

Technical Intern Candidates' Grammatical Errors in Japanese Language at LPK Ganesha Karya Abadi

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Abstract

The high number of Japanese language errors in answering job interview questions is one of the factors that cause the failure of technical intern candidates to be accepted to work in Japanese companies. Therefore, the errors in the answers that technical intern candidates prepare for the possible questions that will usually arise in job interviews need to be known in order to be corrected and improved so that they can be better in following job interviews. This study aims to identify and analyze the forms of errors found in the answers to job interview preparation. The data source consists of the answers of fifteen technical intern candidates at LPK Ganesha Karya Abadi to the job interview essay test. All data were collected, identified, and analyzed using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy theory by Dulay (1982) supported by the Japanese language morphology theory by Yoko Hasegawa (2014) and Japanese language syntax by Masayoshi Shibatani (1990) on the forms of errors. The results of the study showed that the grammatical errors found in the answers of technical intern candidates to the job interview essay test were errors of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering error. The most common error was the misformation, followed by the omission error, then the addition error, and the least was the misordering error.

Keywords: Grammatical Errors; Technical Intern Candidates, Job Interview

1. Introduction

The growing interest among Indonesians to work in Japan has led to a significant increase in the emergence of employment agencies facilitating departures to Japan. One type of such departure agency is known as Vocational Training Institution or Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja (LPK). Technical intern training is one way to improve quality and develop the careers of workers who will go abroad. LPK not only sends someone to work abroad but also provides facilities for learning the language and culture of the target country. Language must be well mastered by someone who wants to work abroad because it plays an important role in the smooth running of the job interview process and their later life in the country. People who wish to work in Japan are required to be able to master Japanese before departure to make it easier to communicate both in their living environment and in their work environment. One of the LPK sending technical intern to training in Japan is LPK Ganesha Karya Abadi, which is located on Jalan Pulau Moyo, Denpasar, Bali. This vocational training institution holds a valid license and has successfully dispatched a considerable number of Indonesians to Japan for technical intern program and work. Among the stages that technical intern candidates are required to pass through is a job interview conducted by the Japanese side.

The frequency of grammatical errors in responding to interview questions in Japanese poses a challenge and contributes to the failure of the technical intern candidates to be accepted to work for Japanese companies. Consequently, it's crucial for instructors to diligently address the errors made by these potential interns, especially those found in the responses they've prepared for common interview questions. The primary focus of this study is on grammatical errors present in the answers of technical intern candidates during job interview essay tests. Proficiency in Japanese language learners is gauged by their ability to correctly apply grammar both in writing and in spoken communication. Hence, this study seeks to identify the various forms of Japanese grammatical errors, categorize them, and investigate the factors influencing these errors, building on the issues described earlier.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Surface Strategy Taxonomy

Surface Strategy Taxonomy is based on errors in altered and inappropriate surface structures. Dulay (1982:146) classifies these errors into four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Omission errors are marked by the absence of specific morphemes within a sentence. The subsequent error type is addition, which is indicated by the presence of specific morphemes that are not necessary in the sentence. This type of error is the opposite of omission. Additionally, misformation are identified by the use of morphemes or structures that are inappropriate in a sentence. Finally, there are misordering indicated by the improper placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes within a sentence. This sequencing error generally arises due to learners translating word-for-word from their source language's structure.

2.2. Japanese Morphology

Morphology or keitairon in Japanese is a branch of linguistics that examines words along with their formation and the influence of changes in language forms on function and meaning and identifies the basic units of language as forms of grammatical units. The smallest elements in morphology are morphemes, whereas the largest elements investigated are words (Simpson, 2021:5). According to Hasegawa (2014:64), Japanese word classes are divided into eight classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, personal pronouns, particles, classification of numbers, and ideophones.

2.3. Japanese Syntax

Syntax is a linguistic branch that examines the structure and elements of a sentence. The scope of syntax encompasses sentence types and functions, its constituent elements, as well as its structure and meaning. According to Shibatani (1990: 257), the basic grammatical structure of Japanese sentences possesses the following characteristics:

- Nominal relationships are expressed through postpositional particles.
- Demonstrative and descriptive adjective words precede the core noun in sentence order.
- Genitive nouns precede the possessed nouns.
- Relative clauses come before the nouns they modify.
- Singular proper nouns precede common nouns.
- Adverbial words precede the modified verbs.
- Auxiliary verbs follow the main verbs.
- Comparative expressions follow the standard order marker of comparative adjectives.

- Another characteristic is that questions are formed by adding sentence-final particles.
- There is no movement of question elements (wh-elements) in question sentences.

3. Methods

This study uses a qualitative descriptive analysis approach. The analysis is based on all gathered data through various data collection methods, including observation, in-depth interviews, and others. After the data is collected, the next steps are conducted in accordance with Corder's (1974) language error analysis procedure. This involves selecting and collecting language data for research. Next, identify errors in the data that has been collected. Following that, classifying errors based on linguistic aspects such as misformation, miscombination, and misordering. Subsequently, explaining errors by describing them. Finally, evaluating all the errors.

The location of this research was carried out at LPK Ganesha Karya Abadi which is located on Jalan Pulau Moyo, Pedungan, Denpasar. The study's timeline spans three months, targeting the basic class comprising 15 technical intern candidates who are Japanese language training participants. This timeline aligns with the three-month initial training program, which serves as a prerequisite for job interview participation. The research was conducted from November 2022 to February 2023.

4. Research Results

Grammatical errors involve understanding the structure and grammatical rules of a language. Analyzing grammatical errors helps us recognize common mistakes that often occur in language usage. Grammatical error analysis aids in identifying errors made in both spoken and written forms, as well as rectifying them. Thus, this analysis serves as a crucial step in enhancing language skills.

The following is the result of an analysis of grammatical errors in answering job interview description tests in Japanese for technical intern candidates at LPK Ganesha Karya Abadi. The results revealed various types of error, in line with Dulay's (1982) categorization, including omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The analysis yielded a total of 88 errors, encompassing 16 omissions, 9 additions, 58 misformations, and 5 misorderings.

4.1. Omissions

Omission errors are characterized by the absence of specific morphemes required within a sentence. The occurrence of errors result in grammatically incorrect sentences. In this study, several omission errors were identified in the answers of the technical intern candidates to job interview questions, including the omission of copulas, the omission of noun phrases, and the omission of honorific suffixes. The following examples are a few sentences of technical intern candidates' responses containing these errors, along with their discussions.

*Nihon wa kirei kuni desu.

The appropriate sentence is:

Nihon	wa	kirei	na	kuni	desu
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Japan	TOP	beautiful	COP.ATT	country	COP
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'Japan is a beautiful country'

The provided data highlights an error in the omission of the copula contained in the answer regarding the impression of the technical intern candidates about the country of Japan. The appropriate sentence should be 'Nihon wa kirei na kuni desu' which translates to 'Japan is a beautiful country'. The -na adjective 'kirei' should

be filled with the ‘-na’ copula conjugation before it is followed by a noun. This ‘-na’ conjugation of the copula is its attributive form. The attributive form is utilized to connect an adjective (such as ‘kirei’) with the noun it describes.

*Hai, koto ga dekimasu.

The appropriate sentence is:

Hai, noru koto ga dekimasu

Yes ride NMLZ NOM can

‘Yes, I can ride’

The data above is an error in the omission of the noun phrase contained in the answer concerning the ability to ride a bicycle. Typically, when the technical interns are in Japan, they will be facilitated with bicycles as a means of personal transportation. The correct sentence should be ‘Hai, noru koto ga dekimasu’, which translates to ‘yes, I can ride’. The sentence pattern ‘~koto ga dekimasu’ is a pattern to show a convey a habitual action or ability, which can only be followed by a dictionary form verb in front of it to make a complete and appropriate clause (Kaiser, 2013: 402). Therefore, in front of the clause ‘~koto ga dekimasu’, a dictionary form verb should be added which indicates the ability intended in the question. Subsequently, it can be followed by ‘koto’ to nominalize the verb, and transforming it into a noun phrase.

4.2. Additions

Addition errors are in contrast to omission type errors. Typically, these errors are apparent through the inclusion of certain elements or words that are not necessary in the sentence. This type of error often leads to sentence inconsistency in terms of grammar. This research identified several addition errors in the answers provided by technical intern candidates during job interview questions. These errors include the addition of particles, copulas, honorific suffixes, derived nouns, and adjective conjugations. Below are a few sentences from technical intern candidates’ responses that display these errors, along with their corresponding discussion.

*Tsuyoi no karada o motteimasu.

The appropriate sentence is:

Tsuyoi karada o motteimasu

Strong body ACC having

Having a strong body

The phrase ‘Tsuyoi no karada o motteimasu’ contains an error related to the addition of a copula. This error is observed in the response regarding the strengths possessed by technical intern candidates. The accurate sentence should be ‘Tsuyoi karada o motteimasu,’ which translates to ‘having a strong body.’ In this context, ‘tsuyoi’ is an i-adjective signifying ‘strong.’ When an i-adjective functions as a modifier, the primary noun can be directly combined without employing ‘-no’. However, when a noun acts as a modifier for another noun, the copula ‘-no’ should be applied after the modifier noun (Hasegawa, 2014: 79).

*Hiragana to katakana no kakishikata o benkyoushimashita

The appropriate sentence is:

Hiragana to katakana no kakikata o benkyou shimashita

Hiragana and katakana GEN how to write ACC learned

I learned how to write katakana

The data above indicates an error involving the addition of derived nouns in responses related to how the technical intern candidates learn Japanese. The correct sentence should be 'Hiragana to katakana no kakikata o benkyou shimashita,' which translates to 'I learned how to write hiragana and katakana.' The term 'kakishikata' should be corrected to 'kakikata,' which means 'how to write.' This term is a derived noun formed through the process of affixation between a verb and the '-kata' ending. The '-kata' ending is a noun ending that illustrates the method of performing an action (Makino, 1996: 183). The process involves removing the '-masu' part of the non-past positive polite form of the verb and adding the '-kata' ending.

4.3. Misformation

This error is indicated by the utilization of inaccurate morphemes or sentence structures. Such errors can result in communication confusion, leading to sentences that are either ungrammatical or devoid of meaning. In the context of this study, various instances of misformations were identified in the responses provided by technical intern candidates during job interview sessions. These misformations encompass errors in verb conjugation, copula forms, yarimorai auxiliary verb forms, particle forms, adjective forms, auxiliary verb forms, numerical expressions, and overall sentence structures. Presented below are examples of sentences that exemplify these errors, accompanied by detailed discussions for each case.

*Hai, sushi o taberu koto ga arimasu

The appropriate sentence is:

hai, sushi o tabeta koto ga arimasu

Yes sushi ACC eat-PST NMLZ NOM have

'yes, I have eaten sushi'

The data above presents a verb-related error identified in the responses of technical intern candidates concerning their experience with consuming Japanese cuisine. The correct sentence should be 'hai, sushi o tabeta koto ga arimasu,' which translates to 'yes, I have eaten sushi.' According to the principles of Japanese grammar, the clause pattern '~koto ga arimasu' should be followed by the plain past tense form of the verb, denoted by the 'ta' form, as in 'tabeta' for 'have eaten.' This usage adheres to the function of the '~koto ga arimasu' pattern, designed to illustrate the experience of an individual who has engaged in a specific action or activity in the past (Makino, 1996: 197).

*Sensei ga naratteimasu

The appropriate sentence is:

Sensei ni naratteimasu

Teacher DAT learning

'learning from the teacher'

The data that shown above indicates an error involving the particle 'ga' in the response about how technical intern candidates learn Japanese. The correct sentence should be 'Sensei ni naratteimasu,' meaning 'learning from the teacher.' The usage of 'ga' would imply that the teacher is the subject of the sentence, suggesting 'the teacher learns,' which isn't the intended meaning. The appropriate particle here is 'ni,' which conveys the indirect object of the verb 'naratteimasu,' indicating 'learning from' (Kawashima, 1999: 132).

*Hai, nihongo ga amari ii desu

The appropriate sentence is:

hai, nihongo ga amari yokunai desu

Yes japanese NOM not.much good.not COP

'yes, my Japanese isn't that good'

The above data highlights an adjective form error in the response regarding the concerns of technical intern candidates when working in Japan. The accurate sentence should be 'hai, nihongo ga amari yokunai desu,' meaning 'yes, my Japanese isn't that good.' The inclusion of the adverb 'amari' in the sentence causes this error. 'Amari' carries the meaning of 'not so' and is typically used with a negative predicate (Makino, 1996: 72). However, using 'ii' as a positive predicate contradicts the grammar rules. The proper form should be the negative 'yokunai,' signifying 'not good.'

4.4. Misordering

The category of misordering errors is characterized by the incorrect arrangement of morphemes or groups of morphemes within sentences. Such sequence errors commonly arise when learners directly translate from the structure of their native language into the Japanese language. Within the context of this study, various misordering errors were identified in the responses provided by technical intern candidates during job interview questions. These errors encompass instances of verb order, compound structure, relative clause arrangement, and noun phrase sequence. Presented below are selected sentences from technical intern candidates' responses that exemplify these errors, accompanied by their corresponding analysis.

*Butaniku o tabenai desu kara, watashi wa isuramu kyou desu

The appropriate sentence is:

Watashi wa isuramukyou desu kara butaniku o tabenai desu

I TOP muslim COP.NPST because pork ACC eat-NEG COP

'because I am a Muslim, I do not eat pork'

The data provided reflects an error in the arrangement of compound words in sentences discussing dietary restrictions faced by technical intern candidate. This issue arises due to a sequence error between cause and effect sentences. The correct sentence structure should be 'Watashi wa isuramu kyou desu kara butaniku o tabenai desu,' meaning 'because I am a Muslim, I do not eat pork'. The conjunction '~kara', meaning 'because', should introduce the main clause after the reason sentence. However, the data's current structure places the main clause before the reason, resulting in a grammatical inaccuracy (Makino, 1996: 180).

*Junbi nihon e ikitai desu

The appropriate sentence is:

nihon e iku junbi o shitai desu

Japan to go preparation ACC want.to.do COP

'I want to make preparations to go to Japan'

The data presented indicates an error in the arrangement of relative clauses concerning activities the candidates wish to undertake before starting their technical internship program in Japan. The current data is inaccurate due to an improper sentence structure that hinders clear communication of meaning. The correct structure should be 'nihon e iku junbi o shitai desu,' conveying 'I want to make preparations to go to Japan.'

The error lies in placing the core noun ahead of the relative clause, contrary to Japanese grammar conventions where the main noun should be preceded by a clause explaining it (Makino, 1996: 183).

5. Conclusion

The process of language learning inherently involves making errors. Should these errors remain unaddressed and uncorrected, learners might inadvertently perpetuate them in the future, presuming their understanding and application to be accurate. Consequently, comprehending the errors prevalent in language acquisition becomes essential for rectification, prompting the need for comprehensive error analyses.

In the context of this research, an error analysis was conducted on the responses of technical intern candidates to job interview assessment tasks. The identified grammatical errors encompassed omissions, additions, misformation, and misordering. Among these, misformations emerged as the most prevalent, followed by omission errors and additions. Conversely, misorderings were identified as the least frequent among the observed errors.

Understanding the array of errors learners encounter during the language learning journey is pivotal not only for correcting immediate mistakes but also for fostering the accuracy and fluency of their future linguistic endeavors. This research underlines the significance of error analysis as a valuable tool in enhancing language teaching methodologies and curriculum development.

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