

The relationship between Japanese learners' grammar performance and English language education policy

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1. Introduction

In Japan, English grammar is officially taught from middle school, so the first-year university students have generally received explicit grammar instruction for six years. Nevertheless, their writings such as 5-paragraph essays and summaries usually contain various types of grammar errors. In many cases, if only one minor error is in a sentence, a reader can understand what the writer wants to communicate. However, when a sentence has multiple errors or serious errors which damage the sentence semantically and syntactically, it becomes incomprehensible.

Several approaches are available to explain why learners make grammar errors even though they have had grammar instruction for a long time. Linguistic distance between their mother tongue and the target language is one of the approaches that can explain their poor grammar performance; Japanese, a language isolate, possesses a very different language structure and rules from the target language, English, which belongs to the Indo-European language family. In general, Japanese learners of English cannot use their L1 knowledge to produce L2 because transfer of L1 knowledge is not possible in many cases. Due to the huge linguistic distance, they have difficulties in acquiring English grammar knowledge and performing well in grammar.

Another perspective used to explain the reason for their difficulty is related to the grammar instruction that they receive. Although many researchers recognize the importance of grammar instruction in L2 education, some disagree with employing the traditional approach of grammar teaching in which grammar has been taught as the central component of L2 education, and classes and teaching materials have been organized around grammar points (Celce-Murcia, 2001). In class, learners engage in various types of grammar exercises (e.g., word/sentence manipulation exercises) while receiving grammar instruction from their teacher. Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2001) point out the following negative point resulting from this approach: It does not guarantee learners to be able to produce the target form in free oral production although they can gain grammar knowledge useful for grammar

tests such as TOEFL. There have been many discussions to identify what is a more effective approach of teaching grammar than the traditional one; one of them is Focus on Form where learners' attention is drawn to a grammar target in the context of communication in classrooms (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

This paper's focus is on English language education at high school and will demonstrate why learners make grammar errors from an alternative perspective, language education policy; in particular, this paper sees that Japanese university students' poor performance in grammar is attributed to the English language education that they received in high school, and its education is, in fact, guided by language education policy.

A government organizes language policy and planning "to change the use of languages, the language code itself, the study of languages and/or the status or prestige of languages" in a society (Slaughter, 2007, p.302). Among various types of language policy and planning, language education policy particularly addresses goals of language education and concerns how language is taught in an education system; it covers issues on not only students and teachers but also "syllabus and curriculum, the methods and materials, the economic resources and ... assessment and evaluation" (Gorter & Cenoz, 2017, p.232). Basically, everything an authority sees essential to teach/learn language in society is included and presented in language education policy. Therefore, this policy is said to frame language education in society. The policy may be assessed by comparison with the actual language education curriculum, and this assessment result can induce changes in language policy (Gorter & Cenoz, 2017).

This paper maintains that Japanese learners' poor grammar performance derives from the current language education policy; essential components for developing grammar performance to the necessary level are missing. In order to determine what should be included in the policy to improve Japanese learners' grammar performance, this paper will compare the current English language education policy from two perspectives, teaching methods and high school textbook contents; my aim is to outline the ways the textbooks can be changed to improve the learners' grammar performance. Hopefully, the methods that I am recommending will be adopted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), as it is MEXT, a language policy maker, that can put these suggestions into effect and then high school students will enter university with better grammar performance.

2. Language education policy addressed by MEXT

In 1947, MEXT first published the Course of Study, the standard for school curricula, addressing not only the goals that learners are expected to achieve but also what the content of each school subject should be, what teaching methods should be employed, and many other necessary items for educating learners; revisions occur basically every ten years (2009, 2011b). The Course of Study is a component that occupies a dominant position in language education policy in Japan.

As globalization progressed, the government, people, and the business community became concerned about the Japanese students' underdeveloped ability in English communicative

competence; therefore, the Japanese society's attention was drawn to the development of students' English communication skills. The Ministry of Education (MOE), the former MEXT, responded to this by announcing in 1989 the implementation of communicative foreign language teaching in its Course of Study, aiming to foster the students' positive attitudes of communication in a foreign language and establish a foundation for international understanding (MOE, 1989). Since then, the acquisition of communicative competence has been emphasized in English language education.

Communicative competence recently defined by MEXT is the modified version of CEFR's definition constructed by the following three competences: (1) linguistic competence (knowledge of vocabulary and grammar), (2) sociolinguistic competence (an ability to communicate with people through appropriate social rules), and (3) pragmatic competence (an ability to communicate with people by paying attention to domains, situations, and interlocutors) (MEXT, 2018). In English Language Teaching (ELT), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which aims to develop the learners' ability to express their own ideas freely in classroom settings and ultimately to acquire sufficient communicative competence (Richards, 2006), has gained popularity worldwide since the 1980s, and therefore has been adopted in ELT in Japan.

MEXT has implemented the Course of Study prioritizing the development of learners' communicative competence in English in 1989; however, this did not improve the learners' English ability as expected. In response, it issued *An Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities* in 2003, and *Five Proposals and Specific Measures for Developing Proficiency in English for International Communication* in 2011 to improve English language education (MEXT, 2011a). The 2011 *Proposals* provide specific measures for developing learners' English proficiency. In 2011, MEXT also published the importance of learners to be *global jinzai* referring to the people possessing the following qualifications: (1) good communication skills in English, (2) necessary personal traits including positiveness, cooperativeness, and flexibility which help them communicate successfully with others from various backgrounds in an international environment, and (3) a solid identity as Japanese and the good understanding of different cultures (2011c). MEXT started to use the term, *global jinzai*, around 2011, and this concept has been widely accepted by the public since then.

Global jinzai is a current key word in Japanese society, and attracts many people's attention. Due to the popularity of this concept, a lot of universities have established an International Studies department where students learn not only English but also culture, politics, and other areas from the international perspective; the number of applicants to the department has been increasing in recent years (see Kakizaki, 2019).

In summary, along with the language education policy of fostering communicative competence in English by the teaching method of CLT and improving English language education to let learners acquire English proficiency, currently MEXT promotes the policy of nurturing learners to be *global jinzai* who can establish successful communication with others in English in international settings.

3. The method to teach English in Japan

Presently, there are a few teaching methods recognized in high schools. The detailed information of each and the way a class is conducted through the teaching method are illustrated as follows.

Communicative language teaching

What MEXT has promoted in the aforementioned language education policy demonstrates that learners' English ability and communication skills are the primary requirements to develop in English language education. To illustrate how learners should be taught to acquire these skills, MEXT published the 2018 *Course of Study* which states the importance of implementing two types of English classes at high school: a mandatory *English Communication* class and an elective *English Expression* class. *English Communication*, first introduced in 2012, aims to develop learners' four basic English skills whereas *English Expression* is designed to develop their production abilities. In the English Expression class, they engage in production activities including speech and discussion as well as paragraph writing to develop their logical thinking and communication ability (MEXT, 2018). High schools employ these two types of classes to help learners become *global jinzai*.

In both *English Communication* and *English Expression* classes, MEXT has promoted the employment of CLT which focuses on fostering learners' communicative competence; it is a learner-centered teaching method treating learners as active participants who experience communication in the process of L2 learning (Savignon, 2001). In CLT classes, learners are expected "to negotiate meaning without the direct control or intervention of the teacher" (Littlewood, 2007, p.244), and all activities are used to enhance the learners' communication (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

CLT has greatly drawn the attention of scholars and instructors not only in Japan but in numerous countries. Although many of them have acknowledged the importance of developing learners' communicative competence, some have pointed out the negative consequence brought by the emergence of CLT to L2 education; it has made L2 instruction shift its focus from grammatical accuracy and metalanguage to fluency in communication (Aydin, 2018, Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Therefore, CLT has been criticized for de-emphasis of language forms (Aydin, 2018).

***Yakudoku* (grammar-translation)**

Yakudoku literally means translating and reading a text; basically, in *yakudoku* classes where Japanese is used as a medium of instruction, learners read the text, translate it into Japanese word by word, and learn grammar and vocabulary to help understand the text (Butler & Iino, 2005). Traditionally, Japanese people used this method to learn new ideas and advanced technology first from China in the ancient times, and later from the Netherlands in the 17th century. Their purpose for learning a foreign language was to acquire sophisticated knowledge and advanced technology in order to facilitate social advancement and self-improvement (Suzuki, 1999); translating writings and understanding grammar were the central components of foreign language learning. However, the acquisi-

tion of communication skills was not emphasized.

When modernizing the country in the Meiji period (1868-1912), Japan learned Western science, technology, and knowledge largely through translation, and adopted English as one of the foreign language subjects at higher educational institutions. In English classes, *yakudoku* was mainly employed, and this method has been used to date; in class, a teacher asks his/her students to read and translate a text, while presenting important grammar points. The students copy the points in their notebooks, memorize them, and tackle various grammar exercises, many of which are done by word/sentence manipulation. In general, *yakudoku* helps learners acquire grammar knowledge and reading comprehension skills; however, it does not provide them with many opportunities to engage in communication activities – thus, they have difficulty developing communicative competence in the *yakudoku* class.

Coexistence of CLT and *yakudoku*

Although MEXT has been keen to implement CLT for the development of learners' communicative competence, the employment of this teaching method has not replaced *yakudoku*. This is partly because of the presence of university entrance exams which measure high school students' "receptive skills through multiple choice items, and translation focusing on vocabulary and grammar" (Humphries & Burns, 2015, p.240). Presently, many teachers in Japan recognize the importance of developing their students' communicative competence; however, they feel that their primary job is to get these students ready for the entrance exams, as is expected by their school, parents, and the students themselves (Humphries & Burns, 2015; Underwood, 2012, 2017).

Under the social condition where passing university entrance exams is recognized as one of the important life events among many Japanese, two types of teaching methods, CLT and *yakudoku*, are currently employed at high school where CLT is incorporated into the *yakudoku* class. In this class, teachers provide a lot of exercises to reinforce their student's receptive skills to better prepare for university entrance exams while at the same time assigning some activities to develop their communicative competence. In other words, in Japan, CLT is employed since it is encouraged by MEXT for the development of learners' communicative competence, while *yakudoku* has been employed to get them ready for university entrance exams.

4. The study of textbooks

In high schools, both CLT and *yakudoku* are employed, therefore to me it seemed reasonable that the textbooks were designed to cater to these teaching methods. To see if this was true and how the textbooks could be changed to improve learners' grammar performance, I conducted a study in 2021 of two types of high school textbooks, *English Communication* and *English Expression*; I examined nine textbooks of *English Communication I* from three publishers (*Sanseido*, *Tokyo Shoseki*, and *Keirinkan*), and seven textbooks of *English Expression I* from the same publishers. I randomly chose three publishers from thirteen that were available from the 2020 textbook list provided by MEXT (see MEXT, 2020).

Organization of a unit in two types of textbooks

When looking at organization of each unit in the examined textbooks, it was revealed that basically all *English Communication* textbooks feature a reading text as a center of the unit, and most exercises are designed to increase the learners' understanding of the text. They also include grammar instruction to help learners advance their grammar knowledge.

In contrast, *English Expression* textbooks feature grammar instruction as its center of the unit where many grammar exercises are provided while they contain a short dialogue accompanying a few listening exercises. They also provide some productive exercises such as email writing and giving speeches in class.

The following table shows basic exercise types in each unit appeared in the two types of textbooks.

Table 1. Exercises of Each Unit in Two Types of Textbooks

<i>English Communication I</i>	<i>English Expression I</i>
1) Open-ended questions as a warm-up at the beginning of the unit	1) Has T/F questions for the dialogue
2) Open-ended comprehension questions for the reading text	2) Provides grammar exercises with fill-in-the-blanks/multiple choices/arranging given words in a correct order
3) Asks to complete a summary for the text with fill-in-the-blanks/choosing correct phrases	3) Provides vocabulary exercises with fill-in-the-blanks/multiple choice/writing a correct word form
4) Asks reading comprehension questions with fill-in-the-blanks/multiple choice	4) Asks for the translation of Japanese sentences into English
5) Has True or False (T/F) questions for the text	5) Asks to write a sentence/paragraph
6) Provides vocabulary exercises with fill-in-the-blanks/multiple choice/writing a correct word form	6) Instructs the students to present a sentence/paragraph in class
7) Provides grammar exercises with fill-in-the-blanks/multiple choices/arranging given words in a correct order	7) Has conversation exercises
8) Provides production exercises (writing and/or speaking)	8) Has listening exercises
9) Has conversation exercises	
10) Has listening exercises	

As demonstrated in Table 1, the two types of textbooks provide exercises for the development of both receptive skills (reading/ listening/ grammar) and productive skills (writing/ speaking). There are a few differences in exercise types as illustrated in the table. *English Communication* textbooks contain various types of questions asking about the content of the text. In contrast, *English Expression* textbooks have many exercises to improve learners' grammar skills as well as a few exercises to translate Japanese sentences into English.

In conclusion, this examination revealed that *English Communication* is primarily focused on developing learners' reading comprehension skills and *English Expression* is largely focused on their grammar skills.

The percentage of production exercises in two types of textbooks

In order to determine whether the examined textbooks focus less on developing learners'

productive skills, I examined the percentage of the productive exercises in total exercises in each textbook. The way to calculate this percentage is carried out through a few steps. First, I counted the number of exercise sections, not the number of questions/sentences under the exercise section: even though one grammar exercise section contains three questions/sentences asking to manipulate a word in each sentence, this is counted as one exercise. Second, each exercise was categorized into two types, productive (writing/ speaking/ conversation) and receptive (reading/ grammar/ vocabulary/ listening). When an exercise requires students to produce a clause in English, it is counted as a productive exercise; an exercise of translating a Japanese sentence into English, answering open-ended reading comprehension questions, and making a speech are productive exercises. The rest of the exercises are categorized into receptive, some of which are an exercise of multiple choice, changing a given word/phrase to be an appropriate form, and filling in the blank with a word/phrase. The table below illustrates the examination result of nine *English Communication I* textbooks.

Table 2. Productive Exercises in *English Communication I* Textbooks

<i>English Communication I</i> Textbooks	Productive Exercises	Receptive Exercises	Publisher	Average of Productive and Receptive Exercises for Each Publisher
1	52.52%	47.48%	Sanseido	Productive: 32.95% Receptive: 67.05%
2	24.10%	75.90%		
3	22.22%	77.78%		
4	32.82%	67.18%	Tokyo Shoseki	Productive: 39.09% Receptive: 60.91%
5	37.33%	62.67%		
6	47.12%	52.88%		
7	24.14%	75.86%	Keirinkan	Productive: 26.39% Receptive: 73.61%
8	27.59%	72.41%		
9	27.44%	72.56%		
Average	32.81%	67.19%		

As shown in Table 2, the percentage of productive as well as receptive exercises varies among the *English Communication* textbooks and the publishers; in addition, even in the same publisher the percentage of exercises varies. However, many textbooks include receptive exercises more than productive ones; only one textbook contains more productive exercises. The average percentages of all the examined textbooks in Table 2 provide evidence that receptive exercises (67.19%) appear more than productive exercises (32.81%) in the examined textbooks.

I also investigated the proportion of productive exercises and receptive exercises in *English Expression I* textbooks. Note that not nine but seven *English Expression* textbooks were examined as Tokyo Shoseki publishes only one *English Expression* textbook; other publishers produced three kinds of these textbooks. The table below illustrates the results.

Table 3. Productive Exercises in *English Expression I* Textbooks

<i>English Expression I</i> Textbooks	Productive Exercises	Receptive Exercises	Publishers	Average of Productive and Receptive Exercises for Each Publisher
1	38.30%	61.70%	Sanseido	Productive: 34.2% Receptive: 65.8%
2	40.64%	59.36%		
3	23.66%	76.34%		
4	45.16%	54.84%	Tokyo Shoseki	Productive: 45.16% Receptive: 54.84%
5	51.43%	48.57%	Keirinkan	Productive: 51.02% Receptive: 48.98%
6	43.78%	56.22%		
7	57.86%	42.14%		
Average	42.98%	57.02%		

Similar to *English Communication I*, the percentage of productive as well as receptive exercises varies among the textbooks and publishers. As illustrated in Table 3, most of the *English Expression* textbooks contain more receptive exercises than productive ones; the average percentage of receptive exercises (57.02%) and productive exercises (42.98%) provides evidence of this. This finding demonstrates that the use of productive exercises in the textbooks are out of line with the MEXT policy of *English Expression* classes which is to enhance learners' productive skills; a textbook for *English Expression* classes should contain more productive exercises than receptive ones.

Next, I compared the ratio of productive exercises between textbooks of *English Communication* and *English Expression* to see whether *English Expression* textbooks include more productive exercises than *English Communication* ones. Table 4 illustrates the comparison of 16 textbooks in total.

Table 4. Comparing The Production Exercises in Two Types of Textbooks

Books Examined	<i>English Communication I</i> Productive Exercises	<i>English Expression I</i> Productive Exercises
1	52.52%	
2	24.10%	
3	22.22%	
4	32.82%	
5	37.33%	
6	47.12%	
7	24.14%	
8	27.59%	
9	27.44%	
10		38.30%
11		40.64%
12		23.66%
13		45.16%
14		51.43%
15		43.78%
16		57.86%
Average	32.81%	42.98%

As shown in Table 4, *English Expression* textbooks (42.98%) tend to contain more productive exercises than *English Communication* ones (32.81%). This conforms to the MEXT language policy of developing learners' productive skills in *English Expression* classes.

Overall, the findings of examining both *English Communication* and *English Expression* textbooks demonstrate that receptive exercises appear more than productive exercises. The tendency of lower percentage of the productive exercise use suggests that the examined textbooks are organized to satisfy both MEXT's language education policy of CLT implementation and the demand from schools, parents, and students for the preparation of university entrance exams; the textbooks are not structured merely to accord with the MEXT policy. Rather, the organization of textbooks is said to reflect the current social demand where not only CLT but also *yakudoku* is necessary in L2 education.

In this study, productive exercises are further divided into either writing exercises or non-writing exercises in order to see how much writing exercises appear in the textbooks; writing exercises are those requiring learners to write not only a paragraph but also an email or letter to state their own feelings and opinions (the exercises which require less than three sentences are excluded). The percentage of writing exercises in the 16 textbooks is compared to determine whether writing exercises appear more in *English Expression* textbooks than *English Communication* ones. Each percentage in Table 5 indicates the percentage of writing exercises in productive exercises.

Table 5. Comparing The Writing Exercises in Two Types of Textbooks

Books Examined	<i>English Communication 1</i>		<i>English Expression I</i>	
	Writing Exercises	Non-Writing Exercises	Writing Exercises	Non-Writing Exercises
1	13.70%	86.30%		
2	0	100%		
3	3.85%	96.15%		
4	23.26%	76.74%		
5	2.65%	97.35%		
6	10.20%	89.80%		
7	25.00%	75.00%		
8	10.00%	90%		
9	0	100%		
10			13.89%	86.11%
11			4.90%	95.10%
12			3.23%	96.77%
13			12.24%	87.76%
14			9.52%	90.48%
15			2.94%	97.06%
16			13.58%	86.42%
Average	9.85%	90.15%	8.61%	91.39%

As illustrated in the table above, *English Communication* textbooks (9.85%) present writing exercises slightly more than *English Expression* textbooks (8.61%), demonstrating a

discrepancy between language education policy and the design of the textbooks; since *English Expression* aims to develop learners' productive skills as addressed in the policy, the textbooks should provide more writing exercises than *English Communication* textbooks. The table also shows that the textbooks have far more non-writing exercises (*English Communication*: 90.15%, *English Expression*: 91.39%) than writing exercises (*English Communication*: 9.85%, *English Expression*: 8.61%). Additionally, two textbooks do not have any writing exercises requiring learners to write more than two independent clauses. This finding demonstrates that not writing but speaking is the focus of productive exercises in the textbooks.

5. Discussion

This paper maintains that Japanese university students' poor grammar performance is attributed to missing components in language education policy. In order to determine what is missing, current language education policy, teaching methods, and textbook contents were illustrated.

What was found in the illustration of the three issues above is that while MEXT promotes CLT in ELT, *yakudoku* has been also employed at school, and textbooks are designed to meet with this teaching practice. It was also revealed that textbooks contain various types of exercises, including grammar, to develop learners' receptive skills for the preparation of university entrance exams. Further, the percentages of both productive and receptive exercises found in the textbook study indicate that the development of receptive skills is more emphasized than productive skills in the textbooks; there is a characteristic in productive exercises which is to have more speaking exercises than writing ones.

The findings above suggest that Japanese university students are likely to possess sufficient grammar knowledge; they had various types of receptive exercises and grammar exercises at high school and passed university entrance exams measuring their grammar as well as reading skills. Their challenge is not that they do not possess good grammar but rather that they cannot apply the acquired learning to produce grammatical sentences. This situation is called pseudo-learning, a superficial form of learning which occurs when the target language is not integrated sufficiently into the learner's language system (McLaughlin, 1990, cited in Truscott, 1996). Learners need to internalize their skills to produce a grammatical sentence; however, the current high school English language education is not as effective as it should be to foster the students' grammar internalization.

The importance of comprehensible output

To increase learners' grammar internalization, I contend that it is better to assign them more productive/output exercises than now. The importance of output is supported by Swain (1985) who sees that output may function as a trigger to draw learners' attention "to the means of expression needed in order to successfully convey his or her own intended meaning" (p.249).

Swain formed Output Hypothesis while researching Canadian French immersion students who achieved a high level of L2 understanding through classroom instruction for

extended periods of time, but the students lagged behind in the grammatical accuracy of their output. Swain (1993) contends that grammatical accuracy may be achieved by learners who are provided opportunities of not only comprehensible input but also comprehensible output where they are pushed "to process language more deeply (with more mental effort)" (1995, p.126). Producing output makes learners notice a gap between their output and the target language through feedback given by others or interactions with others. In language learning, noticing the gap is crucial because this leads them to recognize the current state of their linguistic knowledge and their problems in L2 production (Cumming, 1989, Swain, 1995). Noticing the gap also allows them to restructure output (Doughty, 2001), and consolidate their existing language knowledge (Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

In addition to *noticing*, Swain (1995) explains other two specific functions of output in her Hypothesis. The first function is learners' hypothesis-testing; producing output is used by the learners to test their own hypothesis about how the language works and becomes comprehensible. The second is a reflective function; their reflection on their target language use helps learners develop their control and internalization of linguistic knowledge.

Output has important functions that enable learners to facilitate their grammatical accuracy (Swain, 1995); therefore, classes should be designed to provide learners with a lot of opportunities for comprehensible output.

Benefits of writing

It is important to provide learners with sufficient comprehensible output tasks, and I maintain that writing should be emphasized in class where teachers will provide assignments of writing paragraphs, summaries, and essays. Writing skills are productive, regardless of whether people are writing down their thoughts and feelings for themselves or others; however, when they are writing to express their thoughts and feelings to others it also has a communicative function.

Writing is seen to be beneficial to learners in L2 education, as shown by some study results. Swain and Lapkin (1995) conducted a study assigning 18 Canadian Grade 8 students in French-immersion classes a task of thinking-aloud while composing, which revealed several findings; two are introduced here. First, the students noticed a gap between their produced language and the target language in their L2 writing. Second, they applied certain thought processes including grammatical analysis when they faced difficulties in producing output. Swain and Lapkin think that it is important for the learners to face difficulties because while solving the difficulties, they not only acquire new L2 knowledge but also reinforce their existing knowledge.

Cumming (1990) examined 23 ESL students' oral reports generated during their production of written composition in L2 to see whether the composition induces their use of cognitive processes that reinforce their L2; he hypothesizes that writing draws learners' attention "to form-meaning relations that may prompt [them] to refine their linguistic expression – and hence their control over their linguistic knowledge" (Cumming, 1990, p.483). He found that during writing, the students use the following strategies: (1) they search for and assess appropriate words or phrases, (2) they compare equivalent terms across languages, and (3) they reason about choices of linguistic features. Because L2 writing induces the learners'

cognitive processes, he believes that writing prompts their L2 acquisition.

Some researchers have studied the relative importance of writing and speaking in language learning. Niu (2009) studied 16 EFL students to see whether collaborative writing tasks can enhance their language learning more than oral communicative tasks, and found that they produced more comments and interactions on language features relating to lexis, grammar, and discourse in the writing tasks than the oral ones. Adams (2003) also revealed the similar result. She examined 56 university students learning Spanish to see if noticing can enhance their language learning by assigning an information gap task (this task requires the students to produce both speaking and writing output). She found that the students' attention was drawn to language forms more when they engaged in the writing output than speaking. Based on their results, the researchers assert that writing tasks can draw learners' attention to the language features to a greater extent than the oral tasks.

Further, writing benefits language learning because of the nature of writing; it involves deeper linguistic processing that is possibly due to the fact that writing takes more time to produce than speech/oral communication (Hirvela, Hyland, & Manchon, 2018). Also, writing output is expected to meet a higher demand for expressing one's ideas accurately with appropriate language use than oral output (Wolff, 2000). This nature of writing may allow learners to produce linguistically more complex forms than those in speech/oral communication (Manchon & Williams, 2018).

Learners should be given as many writing exercises as possible because this helps them consolidate their existing L2 knowledge, and reinforce the way to connect their knowledge with performance. In other words, they have a better chance to internalize what they have learned into their language system through writing.

Generally speaking, L2 learners' writing differs significantly from L1 learners' in the use of vocabulary and grammar; even advanced L2 learners produce much simpler text than L1 learners due to their limited lexical and syntactic repertoire (Hinkel, 2006). If L2 learners would like to achieve proficiency in writing, which would lead them to have success in their future careers, it is necessary for them to have a different type of writing instruction from L1 learners (Frodesen, 2001); Celce-Murcia (2001) and Hinkel (2006) contend that L2 education should include explicit grammar and vocabulary instruction.

One of the ways to include explicit instruction of grammar and vocabulary for L2 learners' writing classes is achieved by the integrated approach in which teachers use authentic written text and discourse from various genres such as narratives or exposition for allowing the learners to analyze the specific uses of grammar structure and vocabulary (Hinkel, 2006). The learners are also instructed to draw their attention to the use of written language in a wide range of written formats such as e-mails, news reports, and academic essays (Hinkel, 2006).

Changes in language education policy

Given the textbook examination result demonstrating the predominance of receptive skill exercises and the benefit of writing to achieve learners' grammatical accuracy, I assert what is necessary to include in language education policy is the promotion of writing output. To realize this, MEXT should take several initiatives: The first is to address the importance of

writing to foster learners to become *global jinzai*. This is because learners need to develop their communicative competence by improving their grammar performance for future interactions with others in international settings. The second is to change the existing elective *English Expression* class to a mandatory one; this change makes it possible for all learners to have more writing experience in class. Thirdly, MEXT (which is the authority that determines textbook contents) needs to direct publishers and writers to include more writing output tasks in high school textbooks. Lastly, MEXT would then need to change the teacher training curriculum so that the trainees take mandatory classes that will instruct them on how to teach writing skills and evaluate the learners' output; currently, trainees often do not receive this type of instruction.

6. Conclusion

Japanese university students make grammar errors in their writing despite having had grammar instruction for six years at school. This paper outlines the current English language education policy, teaching methods, and textbook contents to demonstrate that their poor grammar performance derives from the current policy.

By comparing language education policy with teaching methods and textbook contents, this paper concludes that MEXT needs to encourage more writing output. Writing, if improved, will enable the students to better communicate with other English speakers.

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日本人英語学習者の文法力と英語教育政策の関係性

一般的に、日本人は英文法を中学・高校で学習するが、大学生にサマリーや5段落エッセイを書かせてみると、多くの文法間違いをする。なぜ、彼らはこのエラーをするのだろうか。本稿では、彼らの文法間違いは高校での英語教育とそれを管理している文部科学省の言語教育政策に起因すると考え、言語教育政策に欠けている部分が何なのかを探っていく。

そこで、まず最初に、現在実施されているコミュニケーション能力とグローバル人材の育成を目標としている言語教育政策の内容を説明する。次に高校ではどのように英語が教えられているのか、その教授方法について言及し、その後、筆者が2021年に実施した高校の英語教科書の構成と練習問題の内容調査の結果を報告する。

上記調査から、教科書には文法力や読解力を養うための練習問題が多く使用されているが、書く力を育成するための練習問題が少ないことが示された。高校ではスピーキングに重点を置くコミュニケーション力育成のための教育と共に、大学入試準備のための訳読授業も実施されていることから、教科書の構成はこれに対応できるようになっており、そのために書く力を養う練習問題が少なくなっていると推察する。これらから、高校での英語教育では「書く力を養う教育の実施」が不十分で、これが大学生の文法間違いに繋がっているのではないだろうか。

第2言語習得において「書く」という作業は、学習者が目標言語と自分が書いたものとの差に気づくことができる大切なものと捉えられている。加えて「書く」ことは、学習者が学んでいる際に「こうなのではないか」と自分で気づいた目標言語の表現や文法ルールを試す機会となり、自分が書いた文章を振り返ることもできるため、学習したことを確実に自分のものにして、正確な文法の習得にも繋がる (Swain, 1995)。

よって本稿は、コミュニケーション力育成を目標とする言語政策で欠けている部分は書く力の推進であると結論づける。日本人の英語学習者が文法的に正確な英語を実際に使えるようになるためには、学校でもっと「書く力を養う教育」をする必要があり、これを実現するために文科省は言語教育政策の中でこの教育の重要性を述べて、積極的に推進するべきだと考える。「書く」ことは相手に自分の考えや意見等を伝えるコミュニケーション手段の一つであるため、この教育が実施されて、学習者の書く力、そして学んだ文法を正確に実現できる力が向上すれば、コミュニケーション力を持ったグローバル人材を多く輩出できるようになるだろう。

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