

## ERRORS ANALYSIS OF JAPANESE SENTENCE WRITING IN SAKUBUN BY CLASS 25A STUDENTS UNTAG SEMARANG

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze the types of errors and the factors causing errors in Japanese sentence writing (sakubun) produced by Class 25A students of the D3 Japanese Language Study Program at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang. The study used a descriptive qualitative method. The research data were obtained from students' handwritten sakubun assignments on the theme of family and supported by questionnaire responses from 24 students. Data analysis was conducted using language error analysis procedures proposed by Corder and Tarigan, which include data collection, error identification, error classification, error explanation, and error evaluation. Questionnaires were used to identify the factors underlying the writing errors. The results show that three main types of errors were found in students' sakubun writing: vocabulary writing errors, sentence pattern usage errors, and particle usage errors. The most dominant errors occurred in sentence patterns and particle usage, indicating that students still experience difficulties in mastering basic Japanese grammatical structures. Vocabulary errors were mainly caused by inaccuracies in hiragana writing, while sentence pattern errors were related to inconsistent speech levels and limited understanding of grammatical constructions. Particle usage errors reflect students' insufficient mastery of particle functions in sentence construction. Furthermore, the questionnaire results indicate that these errors are influenced by limited kanji proficiency, restricted vocabulary, interference from Indonesian, insufficient writing practice, and a lack of detailed instructor feedback. Overall, the findings suggest that both linguistic and pedagogical factors play important roles in students' sakubun writing performance.*

Keywords: *Japanese writing; sakubun; error analysis; particles; kanji*

### INTRODUCTION

Japanese language learning at the university level does not only focus on understanding linguistic structures but also on productive skills such as writing (*sakubun*). According to Sudjianto and Dahidi (2007), *sakubun* is a writing activity in Japanese aimed at developing learners' ability to express ideas, feelings, and thoughts

in written form in accordance with correct Japanese grammatical rules. *Sakubun* requires accuracy in the use of vocabulary, sentence patterns, and discourse structure. Meanwhile, Iori et al. (2001) explain that *sakubun* is one of the productive skills in Japanese language learning that emphasizes the ability to construct sentences logically and coherently by paying attention to grammatical aspects, the use of particles, and the context of language use.

Writing skill is one of the productive language skills. According to Tarigan (2008), writing is the ability to convey ideas in written form using appropriate and well-structured language. Nurgiyantoro (2013) states that writing skill is a complex language skill because it involves cognitive processes and systematic organization of ideas. Writing skill is an important indicator for assessing the extent to which students are able to apply their knowledge of grammar (*bunpō*), vocabulary, and sentence patterns in real communicative contexts. However, writing in Japanese has a high level of complexity due to strict grammatical rules, the varied use of particles, and differences in sentence structure compared to Indonesian. These conditions often cause students to experience difficulties in expressing ideas in grammatically correct written forms.

In the Japanese Language Study Program at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang, writing ability is one of the core competencies that students are required to master. Class 25A students are expected to produce *sakubun* that meet Japanese language standards. On average, Class 25A students possess JLPT N4-level proficiency, even though they are the first cohort. Most of the students in Class 25A are workers in Japan and use Japanese on a daily basis. However, in practice, various errors in sentence writing are still found, including errors in the use of particles, verb conjugation, vocabulary selection, and sentence structure. These errors indicate a gap between theoretical understanding and its application in writing skills.

Errors in Japanese sentence writing can be addressed through error analysis in order to identify the types of errors made by students as well as the factors underlying their occurrence. This view is supported by Tarigan (2011), who states that language errors produced by students need to be analyzed. The phenomenon of recurring errors in *sakubun* is important to investigate, as it can serve as an indicator of more fundamental problems in language learning. According to Corder (1981), error analysis

aims to identify and explain the errors made by learners as part of the language acquisition process. Ellis (1997) adds that error analysis can be used to determine the types and causes of language errors. Therefore, error analysis theory is applied to examine the language errors found in learners' written texts. If these errors are not systematically analyzed, they are likely to recur and hinder the development of students' language proficiency. Error analysis provides information on dominant error patterns and their underlying causes, whether intralingual (such as insufficient understanding of grammatical rules) or interlingual (influence of the first language). Thus, this study aims to reveal the characteristics of Japanese language errors made by students.

In addition to being beneficial for students, research on the analysis of sentence writing errors is also important for instructors. The findings of the study can serve as a reference for evaluating the learning approaches that have been implemented. Instructors can identify which aspects need to be further developed, which methods need to be adjusted, and which materials should be reinforced to prevent similar errors from recurring. By understanding the errors that appear in *sakubun*, instructors can enhance the effectiveness of Japanese writing instruction.

More broadly, this study makes a substantial contribution to the development of teaching materials and curriculum design in Japanese language education at the tertiary level. By systematically identifying patterns and sources of errors in students' Japanese sentence writing, the findings provide empirical evidence that can inform more effective and targeted instructional strategies, particularly for enhancing students' written production skills. This study also offers pedagogical insights that can assist instructors and curriculum developers in addressing persistent writing difficulties. Therefore, the analysis of errors in Japanese sentence writing in *sakubun* produced by Class 25A students of the Japanese Language Study Program at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang constitutes a relevant and significant research undertaking with practical and academic implications.

For comparison with previous studies, a study by Darmayanti (2018) was identified. This study examined errors in Japanese sentence writing made by Grade XII social science students at SMA Negeri 1 Puri Mojokerto in the 2017/2018 academic year. Based on questionnaire and interview findings, the study revealed that students

frequently experienced difficulties in memorizing characters, vocabulary, and sentence patterns, which led to writing errors. Using a descriptive qualitative method through tests and questionnaires, the study identified several types of errors, including errors in sentence pattern structure (143 cases), verb form changes (194 cases), adjective form changes (36 cases), and particle usage (64 cases). The factors contributing to these errors included difficulties in understanding teachers' explanations (transfer of training), lack of practice, first language interference, limited vocabulary, insufficient understanding of particles, and the complexity of the Japanese writing system and sentence patterns.

Another related study was conducted by Kartika et al. (2020), which aimed to identify the factors causing errors in the use of the particles *ni* and *de* in *sakubun* learning. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. The data were analyzed using language error analysis methods proposed by Setyawati (2010), Richards (as cited in Tarigan, 2011), and Jain and Fisiak (as cited in Tarigan, 2011). The participants of the study consisted of six students from the Japanese Language Education Study Program, FKIP Universitas Riau. Data collection was conducted through interviews to determine the causes of errors in *sakubun* learning. The results showed that the errors were mainly caused by students' lack of understanding of the material, particularly the particles *ni* and *de*. In addition, the errors were also attributed to performance factors, namely students' lack of concentration while writing *sakubun*. This lack of concentration prevented students from completing their writing tasks effectively.

Another study was conducted by Safama (2022) Errors in the use of Japanese particles are frequently found among Japanese language learners in Indonesia. This previous study aimed to identify (1) the types of difficulties experienced by students of the Language and Culture Department at MAN 1 Kebumen in using Japanese particles, (2) the factors causing these difficulties, and (3) the strategies employed by students to overcome them. The research adopted a descriptive quantitative approach using a descriptive research method. The research instruments consisted of a questionnaire and a test. The questionnaire was distributed to 61 students from grades X, XI, and XII of MAN 1 Kebumen. The results revealed that most respondents experienced difficulties in using the particles *wa*, *ni*, and *de*. As many as 61% of the students had difficulty remembering the functions of particles, while 75% encountered difficulties in placing particles correctly when writing sentences. The factors contributing to these difficulties

included both internal and external factors, such as infrequent review of particle materials after class, insufficient explanations of particle functions in textbooks, low learning motivation, and less varied teaching methods. To overcome these difficulties, students employed several strategies, including making notes on particle usage, searching for explanations on the internet, asking more knowledgeable individuals, consulting peers, and directly asking teachers.

Another study was conducted by Safira (2024), which examined errors in the use of the particles *wa* as a topic marker and *ga* as a subject marker in students' written compositions. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the data were obtained from sentences containing errors and interviews conducted to identify their causes. The analysis revealed 42 problematic sentences, which were classified into four patterns: omission, addition, substitution, and others, with substitution errors being the most dominant type (33 cases). The interview results showed that 70% of the 40 respondents made errors due to a lack of understanding of the functions of these two particles. This study emphasizes the importance of a thorough understanding of the use of *wa* and *ga* in Japanese language learning.

There are several similarities between the present study and previous studies conducted by Darmayanti (2018), Kartika et al. (2020), and Safira (2024). All of these studies employ a descriptive qualitative approach and focus on identifying types of errors in Japanese writing through composition (*sakubun*) data. They also highlight the causes of learners' errors, such as insufficient understanding of the learning material, limited mastery of vocabulary and sentence patterns, and difficulties in using particles appropriately. Similar to the present study, these three studies emphasize the importance of mastering Japanese grammatical structures as the foundation of writing skills.

The differences lie in the focus of discussion and the research subjects. Darmayanti's study examined errors made by senior high school students with a broader scope of error types, whereas the present study focuses on Class 25A students of the D3 Japanese Language Program at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang using specific *sakubun* data. Kartika et al.'s study addressed only errors in the use of the particles *ni* and *de*, while the present study examines sentence errors in *sakubun* more generally. Similarly, Safira's study focused on errors involving the particles *wa* and *ga*, whereas the present study is not limited to specific types of particles, allowing for the identification of more complex variations of errors at the sentence structure level.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive method with a qualitative approach, as it aims to analyze and describe the types of errors found in Japanese sentence writing and to identify the factors that cause these errors. Arikunto (2013) states that descriptive qualitative research is intended to investigate situations, conditions, or other phenomena, with the results presented in the form of a research report. Nazir (2017) explains that descriptive research aims to provide a systematic, factual, and accurate description of the facts and characteristics of the object under study. Through this study, it is expected that the types of errors and the factors causing errors in the *sakubun* writing of Class 25A students of the D3 Japanese Language Study Program at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang can be clearly described. Furthermore, by identifying the factors underlying *sakubun* writing errors, appropriate solutions can be formulated to address these errors in future Japanese writing instruction.

Sugiyono (2019) states that data sources are subjects or objects that provide data to researchers, whether in the form of individuals, documents, or observable events. In this study, the data source consists of Class 25A students of the D3 Japanese Language Study Program at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang. The objects of this study are the students' *sakubun* writings and questionnaires. The *sakubun* writings were based on the theme of family, and the questionnaires were administered to support the analysis. The *sakubun* data were obtained from a writing assignment in the course *Reading and Writing Practicum 1*, in which students wrote by hand on the theme of family. From these *sakubun* writings, comprehensive data on the types of errors made by Class 25A students in Japanese writing were collected. Meanwhile, the questionnaire consisted of a series of questions regarding students' understanding and the causes of errors in writing Japanese sentences.

The documentation method was employed as a data collection technique in this study because it utilized *sakubun* writings produced by Class 25A students of the D3 Japanese Language Study Program at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang. In line with Moleong (2018), documentation is a written data source in the form of documents, archives, and records that can be utilized to obtain data relevant to the research objectives.

The data analysis technique used in this study is language error analysis. According to Corder (1981), error analysis is conducted through several stages, namely data collection, error identification, error classification, error explanation, and error evaluation. These stages are employed to determine the types and causes of language errors made by learners. This view is reinforced by Tarigan (2011), who states that language error analysis is carried out systematically for the purpose of improving language learning.

## DISCUSSION

### Types of Error In Japanese Writing

The research data were obtained from a series of studies conducted with Class 25A students of the D3 Japanese Language Study Program at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang. The data were collected from students' *sakubun* writings and questionnaires in order to identify the types of language errors in Japanese sentence writing made by the students. Based on the analysis of the *sakubun* writings, three types of errors in Japanese sentence writing were identified, as follows:

Table 1. Types of Errors in Japanese Writing

No	Type of Error	Frequency of Errors
1.	Errors in vocabulary writing	5
2.	Errors in sentence pattern usage	7
3.	Errors in particle usage	7

The errors in Japanese sentence writing discussed in this study include vocabulary writing errors, sentence pattern usage errors, and particle usage errors. The following is a discussion of these errors.

#### 1) Error in Vocabulary Writing

休みの日に、家族といっしょにえいかを見たり、ごはんを食べたりします。  
*Yasuminohi ni, Kazoku to Isshoni eika o mitari, gohan o tabetari shimasu.*  
 On holidays, I watch movies with my family and eat together.

In the sentence above, there is an error in the vocabulary *eika*, which should be written as *eiga* (えいが／映画), meaning “film.” This error is categorized as a vocabulary writing error, specifically an incorrect use of hiragana, where the voiced sound *ga* (が) is mistakenly written as the unvoiced sound *ka* (か). Although the sentence structure is correct and the overall meaning can still be understood, such vocabulary errors affect the accuracy and appropriateness of sakubun writing. This error is likely caused by a lack of carefulness during writing and limited mastery of Japanese vocabulary, indicating the need for more consistent writing practice and reinforcement of vocabulary understanding.

## 2) Error in Sentence Pattern Usage

みんなそれぞれのことや仕事をやっていますし、忙しいし、いつかまたみんなといつしょにどこかにりょこうしたいと思います。

*Minna sozore no koto yashigoto o yattemasu shi, isogashii shi, ikka mata minna toissho ni dokokani ryokoushitai to omoimasu.*

Everyone has their own matters and jobs, and everyone is busy, but someday I would like to travel together with everyone.

The error in the sentence lies in the use of the *~shi, ~shi* sentence pattern, particularly in the verb form used before *shi*. In the phrase *yatteimasu shi*, the more appropriate and natural form is *yatteru shi*, because the *~shi, ~shi* pattern is commonly used with the plain (casual) form to list reasons or conditions. Using the polite form *~teimasu before shi* results in an inconsistent speech level and makes the sentence sound unnatural. Therefore, the correct form should be *yatteru shi, isogashii shi, ....* This error indicates that the learner has not fully understood the correct usage of the *~shi, ~shi* pattern and the importance of maintaining consistency in speech style within a sentence, highlighting the need for further practice in applying this grammatical structure accurately.

## 3) Error in Particle Usage

姉が4人と、弟が一人 います。

*Ane ga yonin to, otouto ga hitori imasu*

I have four older sisters and one younger brother.

In the sentence *ane ga yonin to, otouto ga hitori imasu*, there is an error in the use of the particle *to*, which is inappropriate for connecting the numbers of family members in

this context. Instead, the particle *de* should be used to indicate a state or overall condition. Therefore, the more appropriate sentence is *ane ga yonin de, otouto ga hitori imasu*. This error indicates that the learner has not fully understood the different functions of the particles *to* and *de* in Japanese sentence construction. Although the meaning of the sentence can still be understood, the incorrect particle use makes the sentence sound unnatural, highlighting the need for deeper understanding and more practice in using particles correctly.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that Class 25A students of the D3 Japanese Language Study Program at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang still experience difficulties in writing Japanese sentences in *sakubun*. Three main types of errors were identified, namely error in vocabulary writing, error in sentence pattern usage, and errors particle usage, with sentence pattern and particle errors occurring most frequently. Vocabulary errors are generally related to inaccuracies in hiragana writing. Sentence pattern errors indicate students' limited understanding of grammatical structures and inconsistency in speech style within a sentence, such as in the use of the *~shi, ~shi* pattern. Meanwhile, particle usage errors reflect students' insufficient understanding of particle functions in constructing natural and grammatically correct sentences. Although the meanings of the sentences can still be understood, these errors reduce the accuracy and naturalness of *sakubun* writing. Therefore, more intensive writing practice and reinforcement of vocabulary, sentence patterns, and particle usage are needed in *sakubun* instruction.

**The Factor Causing Error in Sakubun**

To identify the factors causing errors in sentence writing in the *sakubun* results, the researcher analyzed the questionnaire responses obtained from 24 Class 25A students, with the results as follows:

Table 2. Questionnaire Results on the Causes of Sakubun Writing Errors

No	Question	Answer	N	Percentage
1.	I often experience difficulties in memorizing the forms and meanings of <i>kanji</i> .	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
		Disagree	3	12,5%
		Agree	16	66.7%
		Strongly Agree	4	20.8%

2	I feel that the number of strokes ( <i>kakikata</i> ) in kanji often causes me to make mistakes in writing.	Strongly Disagree	1	4,2%
		Disagree	3	12,5%
		Agree	16	66,7%
		Strongly Agree	4	16,7%
3	I require more time to write kanji than other scripts such as <i>hiragana</i> and <i>katakana</i> .	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
		Disagree	7	29,2%
		Agree	9	37,5%
		Strongly Agree	8	33,3%
4	I frequently forget the correct way to write kanji, even though I am able to read them	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
		Disagree	2	8,3%
		Agree	3	37,5%
		Strongly Agree	13	54,2%
5	I frequently write kanji in non-standard forms, such as disproportionate or incomplete characters.	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
		Disagree	3	12,5%
		Agree	15	62,5%
		Strongly Agree	6	25%
6	I feel that the kanji writing practice provided in class is insufficient to enhance my writing skills.	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
		Disagree	6	25%
		Agree	15	62,5%
		Strongly Agree	3	12,5%
7	I still have difficulty distinguishing the correct usage of the particles は (wa) and が (ga) in sentences.	Strongly Disagree	2	8,3%
		Disagree	16	66,7%
		Agree	6	25%
		Strongly Agree	0	0%
8	I frequently make mistakes in selecting the correct particle (を, に, で, or へ) when writing sentences.	Strongly Disagree	2	8,3%
		Disagree	16	66,7%
		Agree	6	25%
		Strongly Agree	0	0%

9	I believe that additional examples and practice are necessary to gain a proper understanding of particle usage.	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
		Disagree	4	16.7%
		Agree	16	66.7%
		Strongly Agree	4	16.7%
10	Indonesian language interference often leads me to overlook the proper placement of particles in Japanese sentences.	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
		Disagree	9	37.5%
		Agree	11	45.8%
		Strongly Agree	4	16.7%
11	I find it challenging to fully comprehend the particle explanations given by the instructor.	Strongly Disagree	1	8.3%
		Disagree	15	62.5%
		Agree	7	29.2%
		Strongly Agree	0	0%
12	I frequently have difficulty arranging Japanese sentence patterns that differ from those in Indonesian.	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
		Disagree	18	75%
		Agree	6	25%
		Strongly Agree	0	0%
13	I find it challenging to place the verb correctly at the end of sentences when composing <i>sakubun</i> .	Strongly Disagree	1	8.3%
		Disagree	14	58.3%
		Agree	8	33.3%
		Strongly Agree	0	0%
14	I frequently make mistakes in verb conjugation, resulting in incorrect sentence structures.	Strongly Disagree		
		Disagree	12	50%
		Agree	11	45.8%
		Strongly Agree	1	4.2%
15	I find it challenging to organize and develop ideas into	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
		Disagree	7	29.2%
		Agree	15	62.5%

	well-structured, grammatically accurate Japanese paragraphs.	Strongly Agree	2	8.3 %
16	I feel that the <i>sakubun</i> writing practice time provided in class is insufficient to enhance my writing ability.	Strongly Disagree	2	8.3%
		Disagree	12	50%
		Agree	9	37.5%
		Strongly Agree	1	4.3%
17	I require more detailed feedback from the instructor to better comprehend the errors in my writing.	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
		Disagree	3	12.5%
		Agree	17	70.8%
		Strongly Agree	4	16.7%
18	I believe that the instructional materials or media on sentence writing are insufficient to effectively address and correct my writing errors.	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
		Disagree	13	54.2%
		Agree	11	45.8%
		Strongly Agree	0	0%
19	I feel less confident in writing <i>sakubun</i> due to fear of making errors in kanji, particles, or sentence structures.	Strongly Disagree	1	4.2%
		Disagree	13	54.2%
		Agree	9	37.5%
		Strongly Agree	1	4.2%

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The questionnaire results reinforce these findings by showing that writing errors are largely influenced by students' internal factors, particularly in relation to kanji and language skills. Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have difficulty memorizing the forms and meanings of kanji, often forget how to write kanji even though they know how to read them, and feel that classroom kanji writing practice is still insufficient. In addition, the time required to write kanji and the complexity of stroke counts also increase the likelihood of errors. These findings indicate that limited

kanji proficiency is a significant factor affecting the quality of students' *sakubun* writing.

On the other hand, other linguistic factors that contribute to writing errors include interference from Indonesian, limited understanding of particles, difficulties in verb conjugation, and challenges in idea development. Although most students reported that they are not overly confused in distinguishing the particles は (wa) and が (ga), a considerable number admitted to still making mistakes with the particles を (o), に (ni), で (de), and え (e), and expressed the need for more examples and practice. In addition, the majority of students felt that more detailed feedback from instructors and additional time for *sakubun* practice were necessary. Thus, errors in Japanese sentence writing are influenced not only by linguistic factors but also by pedagogical factors, such as the intensity of practice, teaching methods, and the provision of feedback during the learning process.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated errors in Japanese sentence writing (*sakubun*) produced by Class 25A students of the D3 Japanese Language Study Program at Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang and identified the factors contributing to these errors. The findings reveal that students still experience considerable difficulties in writing Japanese sentences accurately. Three main types of errors were identified: vocabulary writing errors, sentence pattern usage errors, and particle usage errors. Among these, errors in sentence patterns and particle usage occurred most frequently, indicating students' limited mastery of Japanese grammatical structures and particle functions. Vocabulary errors were mainly related to inaccuracies in writing hiragana and kanji, which affected the precision of students' written expressions.

The questionnaire results further show that these errors are influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include limited kanji proficiency, difficulties in verb conjugation, interference from Indonesian sentence structures, and challenges in organizing ideas coherently. External or pedagogical factors include insufficient writing practice, limited instructional time for *sakubun*, and the need for more detailed and constructive feedback from instructors. These findings suggest that linguistic

competence alone is not sufficient; effective teaching strategies and adequate practice opportunities are also essential for improving students' writing skills.

In response to these findings, it is recommended that Japanese writing instruction place greater emphasis on structured *sakubun* practice, reinforcement of kanji, sentence patterns, and particle usage, as well as the provision of clearer examples and more detailed feedback. Future research may expand the scope of participants and explore the relationship between specific teaching methods and the reduction of writing errors to further enhance the effectiveness of *sakubun* instruction.

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