrasted with modern linguistic theories, which emphasize descriptive and functional aspects of language.

Grammar rules were created to bring structure to language, shaping how people write and speak. However, language is not static, and the way people naturally communicate does not always follow these strict guidelines. For example, traditional grammar discourages splitting infinitives, insisting that "*to boldly go*" should be rewritten as "*to go boldly*." It also sorts words into categories known as parts of speech, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. Sentence structure is analyzed by identifying key elements like the subject, verb, and object. In the sentence "*She reads a book*," "*She*" is the subject, "*reads*" is the verb, and "*a book*" is the object.

Strict rules for sentence structure, punctuation, and word placement were introduced to create consistency in writing. However, language constantly evolves, and how people actually use it does not always follow these rules. For example, ending a sentence with a preposition, like in "*Where are you at?*", is considered incorrect. Many of these rules come from Latin, even though English functions differently. The restriction on splitting infinitives, for instance, comes from Latin, where infinitives are a single word, such as *amare* for "*to love*," making splitting them impossible.

Traditional grammar provides structure and is useful for formal writing, but it has limitations. Language constantly evolves, and strict rules do not always reflect how people actually communicate. In some cases, rigid grammar can even make learning English more challenging. Since many rules come from

Latin, they do not always fit the way English and other modern languages work today.

METHODOLOGY

This study examines the grammatical errors Japanese senior high school students in Kagawa, Japan, make in their English writing. It identifies the most common errors, explores why they occur, and considers their impact on English language education.

To better understand these errors, the study takes a qualitative approach, using content analysis as the main method. Error Analysis (EA) serves as the framework for identifying patterns and causes. Essays were collected over four weeks, and from these, 25 essays were purposively selected for analysis. The essays were part of the students' regular writing practice and were not graded. Every Friday, the teacher assigned a writing topic, and students turned in their essays the following Monday. These assignments were meant purely for practice, giving students a chance to improve their writing without the stress of being graded.

The written essays were analyzed using the error analysis framework developed by Corder (1967). The five stages of the EA approach included identification, description, explanation, evaluation, and correction with pedagogical implications. Erroneous words, phrases, or sentences were systematically coded based on their essay number (*e.g.*, *Essay 1–25*), and their corresponding causes were analyzed. Error samples were also presented for discussion purposes. Expert evaluators were consulted to validate the results of the error analysis. This study adhered to all necessary ethical considerations throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- **The Grammatical Errors in Using Verb**

Most of the grammatical errors found in the students' essays involved verb usage. Japanese students struggled with English verbs due to fundamental structural differences in verb formation, tense usage, auxiliary verbs, subject-verb agreement, verb patterns, overgeneralization of grammar rules, and interference between Japanese and English. Below are the key reasons why Japanese students made grammatical errors related to verbs in their writing.

- **Differences in Verb Conjugation and Tenses**

Japanese verbs do not change based on person or number, unlike English, which has distinct verb forms depending on the subject. Additionally, Japanese has fewer tense distinctions and does not differentiate as clearly between simple and progressive aspects. One major difference is that Japanese does not have auxiliary verbs like "*be*" and "*have*" to form continuous and perfect tenses. Instead, Japanese often relies on context to convey aspect, which can lead to errors in forming progressive and perfect tenses in English. Another key distinction is that past tense formation differs significantly, as Japanese verbs follow a more regular conjugation pattern compared to English, which has many

irregular past tense forms. Below are some common errors in this category found in the students' essays:

Essay 21: *"*Yesterday, she go to the temple.*" instead of "*Yesterday, she went to the temple.*"

Essay 3: *"*I go to the park now.*" instead of "*I am going to the park now.*"

Essay 9: *"*She already eat lunch.*" instead of "*She has already eaten lunch.*"

- **Lack of Auxiliary Verbs ("Do," "Be," "Have")**

Japanese does not have direct equivalents for *do*-support, *be*-verbs, or perfect tenses, which leads to errors in negation, question formation, and progressive tenses in English. Since Japanese does not require auxiliary verbs, students frequently omit them in English sentences, making it difficult to form grammatically correct questions and negatives. Japanese learners struggle with helping verbs like "*do*," "*does*," and "*did*" because Japanese does not use auxiliary verbs in the same way. As a result, they often omit them or use incorrect structures when forming questions and negative sentences. Below are some examples from the students' essays:

Essay 4: *"*She like coffee?*" instead of "*Does she like coffee?*"

Essay 8: *"*I going to the convenience store.*" instead of "*I am going to the convenience store.*"

Essay 19: *"*He not like sushi.*" instead of "*He does not like sushi.*"

Essay 14: *"*She already finish her work.*" instead of "*She has already finished her work.*"

- **Subject-Verb Agreement Issues**

In Japanese, verbs do not change depending on the subject, whereas in English, verbs must agree with the subject in both number and person. Since Japanese does not require subject-verb agreement, learners often apply the same verb form to all subjects in English, leading to errors, particularly with third-person singular subjects and plural noun subjects. Below are some common patterns of subject-verb agreement errors found in the students' essays:

Essay 9: *"*She have a dog.*" instead of "*She has a dog.*"

Essay 12: *"*My friends is kind.*" instead of "*My friends are kind.*"

- **Confusion Between Infinitives and Gerunds**

Japanese does not have a clear grammatical distinction between gerunds (*-ing*) and infinitives (*to + verb*). Instead, verb nominalization (e.g., *こと* "*koto*" or *の* "*no*") is often used to express both concepts. Since Japanese does not require the same gerund and infinitive patterns as English, learners struggle to memorize correct verb structures. This leads to errors such as:

Essay 1: *"*I enjoy to play soccer.*" instead of "*I enjoy playing soccer.*"

Essay 22: *"*He decided going home.*" instead of "*He decided to go home.*"

- **Misuse of Irregular Verbs**

Japanese learners tend to overgeneralize regular past tense rules (*-ed*) to irregular verbs because Japanese does not have an equivalent set of unpredictable irregular verb forms like English does. While Japanese verbs do change for tense, their conjugation follows regular and consistent patterns, making it difficult for students to memorize English irregular verbs. This issue is not only due to *L1* influence but also a common developmental error in second language learning,

as learners try to apply regular patterns to all verbs. As a result, students often apply the "-ed" rule to all past tense verbs, leading to errors such as:

Essay 12: *"*He teached English.*" instead of "*He taught English.*"

Essay 16: *"*She buyed a new dress.*" instead of "*She bought a new dress.*"

- **Incorrect Use of Modal Verbs (Can, Must, Should, etc.)**

Japanese modal expressions function differently from English modals, often using auxiliary constructions rather than standalone modal verbs. Due to these structural differences, Japanese learners frequently add unnecessary "to" after modals or incorrectly conjugate the main verb. Below are some common errors from the collected data:

Essay 13: *"*You must to study hard.*" instead of "*You must study hard.*"

Essay 7: *"*She can sings.*" instead of "*She can sing.*"

- **Influence of Japanese Sentence Structure (SOV vs. SVO)**

Japanese students frequently struggled with word order in their essays due to fundamental differences in sentence structure between Japanese (SOV) and English (SVO). In Japanese, the verb typically appears at the end of the sentence, whereas in English, it follows the subject and precedes the object. This structural difference often led to incorrect sentence construction and misplacement of verbs in English. For example:

Essay 19: *"*I convenience store to went.*" instead of "*I went to the convenience store.*"

- **Passive Voice and Transitivity Confusion**

It was observed in the students' essays that they frequently used the passive voice, even in contexts where English prefers the active voice. In Japanese, passive constructions are commonly used, and students often transfer this pattern to English, leading to overuse of passive forms. Additionally, differences in verb transitivity between Japanese and English contribute to errors in forming passive sentences. For example:

Essay 25: *"*The mistake was done by me.*" instead of "*I made a mistake.*"

- **Intransitive vs. Transitive Verb Confusion**

Japanese handles transitive and intransitive verb pairs differently from English, leading to errors in English sentence structure. In Japanese, many intransitive verbs do not require a subject, and transitivity is often expressed differently than in English. As a result, learners frequently form unnatural passive-like constructions in English. Since Japanese does not always explicitly mark the agent (who performs the action), learners often misuse passive or intransitive structures when translating into English. For example:

Essay 17: *"*He was fallen by the tree.*" instead of "*The tree fell on him.*"

- **Interference from Katakana English (Loanwords)**

Japanese students frequently misinterpret English verbs due to the interference of *Katakana English*, a writing system used for foreign loanwords. Many English loanwords have altered meanings in Japanese, leading to confusion when learners attempt to use them in standard English. For example, since "*charenji suru*" in Japanese means "*to attempt a difficult task*" rather than "*to challenge something*," students often misuse "*challenge*" as a direct verb in English.

Essay 1: * "*She challenge the exam. (from チャレンジする "charenji suru")*" instead of "*She took on the challenge of the exam.*" / "*She attempted the exam.*"

- **Lack of Strong Verb Drills/Limited Exposure to Authentic English**

Japanese English education has traditionally focused on memorization rather than practical usage (Shin Edupower, 2023). Japanese students often study grammar in isolation, without enough practice in context-based conversation. Additionally, Japanese education emphasizes reading and writing more than speaking and listening (Japan Forward, 2023). These factors have also contributed to errors in verb use.

- **The Grammatical Errors in Using Nouns**

Based on the data collected, it was found that Japanese students struggled with noun usage in English due to fundamental differences between the Japanese and English grammatical systems. The most common reasons for these errors included the lack of articles in Japanese, singular and plural distinctions, countability rules, and word order differences. Below are the key factors contributing to their difficulties:

- **Absence of Articles in Japanese**

Japanese does not have the equivalent of the definite (*the*) or indefinite (*a, an*) articles, making it difficult for students to determine when and how to use them in English. Since articles do not clearly exist in Japanese, students often omit them in English or use them incorrectly. As a result, students frequently make errors such as:

Essay 2: *"I bought apple."* instead of *"I bought an apple."*

Essay 9: *"Sun is bright today."* instead of *"The sun is bright today."*

- **Singular and Plural Nouns**

Japanese nouns do not change form to indicate singular or plural. Instead, plurality is inferred from context or expressed using words like 数(かず)の (*"some"*) or たくさん (*"many"*). Since Japanese does not have a grammatical rule for plural noun formation, learners may forget to add (-s) to plural nouns in English. This gives rise to errors such as:

Essay 5: *"I have three cat."* instead of *"I have three cats."*

Essay 16: *"Many student are here."* instead of *"Many students are here."*

Countable and Uncountable Noun Distinction

Japanese does not have a rigid distinction between countable and uncountable nouns. Many English uncountable nouns have countable counterparts in Japanese. Since Japanese does not use countability markers, students struggle with English mass nouns, leading to errors such as:

Essay 18: *"She gave me many advices."* instead of *"She gave me much advice/lot of advice/plenty of advice."*

Essay 20: *"He bought two furnitures."* instead of *"He bought two pieces of furniture."*

- **Misuse of Possessive Forms**

In Japanese, possession is often expressed through simple juxtaposition, while English uses apostrophe + s ('s) or "of" constructions. Japanese learners may directly translate noun structures from their language, leading to expressions that, although grammatically correct, sound unnatural in modern English and are rarely used in everyday speech. This gives rise to errors such as:

Essay 22: *"The bag of Sakura."* instead of *"Sakura's bag."*

Essay 17: *"The car of my father."* instead of *"My father's car."*

- **Word Order Differences in Compound Nouns**

Japanese and English generally follow a modifier-before-head noun structure, but differences arise in complex noun phrases and compound nouns. In Japanese, *no* (の) is often used to connect two nouns, which may not always translate directly into English. As a result, Japanese learners sometimes misplace adjectives or noun modifiers when forming English phrases. This leads to errors such as:

Essay 2: "A coffee hot." instead of "A hot coffee."

Essay 6: "A book English." instead of "An English book."

- **The Grammatical Errors in Using Adjectives**

In their essays, Japanese students struggled with adjective usage in English due to structural differences between the Japanese and English grammatical systems. These errors were primarily influenced by word order differences, the lack of adjective agreement in Japanese, confusion with comparatives and superlatives, omission of linking verbs, and direct translation issues. The key reasons why Japanese learners made mistakes with adjectives in English in their essays are listed below:

- **Word Order Differences**

In Japanese, adjectives generally come before the noun, similar to English. However, longer descriptive phrases sometimes follow the noun, which can lead to errors in English word order. As a result, Japanese learners may directly transfer noun-adjective placement from their *L1*, leading to misordering in English. As a consequence, errors such as these arise:

Essay 9: "A coffee hot." instead of "A hot coffee."

Essay 8: "A car red." instead of "A red car."

- **No Adjective Agreement in Japanese**

In Japanese, adjectives do not change based on number or gender, and comparative and superlative forms are structured differently from English. While English comparatives and superlatives require "-er," "-est," or words like "more" and "most," Japanese expresses comparisons using words like もっと (*motto*, "more") or 一番 (*ichiban*, "most"). Since Japanese does not use inflected adjective forms like English, learners often overgeneralize English rules. For example:

Essay 6: "She is more tall than him." instead of "She is taller than him."

Essay 2: "That is the most biggest building." instead of "That is the biggest building."

- **Omission of Linking Verbs (Be Verbs)**

In Japanese, い-adjectives can function as predicates without a linking verb, whereas English requires "to be" (*is, are, was, were*). Since Japanese adjectives act as complete predicates, learners often forget to include "to be" in English sentences. As a result, students frequently make mistakes such as:

Essay 1: "She very beautiful." instead of "She is very beautiful."

Essay 12: "The food delicious." instead of "The food is delicious."

"

- **Difficulty with Comparative and Superlative Forms**

In Japanese, adjectives do not change form to express comparisons. Instead, comparisons are made using grammatical structures like より (*yor*, 'than') for comparatives and 最も (*mottomo*, 'most') for superlatives. Since Japanese does not use "-er" or "-est" like English, learners often overgeneralize English rules, leading to errors such as mixing "more" with "-er" or omitting "the" in superlative constructions.

Essay 18: **"That cake is more deliciouser than the other one."* instead of *"That cake is more delicious than the other one."*

Essay 7: **"He is tallest in the class."* instead of *"He is the tallest in the class."*

- **Direct Translation from Japanese**

Some adjective-noun combinations in Japanese do not translate naturally into English, leading to unnatural phrasing. Learners may also misplace adverbs due to differences in sentence structure. These errors occur when students directly translate Japanese phrases without adjusting for English syntax. Since English follows a strict adjective-noun and adverb-adjective word order, learners must adjust their sentence structure to avoid these errors.

Essay 1: **"I feel good condition."* instead of *"I feel well."*

Essay 9: **"This test is difficult very."* instead of *"This test is very difficult."*

- **The Grammatical Errors in Using Preposition**

Based on the collected data, Japanese students struggled with prepositions in English due to significant grammatical differences between Japanese and English sentence structures. The primary causes of these errors included the absence of prepositions in Japanese, differences in spatial and temporal expressions, direct translation issues, and confusion with prepositional collocations. The key reasons why Japanese learners made mistakes with adjectives in their English essays are listed below.

- **Absence of Prepositions in Japanese**

Japanese does not have direct equivalents for English prepositions such as "to," "at," or "on." Instead, it uses particles (e.g., に (*ni*), で (*de*), を (*wo*)) to indicate relationships between words. Since prepositions function differently in Japanese, learners often omit them or use incorrect ones when forming English sentences. This gives rise to errors such as:

Essay 7: **"I go school."* instead of *"I go to school."*

Essay 4: **"She is good English."* instead of *"She is good at English."*

- **Confusion in Spatial Prepositions ("in," "on," "at")**

Japanese spatial relationships do not always correspond directly to English prepositions. Instead of distinct prepositions like "in," "on," and "at," Japanese uses particles (e.g., に (*ni*), で (*de*)) and compound phrases (e.g., の上に (*no ue ni*, "on top of"), の中に (*no naka ni*, "inside")). Because of these differences, learners often translate spatial relationships incorrectly, leading to errors in English prepositions. This results in errors such as:

Essay 19: **"She is in the bus."* instead of *"She is on the bus."*

Essay 13: **"I put the book in the table."* instead of *"I put the book on the table."*

- **Temporal Preposition Mistakes ("on," "in," "at")**

Japanese expresses time differently than English and often does not require a preposition before time expressions. Instead of using "on" (specific days), "in" (months/years), or "at" (specific times), Japanese learners tend to omit prepositions or use incorrect ones due to direct translation from their native language. As a result, errors such as the following occur:

Essay 23: **"I was born at 2001."* instead of *"I was born in 2001."*

Essay 16: **"We will meet in Friday."* instead of *"We will meet on Friday."*

- **Overuse or Misuse of Prepositions**

Japanese learners sometimes add unnecessary prepositions in English, particularly when translating from Japanese sentence structures. In Japanese, certain verbs require particles that function like prepositions, leading students to overuse prepositions in English where they are not necessary. This contributes to errors like:

Essay 20: **"Discuss about the problem."* instead of *"Discuss the problem."*

Essay 11: **"Enter into the room."* instead of *"Enter the room."*

- **Difficulty with Prepositional Collocations**

English has many fixed prepositional phrases that do not follow predictable patterns (e.g., "interested in," "good at," "depend on"). Since Japanese does not have direct equivalents for many of these collocations, learners often translate word-for-word, leading to incorrect preposition choices. As a result, students frequently make mistakes such as:

Essay 4: **"She is interested about music."* instead of *"She is interested in music."*

Essay 10: **"It depends of the weather."* instead of *"It depends on the weather."*

- **The Grammatical Errors in Using Pronouns**

In their essays, Japanese students struggled with English pronouns due to fundamental differences between the Japanese and English pronoun systems. The key reasons for these errors included the lack of subject pronouns in Japanese, absence of gender-specific pronouns, omission of pronouns in sentence structure, confusion between subjective and objective forms, and difficulty with possessive pronouns and reflexive pronouns. Below are the key factors contributing to these difficulties.

- **Omission of Subject Pronouns in Japanese**

In Japanese, subject pronouns (e.g., *I, he, she, they*) are often omitted when the subject is clear from context. Unlike English, Japanese does not always require an explicit subject in sentences, leading learners to omit pronouns in English when they are needed. This results in errors such as:

Essay 5: **"Is my friend."* instead of *"He is my friend."*

Essay 8: **"Go to school every day."* instead of *"I go to school every day."*

- **No Distinction Between "He" and "She" in Japanese**

Japanese does not emphasize gender-specific third-person pronouns like English does. While the words 彼 (*kare*) for "he" and 彼女 (*kanojo*) for "she" exist, they are used far less frequently than their English counterparts. Instead, Japanese speakers often omit pronouns or refer to people by name or title. Because gendered pronouns are not as commonly used in Japanese, learners

frequently confuse "he" and "she" when speaking or writing in English. Due to this, errors such as the following are made:

Essay 14: *"*She is my brother.*" instead of "*He is my brother.*"

Essay 19: *"*He is my mother.*" instead of "*She is my mother.*"

- **Overuse or Omission of Pronouns**

In Japanese, pronouns are often omitted when the subject is clear from context, and proper nouns are frequently repeated instead of being replaced with pronouns. Because of this structural difference, Japanese learners tend to omit pronouns in English when they are needed or repeat proper nouns excessively. This results in errors such as:

Essay 22: *"*John is my friend. John likes soccer.*" instead of "*John is my friend. He likes soccer.*"

Essay 18: *"*My mother is kind. Always helps me.*" instead of "*My mother is kind. She always helps me.*"

- **Confusion Between Subject and Object Pronouns**

Japanese does not have a strict distinction between subject pronouns (*I, he, she*) and object pronouns (*me, him, her*). Unlike English, where subject pronouns are used for the subject of a sentence and object pronouns are used after verbs or prepositions, Japanese uses the same form for both cases. This structural difference leads Japanese learners to misuse pronouns in English. As a consequence, errors such as these arise:

Essay 1: *"*Me go to the park.*" instead of "*I go to the park.*"

Essay 15: *"*She gave it to I.*" instead of "*She gave it to me.*"

- **Difficulty with Possessive and Reflexive Pronouns**

Japanese expresses possession differently from English, often using *no* instead of possessive pronouns (*my, his, her*), which leads Japanese learners to omit or misuse possessive pronouns in English. Additionally, Japanese does not use reflexive pronouns (*myself, yourself, himself*) in the same way as English, causing learners to apply incorrect sentence structures when expressing reflexive actions. As a result, students frequently make mistakes such as:

Essay 9: *"*This is I book.*" instead of "*This is my book.*"

Essay 4: *"*I cut myself the finger.*" instead of "*I cut my finger.*"

- **The Grammatical Errors in Using Adverbs**

Based on the collected data, Japanese students struggled with adverb usage in English due to grammatical differences between Japanese and English, word order variations, lack of clear distinction between adjectives and adverbs, omission of adverbs, and difficulty with comparative and superlative forms. Below are the key reasons why Japanese learners make errors when using adverbs in English:

- **Word Order Differences**

In Japanese, adverbs typically appear before the verb, whereas English adverb placement is more flexible, depending on the type of adverb. Due to this structural difference, Japanese learners often misplace adverbs in English by directly translating word order from Japanese. This contributes to errors like:

Essay 6: *"*He drives carefully the car.*" instead of "*He drives the car carefully.*"

Essay 11: *"*I always am happy.*" instead of "*I am always happy.*"

- **Confusion Between Adjectives and Adverbs**

Japanese does not require distinct forms for adjectives and adverbs, whereas English often requires adverbs to end in “-ly.” Since Japanese adjectives can function as adverbs without modification, learners frequently forget to add “-ly” when using adverbs in English. This leads to errors such as:

Essay 19: **"She sings beautiful."* instead of *"She sings beautifully."*

Essay 21: **"He runs quick."* instead of *"He runs quickly."*

- **Omission of Adverbs**

In Japanese, adverbs of degree, manner, or frequency are sometimes implied rather than explicitly stated, as meaning is often inferred from context. Since adverbs are not always required in Japanese, learners tend to omit them in English sentences where they are necessary for clarity.

Essay 1: **"He speaks English."* instead of *"He speaks English fluently."*

Essay 13: **"She reads books."* instead of *"She often reads books."*

- **Incorrect Use of Comparative and Superlative Adverbs**

Japanese does not have distinct comparative and superlative adverb forms like *"more quickly"* or *"most carefully."* Instead, comparisons are made using structures such as *yor*i (more than) and *mottomo* (most), without altering the adverb's form. This causes difficulty in choosing between *-er/-est* and *"more/most"* in English. As a result, Japanese learners frequently make mistakes such as:

Essay 12: **"She runs faster than him."* (Correct) → But confusion arises when changing it to *"She runs more fast than him."* (Incorrect)

Essay 14: **"He did best in the test."* instead of *"He did the best in the test."*

- **Direct Translation from Japanese**

Some Japanese expressions do not have direct English equivalents, leading to awkward or unnatural adverb usage. Students translate adverbial expressions literally from Japanese, creating unnatural English sentences. This causes common errors, including:

Essay 22: **"I go to school by walking."* instead of *"I go to school on foot."*

Essay 16: **"I study with effort."* instead of *"I study hard."*

- **The Grammatical Errors in Using Conjunctions**

Japanese students made errors in conjunction usage in English in their essays due to differences in sentence structure, the absence of equivalents for certain conjunctions, incorrect word order, overuse or omission of conjunctions, and confusion between coordinating, subordinating, and correlative conjunctions. Below are the key reasons for these difficulties:

- **Differences in Sentence Structure**

In Japanese, conjunctions are often optional, and sentence connections rely on verb conjugations or particles rather than explicit conjunctions. Since Japanese does not always require conjunctions, students tend to omit them or use redundant phrasing. This often leads to errors, including:

Essay 23: **"I studied hard, I failed."* instead of *"I studied hard, but I failed."*

Essay 2: **"He is smart and also he is strong."* instead of *"He is smart and strong."*

- **Lack of Direct Equivalents for Some English Conjunctions**

Some English conjunctions do not have exact translations in Japanese, making it hard for students to know when and how to use them. Learners misuse

"because," "although," "since," and "while" due to a lack of direct equivalent grammar rules in Japanese. This contributes to errors like:

Essay 4: *"*Because of he was late, he missed the bus.*" instead of "*Because he was late, he missed the bus.*"

Essay 6: *"*Although he is tired, but he keeps working.*" instead of "*Although he is tired, he keeps working.*"

- **Incorrect Word Order in Complex Sentences**

Japanese word order differs significantly from English, especially when using subordinating conjunctions (e.g., "because," "although," "if"). Japanese allows dropping the subject, leading to incomplete subordinate clauses in English. As a result, students frequently make mistakes such as:

Essay 24: *"*He is happy because won the game.*" instead of "*He is happy because he won the game.*"

Essay 2: *"*If you will go to the party, tell me.*" instead of "*If you go to the party, tell me.*"

- **Overuse or Omission of Conjunctions**

Japanese students sometimes insert unnecessary conjunctions or forget to use them when connecting clauses. In Japanese, some sentence connectors function differently or can be omitted without affecting meaning. This often leads to errors, including:

Essay 8: *"*I like coffee, and also I like tea.*" instead of "*I like coffee and tea.*"

Essay 25: *"*She was late she was tired.*" instead of "*She was late, and she was tired.*"

- **Confusion Between Coordinating, Subordinating, and Correlative Conjunctions**

Japanese students often struggle to distinguish coordinating (e.g., *and*, *but*, *or*), subordinating (e.g., *because*, *although*, *since*), and correlative conjunctions (e.g., *either...or*, *neither...nor*). Correlative conjunctions are rarely used in Japanese, making them difficult for learners to master. This gives rise to errors such as:

Essay 7: *"*Either she nor her sister is going.*" instead of "*Either she or her sister is going.*"

Essay 20: *"*I like both apples or oranges.*" instead of "*I like both apples and oranges.*"

- **The Errors in English Spelling**

Japanese students had difficulties with English spelling in their essays due to differences in writing systems, inconsistencies in English spelling rules, phonetic mismatches, silent letters, homophones, and limited exposure to English orthography. Below are the key reasons why they frequently make spelling mistakes:

- **Differences in Writing Systems (Kanji, Hiragana, Katakana vs Alphabet)**

Japanese uses three writing systems (*Kanji*, *Hiragana*, and *Katakana*), while English relies on the Roman alphabet. Japanese students are not accustomed to spelling words letter-by-letter, as Hiragana and Katakana are syllabic, meaning one character represents a whole syllable rather than an individual sound. This contributes to errors like:

Essay 3: *"*shcool*" instead of "*school*"

Essay 9: *"*becouse*" instead of "*because*"

- **English Spelling Inconsistencies**

English has irregular spelling patterns that do not always follow phonetic rules. Since English spelling is not always predictable, students rely on phonetic approximations. As a consequence, errors such as these arise:

*Essay 18: *tommorow instead of "tomorrow"*

*Essay 5: *definatly instead of "definitely"*

- **Phonetic Mismatch Between Japanese and English**

Some English sounds do not exist in Japanese, leading to incorrect spelling based on pronunciation. Japanese learners struggle with English /r/ and /l/ as well as /v/ and /b/, affecting how they spell words. This results in errors such as:

*Essay 17: *ribber instead of "river"*

*Essay 11: *flend instead of "friend"*

- **Silent Letters & Complex Vowel Combinations**

English contains silent letters (e.g., "k" in knife) and complex vowel combinations (e.g., "ea" in bread and lead). Japanese does not have silent letters or irregular vowel patterns, making it difficult for learners to predict spelling. As a result, errors such as the following occur:

*Essay 10: *knowlege instead of "knowledge"*

*Essay 21: *recieve instead of "receive"*

- **Homophones (Words that Sound the Same but Have Different Spellings)**

English has many homophones that are spelled differently but sound the same. Japanese has fewer homophones in writing due to Kanji characters providing meaning, whereas English relies on spelling to differentiate words. This causes common errors, including:

*Essay 15: *there instead of "their"*

*Essay 19: *two instead of "too"*

- **Insights for English Language Education**

One of the most valuable skills an English teacher can have is the ability to recognize and address student errors. Errors in speaking and writing are not just problems to fix; they are opportunities for growth. They show where students need support and help teachers adjust their approach to make learning more effective. A great teacher does more than correct errors. They help students understand why they happen and how to improve. By understanding where students typically struggle, English teachers can create lessons that clarify difficult concepts and make learning feel more natural. For example, if students often mix up past tense verbs, meaningful and targeted practice can help them use them correctly and with confidence. Learning a language is not just about grammar. It is about expressing ideas in a way that feels natural. When students think about their errors, they start to see patterns and understand how the language works. Over time, this helps them become more independent and confident learners. Instead of simply pointing out errors, teachers can turn them into valuable learning moments. When students feel supported, they are more willing to take risks, learn from their errors, and grow. Seeing errors as part of the learning process builds confidence. The more they use the language, the more naturally their communication skills develop.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was found that EFL students made several grammatical errors in their writing, affecting nearly all parts of speech, including verbs, nouns, prepositions, adjectives, articles, pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, and spelling. Addressing these errors requires targeted instruction, independent grammar practice, and structured drills and exercises. To better support students, this study recommends implementing an intensive English grammar program and encourages teachers to explore effective techniques for teaching and correcting grammatical errors. Future research may benefit from analyzing a larger set of grammatical errors over an extended period to gain deeper insights.

FURTHER STUDY

This study enhances the understanding of grammatical errors in EFL learners, particularly in their writing; however, its findings are limited by factors such as sample size, data collection methods, the scope of qualitative analysis, and contextual variability. To improve the depth and applicability of future research, studying a more diverse group of learners, extending data collection periods, and incorporating experimental methods could provide a more comprehensive understanding of error patterns. These approaches may contribute to more effective language teaching strategies and a stronger foundation for improving learners' writing proficiency.

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