
Japanese Students' Common grammar errors in Writing Vietnamese

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Abstract

Based on the language materials collected from final examination papers of Vietnamese Writing I, II, III and IV at Nagoya University of Commerce and Business Administration (Japan) in the years 2005-2008, this research finds that the most common grammatical problems for Japanese students in writing Vietnamese is word order and classifiers. The errors of word order (at both phrasal and structural levels) include the word misplacement of almost all parts of speech and phrases and sentence types due to the influence of the students' native language, which has the contrary word order to the target language. Because of the special feature of Vietnamese classifiers, the errors in use of this part of speech have a different source: the target language itself. A system error analysis can help the teacher know the students' level and, therefore, prepare appropriate learning materials and practice exercises, and the students themselves in testing their strategies in learning the language.

Introduction

Errors are inevitable in the process of foreign language acquisition since this is a process of hypothesis and trial. A foreign language learner's errors are not negative or interfering in any way with learning the target language but are a positive factor, evidence of strategies and procedures the learner is employing in his or her discovery of the language. A systematic analysis of errors will tell the teacher how much of the target language the learner knows and consequently, what remains to be learned. The teacher should know what kinds of errors need to be handled, otherwise, they can become fossilized. Error analysis is also helpful to the learner to help test his hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning.

Errors can be classified according to: (1) modality, i.e. level of proficiency in speaking, writing, reading, listening; (2) linguistic levels of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, style; (3) syntactic forms, i.e. omission, insertion, substitution or word order. According to the source, errors are generally divided into two categories: interference (or interlingual) errors, whose source can be traced to the learner's mother tongue, and intralingual (or developmental) errors, which arise from the target language itself. Correlatively, the device or strategies used by the learner are called interlingual transfer (or simply, transfer) from the native language, and intralingual transfer, which appears in concrete occasions as overgeneralization or as communicative strategies, such as avoidance, simplification and language switching...)

From this theoretical background, this paper aims to analyse the most common grammar errors made by Japanese students in writing Vietnamese in order to obtain information on common difficulties in Vietnamese learning. Such analysis may aid in teaching or in preparing teaching materials and make students more conscious of using classifiers and word order in writing Vietnamese. The data are the first-hand language materials collected from over 120 papers of final examinations of the courses Vietnamese Writing I-II-III-IV and Vietnamese Integrated Practices I-II-III-IV-V (Writing parts) in the academic years from 2005 to 2008 at Nagoya University of Commerce and Business Administration. Other errors such

as in spelling and punctuation are not taken into consideration in this paper. The most common errors are classifiers and word order. There are different types of word misplacement and incorrect usage of classifiers.

1. Errors in word order.

Learning a second or foreign language is influenced by students' prior knowledge (Brown, 2000). In the case of Japanese students learning Vietnamese, prior knowledge of Japanese language patterns may notably affect their acquisition of Vietnamese. Language transfer, or the incorporation of patterns from the native language into the target language, is a common source of errors among learners of a second or foreign language (Brown, 2000).

One area where language transfer is particularly prevalent among Japanese learners is word order in a phrase or sentence.

Vietnamese and Japanese belong to different language groups. Vietnamese is classified as an analytic or isolating language, whereas Japanese is an example of agglutinating languages.

Japanese has a highly regular agglutinative verb morphology and a system of particles to express grammatical meanings. Japanese parts of speech are usually marked with particles that follow the word they modify. These particles identify the function of the word or the phrase in the sentence (topic, subject, (direct/indirect) object, complement). Japanese is flexible in terms of word order due to use of particles.

Vietnamese, as an isolating language, has no inflectional morphology and all the words are invariable. Grammatical meanings are expressed not by changing the internal structure of the word, but by the use of word order, sentence structure and auxiliary words. Many grammatical concepts, which would be expressed by gluing morphemes together in Japanese, are expressed with word order in Vietnamese. The word order in Vietnamese is fairly rigid.

In terms of word order, Japanese is the epitome of a head-final language. Japanese phrases are exclusively head-final and compound sentences are exclusively left-branching. A phrase is headed by the main word, which is always placed at the end of the phrase.

Vietnamese, by contrast, is a rigidly head-initial language: the head of each phrasal constituent precedes its phrasal complement.

There are three main phrases: noun phrases, verb phrases and adjective phrases that form the core of a Vietnamese sentence. (UBKH XHVN, 1983-2002)

Errors in word order can be found in all these types of phrases and in some sentential structures. They can be separated into three groups. Noun phrases and adjective phrases form one group because the word order errors in them are similar. In the second group, verb phrases, word misplacement concerns both errors within phrases and in the structure of the sentence. The third group includes word order errors in sentential structure.

1.1. Word misplacement in noun phrases and adjective phrases

1.1.1. Word misplacement in noun phrases

The errors in word order of noun phrases can be grouped as follows:

- Quantifiers placed after the head noun instead of before it:

(1) * *Trong phòng có người sáu.*

Vs. *Trong phòng có sáu người.* 'There are **six people** in the room.'

(2) * *Hà Nội và Hải Phòng là lớn nhất thành phố hai ở Việt Nam miền Bắc.*

Vs. *Hà Nội và Hải Phòng là hai thành phố lớn, nhất ở miền Bắc Việt Nam.* 'Hanoi and Haiphong are **two biggest cities** in the North of Vietnam.'

(3) * *Sinh viên nhiều đã tham gia cuộc họp.*

Vs. *Nhiều sinh viên đã tham gia cuộc họp.* 'A lot of the students attended the meeting'.

Here also: Quantifiers and classifiers after the head noun instead of before it:

(4) * *Quyển từ điển hai này là của tôi.*

Vs. *Hai quyển từ điển này là của tôi.* 'Two these dictionaries are mine.'

(5) * *Tôi mua bưu thiếp mười hai tấm.*

Vs. *Tôi mua mười hai tấm bưu thiếp.* 'I bought twelve postcards.'

(6) * *Có mèo bốn con trong vườn.*

Vs. *Có bốn con mèo trong vườn.* 'There are four cats in the garden.'

- Adjectives before the head noun instead of after it:

(7) * *Mới tạp chí ở trên bàn.*

Vs. *Tạp chí mới ở trên bàn.* 'New magazine is on the table.'

(8) * *Tôi không thích cổ điển nhạc.*

Vs. *Tôi không thích nhạc cổ điển.* 'I do not like classical music.'

(9) * *Hiện đại khách sạn này vào năm 2005 được xây.*

Vs. *Khách sạn hiện đại này được xây vào năm 2005.* 'This modern hotel was built in 2005'.

- Modifying nouns before the head noun instead of after it:

(10) * *Khách phòng ở bên phải.*

Vs. *Phòng khách ở bên phải.* 'Living room is on the right side.'

(11) * *Thành phố trung tâm cách đây không xa.*

Vs. *Trung tâm thành phố cách đây không xa.* 'The city center is not far from here.'

- Modifying verbs and verbal phrases before the head noun rather than after it:

(12) * *Tôi đợi bạn ở chờ phòng.*

Vs. *Tôi đợi bạn ở phòng chờ.* 'I wait for you in the waiting room.'

(13) * *Đọc phòng ở bên phải.*

Vs. *Phòng đọc ở bên phải.* 'Reading room is on the right side.'

(14) * *Họ mới xây ngôi nhà chuyển đến.*

Vs. *Họ chuyển đến ngôi nhà mới xây.* 'They moved to the house just built.'

- Relative clause before the head noun instead of after it:

(15) * *Nơi mẹ tôi làm việc bệnh viện rất gần nhà tôi.*

Vs. *Bệnh viện nơi mẹ tôi làm việc rất gần nhà tôi.* 'Hospital, where my mother works, is very near my house.'

(16) * *Mùa thu là tôi thích nhất mùa.*

Vs. *Mùa thu là mùa tôi thích nhất.* 'Autumn is the season I like most.'

(17) * *Đây là hay nghe anh ấy bản nhạc.*

Vs. *Đây là bản nhạc anh ấy hay nghe.* 'This is the melody he often listen to.'

In Vietnamese noun phrases the head noun can be modified by pronouns, quantifiers, classifiers, adjectives, other attributive lexical words (such as other nouns and verbs), and phrases. These modifiers co-occur with the head noun in a strict order. The following modifiers appear before the head noun:

- totality: *cả lớp* 'whole class', *mỗi sinh viên* 'each student', *hàng ngày* 'every day'
- quantifier: *hai người* 'two persons', *mấy sinh viên* 'some students', *vài ngày* 'several days'
- plural markers: *những ấn tượng* 'impressions', *các ý kiến* 'opinions'
- classifier: *con mèo* 'cat' (Clas for animals – cat), *cái bàn* 'table' (Clas for things – table), *tấm bản đồ* 'map' (Clas for paper – map)

The use and the position of each pre-modifier depend on the subclass of the head noun. For example, if the head noun is an abstract noun, then the totality, quantifier and plural marker can immediately precede

it. However, if the head noun is an item noun, a classifier must be placed between the other pre-modifiers and the head noun.

The following modifiers occur after the head noun:

- adjective: *sách hay* 'interesting book', *từ mới* 'new word', *lá đỏ* 'red leaf'
- pronoun: *từ điển này* 'this dictionary', *khách sạn kia* 'that hotel', *người ấy* 'that person'
- other attributive word, phrase or relative clause: *phòng khách* lit. 'guests' room', *phòng đọc* 'reading room', *trường của anh ấy* lit. school of he – 'his school', *xe mới mua* 'just bough car', *bài hát (mà) chúng tôi đang nghe* 'the song we are listening to'...

The pre-modifiers are function (or "empty") words (although they have certain lexical meaning), whereas, the post-modifiers are lexical (or "full") words (UBKH XHVN, 1983-2002). Therefore, the position of modifiers in noun phrases is considered relevant in determining head position. By these criteria, Vietnamese is consistently head-initial (Cao Xuan Hao, 1999).

The noun phrase in Vietnamese has the following structure:

Totality – quantifier/plural marker – classifier – head noun – attributive word/phrase – adjective – pronoun – relative clause

cả hai quyển từ điển Việt – Nhật này của tôi

'all two these new Vietnamese books of mine'

In Japanese, the grammatical function of nouns is indicated by postpositions. These include topic particle *wa* (*haha wa*), subject *ga* (*sashimi ga*), direct object *wo* (*hon wo*), indirect object *ni* (*imouto ni*), possession *no* (*sensei no*).... The particles play an extremely important function in Japanese.

It is clear that the source of the above errors is the influence of prior knowledge of word order in Japanese noun phrases, where all kinds of modifiers are placed before the head noun (e.g. *otoko no ko* 'boy-kid', *shiroi neko* 'white cat' *kuruma de* 'by car', *rinko yori* 'than apple'...). This order contrasts with the word order in Vietnamese noun phrases.

1.1.2. Word misplacement in adjective phrases

There are three subgroups of word order errors in adjective phrases:

- Modifying nouns (noun phrases) before the head adjective instead of after it:

(18) * *Công viên bệnh viện gần.*

Vs. *Công viên gần bệnh viện.* 'The park is **near a hospital.**'

(19) * *Trường này nhà tôi xa.*

Vs. *Trường này xa nhà tôi.* 'This university is **far from my house.**'

- Prepositional phrases before the head adjective instead of after it:

(20) * *Nhà hàng này về sushi nổi tiếng.*

Vs. *Nhà hàng này nổi tiếng về sushi.* 'This restaurant is **famous with sushi.**'

(21) * *Anh ấy trong học tập nghiêm túc.*

Vs. *Anh ấy nghiêm túc trong học tập.* 'He is **serious in study.**'

(22) * *Chị Lan như diễn viên đẹp.*

Vs. *Chị Lan đẹp như diễn viên.* 'Miss Lan is **pretty as an actress.**'

- Verb phrases before the main adjective instead of after it:

(23) * *Tôi hơn Yumi nhỏ.*

Vs. *Tôi nhỏ hơn Yumi.* 'I am **smaller than Yumi.**'

(24) * *Tôi bằng anh ấy cao.*

Vs. *Tôi cao bằng anh ấy.* 'I am **as tall as him.**'

(25) * *Bố tôi và bố nó bằng nhau già.*

Vs. *Bố tôi và bố nó già bằng nhau.* 'My father and his father are **the same age.**'

The cause of these errors is the same as of the previous group: the difference between word order of

adjective phrases in Vietnamese and Japanese. In Vietnamese the main (head) adjective always precedes its modifiers, whereas in Japanese it follows them: *sakura de yumeina* 'famous with sakura', *yama no youna* 'like a mountain', *taihen kireina* 'very beautiful' ...

1.2. Word misplacement in verb phrases

Word order errors in verb phrases can be divided into the following subgroups:

- The main verb in the end of the sentence instead of before its object:

(26) * *Tôi ngữ pháp vào thứ năm học.*

Vs. *Tôi học ngữ pháp vào thứ năm.* 'I study grammar on Thursday.'

(27) * *Chúng tôi Việt Nam món ăn thích.*

Vs. *Chúng tôi thích món ăn Việt Nam.* 'We like Vietnamese food.'

(28) * *Mẹ ô em gái cho.*

Vs. *Mẹ cho em gái ô.* 'My mother gave my sister an umbrella'.

- Modal verbs after the main verb instead of before it:

* *Tôi Việt Nam đi muốn.*

Vs. *Tôi muốn đi Việt Nam.* 'I want to go to Vietnam.'

(29) * *Thỉnh thoảng chúng tôi thứ bảy vào học phải.*

Vs. *Thỉnh thoảng chúng tôi phải học vào thứ bảy.* 'Sometimes we have to study on Sunday.'

(30) * *Bệnh nhân uống thuốc cần.*

Vs. *Bệnh nhân cần uống thuốc.* 'Patient needs to take medicines.'

- Complement verbs after the main verb rather than before it:

(31) * *Trẻ em chơi đi công viên.*

Vs. *Trẻ em đi chơi công viên.* 'The children go to play in the park.'

(32) * *Tôi đọc bắt đầu cuốn sách này.*

Vs. *Tôi bắt đầu đọc cuốn sách này.* 'I began to read this book.'

(33) * *Em sẽ học cố gắng.*

Vs. *Em sẽ cố gắng học.* 'I will try to learn.'

- Passive markers after the verb instead of before it:

(34) * *Chị Hà khen được.*

Vs. *Chị Hà được khen.* 'Miss. Hà is prized.'

(35) * *Bài văn này chê bị.*

Vs. *Bài văn này chê bị.* 'This composition is criticized.'

- Adverbs and adverbial phrases before the verb instead of after it:

(36) * *Nó muộn dậy.*

Vs. *Nó dậy muộn.* 'He gets up late.'

(37) * *Mèo nhà tôi nhiều ăn.*

Vs. *Mèo nhà tôi ăn nhiều.* 'Our cat eats much'.

(38) * *Tôi bài tập nhà đã xong làm.*

Vs. *I đã làm xong bài tập về nhà.* 'I have finished my homeworks'

(39) * *Tôi muốn nữa chơi.*

Vs. *Tôi muốn chơi nữa.* 'I want to play more'

(40) * *Tôi câu hỏi không ngay hiểu.*

Vs. *Tôi không hiểu ngay câu hỏi.* 'I did not understand the question immediately.'

(41) * *Anh ấy rất giỏi bơi.*

Vs. *Anh ấy bơi rất giỏi.* 'He swims very well.'

- Adverbials (in form of prepositional phrases) before the verb (with or without object) instead of after it:

• Temporal:

(42) * Tôi thường lúc 7 giờ đi học.

Vs. Tôi thường **đi học lúc 7 giờ**. 'I usually **go** to school at **7 o'clock**.'

(43) * Hôm nay tôi 4 tiếng làm việc.

Vs. Hôm nay tôi **làm việc 4 tiếng**. Lit. 'Today I **worked 4 hours**'.

• Locative:

(44) * Tôi trong giường đọc thích.

Vs. Tôi **thích đọc trên giường**. 'I like reading in bed.'

(45) * Tôi ấy ở nhà hàng làm thêm.

Vs. Tôi **làm thêm ở nhà hàng**. 'I have a part-time job in a restaurant'.

• Instrumental:

(46) * Người Việt bằng đũa ăn.

Vs. Người Việt **ăn bằng đũa**. 'Vietnamese eat with chopsticks.'

(47) * Tôi bằng xe buýt đến trường.

Vs. Tôi **đến trường bằng xe buýt**. 'I go to school by bus.'

(48) * Sinh viên Nhật thường bài bằng bút chì viết.

Vs. Sinh viên Nhật thường **viết bài bằng bút chì**. 'Japanese students usually write lessons with a pencil.'

• Comparative:

(49) * Anh ấy như người Việt nói tiếng Việt.

Vs. Anh ấy **nói tiếng Việt như người Việt**. 'He speaks Vietnamese like a Vietnamese.'

(50) * Ông ấy như máy làm việc.

Vs. Ông ấy **làm việc như máy**. 'He works like a machine.'

• Causal/Purpose:

(51) * Kotaro tiếng Việt để học đi Việt Nam.

Vs. Kotaro **đi Việt Nam để học tiếng Việt**. 'Kotaro went to Vietnam to learn Vietnamese.'

(52) * Tôi để mượn sách đến thư viện.

Vs. Tôi **đến thư viện để mượn sách**. 'I came to the library to borrow books.'

- Modifying clauses before the main verb instead of after it:

(53) * Tôi hôm nay anh ấy sẽ đến rằng nghĩ.

Vs. Tôi **nghĩ rằng hôm nay anh ấy không đến**. 'I think that today he does come.'

(54) * Anh Nam công ty này thích là nói.

Vs. Anh Nam **nói là (anh ấy) thích công ty này**. 'Nam said that he liked this company.'

A verb phrase can be the predicate of a sentence. The basic sentential word order in Vietnamese is Subject-Verb-Object (S-V-O): typically, the subject precedes the auxiliary, which precedes the lexical verb, which in turn precedes any object or noun phrase.

Subject – auxiliary – modal verb – main verb – (direct, indirect) object – adverbial – modifying clause

Ông Nam thường đi làm sớm để tránh kẹt xe. 'Mr. Nam often goes to work early to avoid the traffic jam.'

Japanese is typologically classified as a Subject-Object-Verb (S-O-V) language. In Japanese, the verb appears at the end of clauses and sentences. Two principles hold true for word order in Japanese: (1) the predicate (a verb or a verbal form) must come at the end of the sentence; (2) a particle must immediately follow the word it marks. Other than this, word order in Japanese is not rigid. The subject or topic usually

comes first, although an adverb of time may be placed before or after it. Expressions of time usually precede expression of place (Makino Seiichi and Tsutsui Michio, 1995). Most modifiers precede the word they modify. However, Japanese sentences generally have the following structure:

Topic – time – location – subject – indirect object – direct object – verb

Sumisu-san wa Nihon de nihongo wo benkyou shite iru. 'Mr. Smith is studying Japanese in Japan.

As seen in the above examples, the word order errors in verb phrases are numerous and very different. The first and main reason is the difference in word order in the two languages. For example, in Vietnamese, adverbs must be placed after the main verb. In the case of moving them to the beginning of the sentence, they become the sentence topic and cause the sentence meaning to change. Cf.

(a) *Midori thường học tiếng Việt vào buổi sáng.* 'Midori often learns Vietnamese in the morning.'

(b) *Buổi sáng, Midori thường học ở thư viện.* (The preposition is often omitted.) 'As for the morning, Midori often learns Vietnamese.

The time is emphasized in (a) 'When does Midori often learn Vietnamese?', whereas the activity is focused in (b) 'What does Midori often do in the morning?'

(c) *Tôi đi thư viện để mượn sách.* 'I go to the library to borrow a book.'

(d) *Để mượn sách, tôi đi thư viện.* 'In order to borrow a book I go to the library.'

The focus is on the purpose in (c) 'For what do you go to the library?', and on activity in (d) 'What do you do to borrow a book?'

There is the same situation with the order of the objects in two-object sentences. The normal order of objects is: direct object – indirect object. In some cases, their order can be changed:

Tôi mượn sách thư viện. Cf. *Tôi mượn thư viện sách.*

In certain contexts, the above examples are synonyms for 'I borrowed the book from the library.' However, the meanings of these sentences can be different in this way: While *Tôi mượn thư viện sách* has only the above meaning, *Tôi mượn sách thư viện* means 'I borrowed the **library book** (but may be from the library or from, for example, my friend.)'

The objects can exchange their positions without changing the sentence meaning only when indirect object follows the preposition *cho*:

Mẹ mua một cái mũ cho tôi and *Mẹ mua cho tôi một cái mũ.* 'My mother bought me a hat.'

However, in all versions, the main verb must precede its objects.

Second, although the Vietnamese word order is rigid, in verb phrases it appears less consistent than in other phrases (UBKHXX, 1983-2002). Some verb dependents can be placed in more than one position; for example, some adverbs can occur before or after the verb: *thầm nghĩ – nghĩ thầm* 'think secretly, silently', *khẽ gọi – gọi khẽ* 'call softly' (but only *gọi to* 'call loudly', (**to gọi*) is ungrammatical), *nhẹ nhàng đến – đến nhẹ nhàng* 'come lightly, gently' ...

1.3. Word misplacement in sentential structure

The sentence word order errors concerning the verb in simple sentences are shown in 1.2. Here we will present the errors in compound sentences and questions.

1.3.1. Word order errors in compound sentences

The errors are found only in subordinate compound sentences. There are three groups:

- Subordinate clause after the main clause instead of before it:

(55) * *Thì anh ấy đến nếu tôi gọi.*

Vs. *Nếu tôi gọi thì anh ấy đến.* 'If I call he will come.'

(56) * *Nhưng kết quả không tốt tuy anh ấy học nhiều.*

Vs. *Tuy anh ấy học nhiều, nhưng kết quả không tốt.* 'He learns hard, but the results are not

good.'

(57) * *Nên mẹ không đi làm vì con nhỏ ốm.*

Vs. *Vì con nhỏ ốm nên mẹ không đi làm.* 'Since the kid is sick, the mother does not go to work.'

- Connective misplacement in sentences containing one conjunction:

(58) * *Trời mưa nếu tôi sẽ ở nhà.*

Vs. *Nếu trời mưa, tôi sẽ ở nhà.* 'If it rains, I will be at home'

(59) * *Vì cô ấy buồn, anh ấy không tặng hoa.*

Vs. *Cô ấy buồn vì anh ấy không tặng hoa.* 'She is sad **because** he didn't give flowers.'

(60) * *Công việc vất vả, tuy cô ấy không thấy mệt.*

Vs. *Tuy công việc vất vả, cô ấy không thấy mệt.* 'Although the work is hard, she doesn't feel tired.'

Putting the conjunction in the front position of the subordinate clause will make these sentences correct.

- Conjunction misplacement in sentences with two conjunctions:

(61) * *Vì tôi ở nhà nên trời mưa.*

Vs. *Vì trời mưa nên tôi ở nhà.* 'Since it rains, I am home.'

(62) * *Nếu bạn sẽ béo vì bạn ăn nhiều*

Vs. *Nếu bạn ăn nhiều, thì bạn sẽ béo.* 'If you eat much, you will be fat.'

(63) * *Dù tôi đi trường nhưng tôi ốm.*

Vs. *Dù tôi ốm nhưng tôi vẫn đến trường.* 'Although I am sick, I go to school'

These sentences become correct when exchanging the positions of the conjunctions.

In Vietnamese, subordinate compound sentences are always used with conjunctions (connectives), which always stand at the beginning of the clauses. If there is only one conjunction, it stands in the subordinate clause, which is placed after the main clause. The order of subordinate compound sentences with one conjunction is as follows:

Main clause – connective – subordinate clause

Tôi không đến trường vì hôm nay là ngày lễ. 'I don't go to school **because** it is a holiday today.'

In sentences with a couple of conjunctions, the two conjunctions each stand in the front position of a clause. The subordinate clause often precedes the main clause.

Connective 1 – subordinate clause – connective 2 – main clause

Vì hôm nay là ngày lễ nên tôi không đến trường. 'Since it is a holiday today, I don't go to school'.

In some sentences denoting condition-consequence, cause-result and concession-increase, the conjunction in the main clause can be omitted and become similar to the sentences containing one conjunction, that are mentioned above.

Nếu ngày mai anh rỗi, (thì) tôi sẽ cùng anh đi nhà sách. 'If you are free tomorrow, I will go to the bookstore with you.' Cf. *Tôi sẽ cùng anh đi nhà sách, nếu ngày mai anh rỗi.* 'I will go with you to the bookstore if you are free tomorrow'.

Vì hôm nay trời rất nóng, (nên) tôi không muốn đi đâu cả. 'Since it is very hot today, I don't want to go anywhere.' Cf. *Tôi không muốn đi đâu cả vì hôm nay trời rất nóng.* 'I don't want to go anywhere, because it is very hot today.'

Dù trời mưa (nhưng) trẻ em vẫn ra ngoài chơi bóng. 'Although it rains, the children went out to play football.' Cf. *Trẻ em vẫn ra ngoài chơi bóng, dù trời mưa.* 'The children went out to play football, though it rains.'

However, there many sentences with one conjunction, which have no parallel structure with the reversed order of the clauses. For example:

Mẹ mắng vì con hư. 'The mother scolds, **because** the child is spoiled.'

* *Vì con hư mẹ mắng;* but *Vì con hư nên mẹ mắng* is correct.

In Japanese, a subordinate clause is often called an embedded clause or sentence, which is embedded within another sentence and is marked by a subordinate conjunction such as *kara*, *node* 'because', *keredemo/keredo*, *noni* 'although', *to*, *ba* 'if'. The conjunctions are always placed at the end of the embedded (subordinate) clauses. A main clause is a clause with an embedded subordinate and which is not marked by conjunctions. For example:

Yamada-kun wa atama ga itai noni gakkou ni itta. 'Yamada went to school, **although** he had a headache.'

Kazuko-san wa otto ga yasashii kara koufuku desu. 'Kazuko is happy, **because** her husband is kind.'

Here again, the source of the errors shown above is the difference in sentence structure in the two languages.

1.3.2. Word order errors in questions

The word order errors in question are mainly misplacement of interrogatives:

(64) **Hôm qua ai bạn gặp ai?*

Vs. *Hôm qua bạn gặp ai?* 'Who did you meet yesterday?'

(65) **Gì hôm nay chúng ta sẽ học?*

Vs. *Hôm nay chúng ta sẽ học gì?* 'What will you learn today?'

(66) **Khi nào anh từng đi Pháp?*

Vs. *Anh từng đi Pháp khi nào?* 'When have you been to France?'

(67) **Mấy ngày anh định ở Việt Nam?*

Vs. *Anh định ở Việt Nam mấy ngày?* 'How long are you going to stay in Vietnam?'

(68) **Bao xa Hồ Hoàn Kiếm cách đây?*

Vs. *Hồ Hoàn Kiếm cách đây bao xa?* 'How far is Hoan Kiem lake?'

(69) **Bạn đến muộn tại sao?*

Vs. *Tại sao bạn đến muộn?* 'Why did you come late?'

(70) **Ở đâu bạn học tiếng Việt?*

Vs. *Bạn học tiếng Việt ở đâu?* 'Where are you studying Vietnamese?'

In Vietnamese, there is no overt wh-movement: most interrogatives appear in the same structural position as their non-question-word counterpart (e.g. *Hôm qua tôi gặp anh ấy.* 'Yesterday I met him.' cf. *Hôm qua anh gặp ai?* (Yesterday you meet who) 'Who did you meet yesterday?' or *Cái mũ này giá 200 nghìn đồng.* 'This hat costs 200 thousands dong.' cf. *Cái mũ này giá bao nhiêu?* (Cái hat this cost how much) 'How much is this hat?').

This feature also characterizes Japanese questions. The word order is the same in a question as in a statement. A statement becomes a question just by adding the particle *ka* at the end of the sentence (e.g. *Ima ie ni kaerimasu ka?* 'Are you going home now?'). If a question uses an interrogative (*itsu* 'when', *doko* 'where', *nan/nani* 'what' ...) it normally comes after the subject or topic but this is not rigid.

However, in Vietnamese, while some interrogatives are placed at the beginning of the question (such as, *sao*, *tại sao*, *vì sao* 'why'; e.g. *Sao anh không đến?* 'Why did you come?'). some others occur at the end of the questions (*đâu*, *ở đâu* 'where/where to', *bao lâu* 'how long', *bao xa* 'how far', *thế nào* 'how'; e.g. *Em đang học tiếng Việt ở đâu?* 'Where are you learning Vietnamese?'). As for interrogatives relating to time (*bao giờ*, *khi nào*, *lúc nào* 'when', *ngày nào* 'what day', *thứ mấy* 'what day (of the week)', *tháng nào* 'what month', *năm nào* 'what year' ...), while their position at the beginning of questions refers to the present or

future, their position at the end refers to the past (e.g. *Khi nào họ đi?* ‘When will they go?’ cf. *Họ đi khi nào?* ‘When did they go?’)

It is this feature that causes the errors in the questions shown above. Unlike other word order errors, the errors in questions are intralingual rather than interlingual.

2. Errors in using classifiers

The collected materials show that there are three main types of errors in using classifiers: classifier omission, classifier addition (insertion) and classifier substitution (using wrong classifiers) in Japanese students’ writing examination papers.

2.1. Classifier omission

The errors of this type can be divided into three groups:

2.1.1. Classifier omission in noun phrases denoting specific reference

- (1) *Xe hơi ấy không mới nhưng rất tốt.*
- (2) *Bạn thấy bút đen của tôi ở đâu không?*
- (3) *Chó này thích tôi vì tôi hay cho nó ăn.*
- (4) *Thói quen của tôi là đánh răng ba phút trong khi tắm vào tối.*

In sentences (1), (2) and (3), the nouns *xe hơi*, *bút*, *chó* are item nouns followed by a demonstrative pronoun (*này* ‘this’, *ấy* ‘that’) or an adjective (*đen* ‘black’), and indicate a specific thing or animal. They must be preceded by their appropriate classifiers *cái/chiếc* (*cái/chiếc xe hơi ấy* ‘that car’, *cái bút đen* ‘black pen’), *con* (*con chó này* ‘this dog’). Here the students may not know or remember the rule: ‘A classifier combines with a concrete noun to denote a specific meaning; when a concrete noun is used without classifiers it bears a general meaning’ (e.g. *Xe hơi nhanh hơn xe đạp*. ‘A car is quicker than a bike.’ *Tôi thích chó đen hơn chó trắng* ‘I like black dogs more than white ones.’). Consequently, they do not use classifiers. In this case, due to their insufficient linguistic knowledge, the students have to express themselves with the help of one of the communicative strategies: avoidance.

In example (4), the noun *tối* ‘evening’ indicates a segment of the day and requires the obligatory classifier *buổi* indicating “time unit” (*vào buổi tối* ‘in the evening’). In Vietnamese, this kind of noun can be used without classifiers if it is followed by a noun or noun group indicating “day”: *hôm kia* ‘the day before yesterday’, (*hôm*) *qua* ‘yesterday’, (*hôm*) *nay* ‘today’, (*ngày*) *mai* ‘tomorrow’... (*vào chiều hôm kia* ‘in the afternoon of the day before yesterday’, *đêm qua* ‘last night’, *tối nay* ‘this evening’, *sáng mai* ‘tomorrow in the morning’...). Here the students may apply their previously learnt rules and previous experience of the cases where Vietnamese nouns can be used without classifiers to make these sentences. The cause of these errors is overgeneralization.

2.1.2. Classifier omission after plural markers “những”, “các”

- (5) *Tôi thích những mèo nhà tôi.*
- (6) *Đây là những sách tiếng Việt của tôi.*
- (7) *Thanh niên Nhật Bản hầu như không biết những chiến tranh ở Việt Nam.*
- (8) *Chúng tôi thích đến thăm các chùa ở Kyoto.*

In sentences (5), (6), and (8), the nouns belong to the group of concrete nouns indicating animals (*mèo* ‘cat’) and things (*sách* ‘book’, *chùa* ‘pagoda’). As they are used with plural markers *những*, *các* these nouns must be preceded by their appropriate classifiers *con* (*những con mèo*), *cuốn/quyển* (*những quyển/cuốn sách*), *ngôi* (*các ngôi chùa*). In example (7), the noun *chiến tranh* ‘war’ is an abstract noun. In Vietnamese, most abstract nouns can be preceded by a plural marker without classifiers (*những ý nghĩa* ‘meanings’, *những nội dung* ‘contents’, *các thành tích* ‘achievements’, *các khuyết điểm* ‘defects’...).

However, combinations of some abstract nouns and plural markers can be used with or without classifiers (e.g. *những lo âu* and *những nỗi lo âu* 'worries', *những tâm tư* and *những nỗi tâm tư* 'inmit feelings', *các hi vọng* and *các niềm hi vọng* 'hopes'...). Some other abstract nouns must be used with classifiers when they combine with plural markers (*những cuộc họp* 'meetings', *những nỗi buồn* 'sorrows', *những căn bệnh* 'diseases'). The noun *chiến tranh* in (7) belongs to the last subgroup and, therefore, must be used with the classifier *cuộc* indicating 'entity involving interaction, generally competitive' (*những cuộc chiến tranh*).

The above errors are caused by strategies of communication and/or overgeneralization.

2.1.3. Classifier omission after quantifiers and numerals

(9) Anh ấy cho xem vài ảnh chụp ở Việt Nam.

(10) Ngoài sân có mấy chim.

(11) Tôi có hai mũ.

(12) Nhà tôi nuôi bốn mèo, nhưng hôm qua một mèo trắng chết, nên bây giờ chỉ có ba mèo.

In these examples, the students use the item nouns *chim* 'bird', *mèo* 'cat', *ảnh* 'photo', and *mũ* 'hat', which indicate concrete animals and things, with a quantifier *vài* 'several', *mấy* 'some' or a numeral *hai* 'two', *bốn* 'four', *một* 'one', *ba* 'three', in order to quantify these objects. In Vietnamese, a combination of a quantifier or a numeral and a concrete noun must always co-occur with a classifier used as an intermediary between them. The ungrammatical combinations *vài ảnh*, *mấy chim*, *hai mũ*, *bốn mèo*... can be rendered as grammatical phrases with classifiers present: *bức (vài bức ảnh 'several photos')*, *con (mấy con chim 'some birds', bốn con mèo 'four cats'...)*, *cái (hai cái mũ 'two hats')*.

In sentence (9), the obligatory classifier *bức* is more specific: it is used with a very small group of nouns denoting relatively thin, rectangular objects of fairly large size (*bức ảnh* 'photo', *bức tranh* 'painting', *bức thư* 'letter', *bức tường* 'wall'...). As this rule applies to such a small group, it is difficult for the students to remember. The errors in this example can be explained by the students' strategies of communication: they do not use the classifier because they do not remember it. Thus, these errors occur because of the influence of the majority of cases in which concrete nouns can be used without classifiers. Therefore, the causes of these errors are the same as those errors shown in 2.1.2.

2.2. Classifier insertion

There are three groups of classifier insertion errors.

2.2.1. Using classifiers in noun phrases denoting generic reference

(13) Tôi nghĩ cái áo dài Việt Nam rất đẹp.

(14) Trong phòng ngủ của tôi có cái bàn, cái ghế và cái giường.

(15) Tôi thích thịt con gà hơn thịt con lợn.

(16) Tôi thường đi học bằng chiếc xe hơi, đi làm thêm bằng chiếc xe đạp.

In sentence (13), the noun *áo dài* 'long dress' is used with the meaning "a kind of clothes" as different from other kinds of clothes, such as shirts, jackets, boleros or kimonos... Therefore it must be used without classifiers (*Tôi nghĩ áo dài Việt Nam rất đẹp* 'I think the Vietnamese long dress is very beautiful').

In example (14), the noun *bàn* 'table', *ghế* 'chair', *giường* 'bed' must be used without classifiers because they do not denote a specific table, chair or bed, but rather "furniture" or "comfort" in general (*Trong phòng ngủ của tôi có bàn, ghế và giường*. 'There is a table, a chair and a bed in my bedroom'). In (15), the incorrect combinations *thịt con gà*, *thịt con lợn* (lit. 'meat of a chick', 'meat of a pig') must be changed into *thịt gà* 'chicken', *thịt lợn* 'pork' for the same reason.

In (16), the student wants to express the meaning "means of transport" by using combinations of nouns and the preposition *bằng* 'by'/'with'. However, the nouns *xe hơi* 'car', *xe đạp* 'bike' used here do not denote a concrete car or bicycle, but name two kinds of "means of transport" in distinction with other kinds

of transport: *xe máy* ‘motorcycle’, *tàu điện ngầm* ‘subway’, *máy bay* ‘airplane’ Thus, the ungrammatical combinations *bằng chiếc xe hơi*, *bằng chiếc xe đạp* can be rendered grammatical by omitting the classifier: *bằng xe hơi* ‘by car’, *bằng xe đạp* ‘by bicycle’.

2.2.2. Using classifiers with collective nouns

(17) Ở Nhật có nhiều cái phong cảnh đẹp.

(18) Trong phòng học này có ít cái bàn ghế.

In Vietnamese collective nouns are not followed by classifiers. As collective nouns, *phong cảnh* ‘landscape’ and *bàn ghế* ‘table and chair’ (lit.) can be used with quantifiers, such as *nhiều* ‘lots’, *ít* ‘few, little’, without any classifiers. The incorrect combinations above must be changed into *nhiều phong cảnh*, *ít bàn ghế*.

The reason why the students use classifiers in the sentences at 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 can be explained by the students’ overgeneralization due to their prior knowledge of the rules ‘classifier + noun’.

2.2.3. Using classifiers before unit nouns

(19) Tôi đã làm xong hai cái bài tập.

(20) Tôi có hai cái viên tẩy trong hộp bút.

(21) Sinh nhật bạn tôi, tôi tặng một cái bó hoa nhỏ.

Bài (used for compositions like songs, drawings, poems, essays...), *viên* ‘pill’ and *bó* ‘bundle, bunch’ are unit nouns. The noun combinations *bài tập* ‘exercises’, *viên tẩy* ‘eraser’ and *bó hoa* ‘a bunch of flowers’ can immediately combine with numerals without classifiers. The students may think that *bài tập*, *viên tẩy*, *bó hoa* are disyllabic item nouns, and, as a result, they place a classifier before them.

2.3. Wrong Classifier

This type of classifier error can be divided into two groups.

2.3.1. Using cái instead specific classifiers

(22) Anh ấy mua cho tôi cái sổ tay này.

(23) Ở Nhật Fuji là cái núi cao nhất.

(24) Ở ngoài sân trẻ em đang chơi với một cái bóng.

In Vietnamese, classifiers must agree semantically with the head noun. Among them *cái* classifying inanimate nouns and *con* used with non-human animate nouns are the most common. The other classifiers are more specific and are used with small groups of nouns.

In sentences (22), (23) and (24), the students use the classifier *cái* instead of *ngọn* ‘pick’ for *núi* ‘mountain’, *quyển/cuốn* ‘’ for *sổ tay* ‘notebook’ and *quả* for *bóng* ‘ball’. Here the students may forget the specific classifiers for these nouns and, instead of them use the most common classifier *cái*, applying the rule ‘*cái* + things’ that they learn from their first Vietnamese lessons. The cause of these errors is overgeneralization.

2.3.2. Using wrong specific classifiers

(25) Tôi đi nhà sách mua năm tờ bưu ảnh.

(26) Hôm qua ở nhà hàng Việt Nam tôi ăn ba cây nem.

(27) Mẹ bảo tôi mua hai quả hành.

In sentence (25), the student used *tờ* instead of *bức/tấm* for *bưu ảnh* ‘postcard’. The classifier *tờ* is used for sheets and other thin objects made of paper (such as papers, newspapers, calendars...). In substituting *tờ* for *bức/tấm* one assumes that the student thought that a postcard is like a thin object made of paper.

In example (26), *cây*, the classifier for stick-like objects (e.g. plants, pens, guns, canes...) is substituted with *cái* in combination with the noun *nem* 'spring roll'. The stick-like shape of *nem* may be the reason for the student's wrong classifier use in this case.

The noun *hành* 'onion' in (27) must be preceded by *củ* which is used for a bulb, tuber with roots (such as, potato, garlic, peanut...). Instead, the student uses *quả* which is used with nouns denoting global objects (like fruit, balls...). Such confusion of category is due to the same reason as in the previous case.

All the cases of using wrong specific classifiers are caused by overgeneralization.

Vietnamese uses an extensive system of classifiers to indicate word classes of nouns. The Vietnamese system and usage of classifiers are more variable than English and many other languages. Although there are rules of using classifiers, in fact, a foreigner always encounters the arbitrary nature of behavior of Vietnamese classifiers. For example, the classifier *con*, usually used for animate nouns, can also be used to describe some inanimate objects: *con dao* 'knife', *con tem* 'stamp', *con đường* 'road, way, street', *con sông* 'river'. Similarly, some nouns can combine with different classifiers: *cái nhà*, *ngôi nhà*, *tòa nhà*; *cái bút*, *chiếc bút*, *cây bút*... with certain lexical-expressive connotative difference. Most Vietnamese teachers recognize strategies of communication and overgeneralization of rules as areas of difficulty faced by the majority of beginner and intermediate students in regards to the use of classifiers.

Vietnamese classifiers are a very difficult grammatical unit not only for Japanese learners but also for other foreign learners. Furthermore, most Japanese learners' errors of classifiers are similar to those made by students from other L1 languages. These points indicate that classifier errors belong to the category of intralingual errors.

3. Suggested drills and exercises

3.1. In order to help students reduce word order confusion, teachers should focus learners' attention on the differences in word order between the two languages. Learners should be warned of the potential of interference from Japanese. Drills on word order should focus on the basic word order of noun phrases and basic sentence structure in Vietnamese. The following types are suggested:

(1) Multiple choice drills (with different order of words in each choice)

1. Ông Trung , phải không?
(a) người Việt là (b) Việt người là (c) là người Việt
2. Anh là ?
(a) người nào nước (c) nào nước người
(b) người nước nào (d) nào người nước
3. Bây giờ (a)... anh (b)... ở đâu (c)...? (sống)
4. Anh (a)... có (b)... tiếng Nhật (c)... được (d)... không? (nói)

(2) Join two parts into a sentence in the right order with appropriate conjunction (if it is needed)

1. ... thì tôi đi chơi ... ngày mai trời đẹp
2. ... nên tôi rất vui ... từ ngày mai tôi đi du lịch
3. ... tôi không nghỉ học ... tôi bị ốm.

(3) Rearrange the given word groups to form correct sentences

1. bạn / rất vui / được gặp
2. không / bạn / nói được / tiếng Việt?
3. ở bưu điện / anh ấy / làm việc.
4. người nước nào / ông Smith / là ?
5. trời đẹp / ngày mai / nếu / công viên / sẽ đi chơi / thì / chúng tôi

(4) Rearrange the given words to form correct sentences

1. gặp / vui / rất / bạn / được
2. không / tiếng / bạn / được / nói / Việt?
3. bưu điện / anh ấy / ở / làm việc.
4. nước / ông / người / Smith / là / nào?
5. trời / ngày mai / nếu / công viên / sẽ / chơi / thì / đi / chúng tôi / đẹp

The drills are given in order of increasing difficulty.

3.2. The most effective means to overcome classifier errors is to give the students cognitive drills of the 4 following types (with increasing level of difficulty)

(1) Multiple choice drills

1. Tôi có mộtsách hay.
(a) cái (b) con (c) cuốn
2. Nhà tôi nuôi haimèo.
(a) cái (b) con (c) (-)
3. Nhà bạn tôi cóchó nhưng không cómèo.
(cái) (b) con (c) (-)

(2) Matching the given words/word combinations

<i>con</i>	<i>bản đồ</i>
<i>cái</i>	<i>gà</i>
<i>bức</i>	<i>thư</i>
<i>tấm</i>	<i>nhà</i>
<i>ngôi</i>	<i>bàn ...</i>

(3) Filling in the blanks with the appropriate words from the given words

cái, con, quyển, chiếc

1. Tôi có một đồng hồ.
2. Ngoài sân có bachim.
3. Trên bàn có haisách, ba bút và mộttẩy.

(4) Filling in the blanks with the appropriate words.

Tôi không có gia đình. Tôi sống cùngcon chó và ba mèo. Tôi rất yêu động vật và thích thời trang. Tôi có 92 áo, 87 quần và 76 váy. Tôi cũng rất thích đọc sách và nghe nhạc. Trên giá sách của tôi có 150 sách và 100 đĩa nhạc. Hôm qua tôi đi siêu thị, tôi mua hai giày, một mũ và basách. Còn bạn, bạn có gì? (from Vietnamese. Level A, part 1. Nguyen Thien Thuat)

Drills of this type are similar to the drills of previous type, but much more difficult and creative because the students have to use their own words.

Conclusion

Analysis of the errors in the collected materials shows that the most common grammatical errors in the writing papers of Japanese students are word order and classifiers.

Since Vietnamese words are not marked by morphology showing their role in the sentence, word order is very important in Vietnamese. In the process of acquiring word order in Vietnamese, most Japanese students begin with a word order based on their native language, which is different from Vietnamese word order in the most important aspects: word order in nominal phrases, including noun phrases and adjective phrases; sentential structure with verb position. Students' word order errors are the results of interlingual transfer of linguistic system rules and patterns from their native language.

The difficulty in use of Vietnamese classifiers itself and the students' insufficient knowledge about them are the sources of intralingual transfer, in which the students use their communicative strategies, such as overgeneralization, avoidance, and simplification... to learn the language materials, and as a result, they make classifier errors.

Thus, errors are evidence of the learning process of the students. Error analysis can help the teacher know the students' level and prepare the appropriate learning material and drills.

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