

# **A Practical Report on the Specialized Subject “Japanese Linguistics”: English Composition Instruction Using Google Translate**

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## **1. The Purpose of This Report**

I am currently in charge of a specialized subject in the Department of Japanese Literature called “Japanese Linguistics.” This report focuses on demonstrating how “Japanese Linguistics” should be taught.

The Department of Japanese Literature at Jissen Women’s University began a new curriculum in 2018. One of the highlights of the new curriculum is the four Global Studies subjects, which include “Japanese Linguistics.” As “Japanese Linguistics” is a subject for second-year students, it was planned to start from the second year after the introduction of the new curriculum. In other words, it was scheduled to start in 2019. However, in 2019, the course was canceled because I was on a sabbatical, and therefore, it started in 2020.

“Japanese Linguistics” is a subject that is held in the second semester. In 2020, 11 students attended, and in 2021, 18 students have opted for this course. Classes of 2020 have already ended, and classes of 2021 are currently underway.

At our university, students evaluate classes at the end of the semester. For “Japanese Linguistics” in 2020, the student satisfaction rating was 4.5. Student satisfaction is measured on a scale from 1 to 5, so a rating of 4.5 is not so bad. In addition, the number of students——11 in 2020 and 18 in 2021——is by no means small for an English subject offered as a specialized subject in the department. In 2020, of the 11 students, only 2 were students of the Department of Japanese Literature, but in 2021, all 18 students belong to the department.

“Japanese Linguistics” attempts to enable students to write English using Google Translate. This report introduces how this is tackled.

## **2. Class Method**

Due to the influence of COVID-19, this course was conducted on-demand in 2020 and 2021. At Jissen Women’s University, on-demand classes are conducted using a system called manaba.

The procedure for conducting the classes is as follows:

- ① The teacher gives homework in the form of “answering a question about Japanese from a

foreign student in English.”

- ② Students make an answer in Japanese that is as simple and easy to understand as possible, and they use Google Translate to translate it into English.
- ③ The students read the English-translated answer, and if its meaning is different from that of the Japanese one, they rewrite the Japanese sentence and translate it again with Google Translate.
- ④ By repeating processes ② and ③, the students complete a convincing English answer. Once the English answer is complete, they submit both the Japanese and English answers to the teacher through manaba.
- ⑤ In the materials delivered for the next week’s class, the teacher shows the answer he/she made and gives a brief explanation. The teacher also uses Google Translate to show both untranslated Japanese and translated English answers.

A major feature of this course is the use of Google Translate. When students write clear and decent Japanese, it is translated fairly correctly by Google Translate. However, when students write verbose and confusing Japanese, the English translated by Google Translate often has meanings that the writer did not intend. Therefore, the training of this course looks like English training, but in fact, it can be said that it is training to write Japanese properly and easily.

In the materials delivered, I provide feedback on the answers of several students every week. However, at that time, little feedback on English expressions is given. Feedback is mainly about the clarity and content of the answers.

There are two reasons for not giving feedback on English expressions. The first is the way of thinking about English in this course. In this course, English is a means, not an end. Therefore, I do not think it is necessary to comment on the English expression itself. The second reason is my lack of English proficiency. As a teacher, my English ability is low, and I am always impressed that students majoring in Japanese literature can write extensively in English. Therefore, when it comes to English expressions, I always comment, “Everyone, it’s really amazing!” In general, teachers tend to give detailed comments to students’ English expressions. However, I feel that it is not a bad thing to make no comments other than to praise the students. Students seem to be relaxed in writing English because their English expressions are not modified and they are always complimented.

In addition, since “Japanese Linguistics” is one of the subjects of the Japanese language teacher training course of the Faculty of Letters, most of the students are very interested in Japanese language education. In fact, some students aspire to become Japanese teachers after

graduation. Such students should be interested in the task of "answering a question about Japanese from an international student in English."

### 3. Procedures for Using Google Translate Effectively

This course comprises of 14 classes. How to use Google Translate is explained in the first class. Using Google Translate itself is not difficult, but to use it effectively, a little procedure is required, which is explained in the first class. The contents of this explanation are shown below.

The next (1) is a question about Japanese from a foreign learner of Japanese. In the first class, I explain the procedure for using Google Translate while showing the answer to this question.

(1) Is the Japanese translation of "Please go to the window" "窓に行ってください"?

First, I will show the students the Japanese answer to the above question that I made myself. The answer is as follows:

(2) 「Please go to the window」の日本語訳は、「窓に行ってください」ではなく、「窓のところに行ってください」です。

日本語は、「場所を表す名詞」が決まっています。「学校、教室、市役所、病院」などは「場所を表す名詞」です。だから、「学校に行く」「教室に行く」「市役所に行く」「病院に行く」などと言うことができます。

一方、「窓、ドア、机、黒板」などは「場所を表す名詞」ではありません。だから、「窓に行く」「ドアに行く」「机に行く」「黒板に行く」とは言えないのです。そのため、「ところ」という「場所を表す名詞」を挿入して、「窓のところに行く」と言います。

Next, the English answer that Google Translate translated for (2) is shown in the following:

(3) The Japanese translation of "Please go to the window" is not "Please go to the window" but "Please go to the window".

In Japanese, the "noun that represents a place" has been decided. "Schools, classrooms, city halls, hospitals" etc. are "nouns that represent places". So you can say "go to school," "go to the classroom," "go to the city hall," "go to the hospital," and so on.

On the other hand, "windows, doors, desks, blackboards" etc. are not "nouns that represent places". That's why you can't say "go to the window," "go to the door," "go to the desk," or

"go to the blackboard." Therefore, insert the "noun that represents the place" called "place" and say "go to the window".

Looking at (3) above, I notice the following:

- (4) • Even Japanese example sentences that should not be translated have been translated.
- For quotation marks, “ ” should be used, but “ ” is used.
- For apostrophes, ‘ ’ should be used, but ‘ ’ is used.
- The beginning of a paragraph is not indented.
- The quotation marks (”) sometimes precede the periods (.) and commas (,).

After modifying the above points, (3) becomes (5).

- (5) The Japanese translation of “Please go to the window” is not “窓に行ってください” but “窓のところにってください.”

In Japanese, the “noun that represents a place” has been decided. “学校, 教室, 市役所, 病院” etc. are “nouns that represent places.” So you can say “学校に行く,” “教室に行く,” “市役所に行く,” “病院に行く,” and so on.

On the other hand, “窓, ドア, 机, 黒板” etc. are not “nouns that represent places.” That’s why you can’t say “窓に行く,” “ドアに行く,” “机に行く,” or “黒板に行く.” Therefore, insert the “noun that represents the place” called “ところ” and say “窓のところに行く.”

When I read the above again, I notice that the meaning of the last sentence is not correct. In other words, the meaning of the following sentence does not match the original meaning of Japanese.

- (6) Therefore, insert the “noun that represents the place” called “ところ” and say “窓のところに行く.”

Specifically, “noun that represents the place” and “ところ” are not well related. The original Japanese for this sentence is as follows:

- (7) そのため、「ところ」という「場所を表す名詞」を挿入して、「窓のところに行く」と言います。

The appositional expression “「ところ」という「場所を表す名詞」” is not well translated. Therefore, I change (7) as follows:

(8) そのため、「場所を表す名詞」である「ところ」を挿入して、「窓のところに行く」と言います。

The point is that “「ところ」という「場所を表す名詞」” was changed to “「場所を表す名詞」である「ところ」.”

When (8) is translated by Google Translate, it becomes (9).

(9) Therefore, insert "place", which is a "noun that represents a place", and say "go to the window".

“Which is a "noun representing a place"” is an inset phrase. This sentence makes sense. If the same modification as for (4) is applied to this, it becomes (10).

(10) Therefore, insert “ところ,” which is a “noun that represents a place,” and say “窓のところにいく.”

In addition, when this is included in the whole English answer, it becomes (11).

(11) The Japanese translation of “Please go to the window” is not “窓に行ってください” but “窓のところに行ってください.”

In Japanese, the “noun that represents a place” has been decided. “学校, 教室, 市役所, 病院” etc. are “nouns that represent places.” So you can say “学校に行く,” “教室に行く,” “市役所に行く,” “病院に行く,” and so on.

On the other hand, “窓, ドア, 机, 黒板” etc. are not “nouns that represent places.” That’s why you can’t say “窓に行く,” “ドアに行く,” “机に行く,” or “黒板に行く.” Therefore, insert “ところ,” which is a “noun that represents a place,” and say “go to the window.”

In the first class, the above explanation is given on how to use Google Translate.

I am not sure if the answer in (11) is really correct and qualified English. However, if students majoring in Japanese literature, who are not very good at English, can create such English sentences, it can be said that they are good for the time being.

Below is a summary of the points of correction shown in (4) – (11).

- (12) ① Return the parts that should not be translated into English, such as Japanese example sentences, to Japanese.
- ② Indent the beginning of a paragraph.
- ③ Correct the quotation mark from “ ” to “ ”.
- ④ Correct the apostrophe from “ ’ ” to “ ’ ”.
- ⑤ When the quotation mark (") and the period (.) or comma (,) are lined up, put the quotation mark after it.

In the class, “⑥ Correct what you noticed” is added to the above.

#### 4. The Syllabus of Japanese Linguistics

This chapter shows the syllabus of “Japanese Linguistics.”

“Japanese Linguistics” comprises of 14 classes. The first class explains how to use Google Translate, as explained in the previous chapter. From the second class, students learn the basics of Japanese Linguistics and ways of writing English using Google Translate, making answers to questions from foreign learners of Japanese. In the second class, only two questions are dealt with. From the third to the fourteenth class, three questions are dealt with every week. The questions dealt with in the class are given to the students as homework the previous week. Students submit Japanese and English answers to the teacher through manaba at least two days before class the following week.

The following is the syllabus of “Japanese Linguistics.”

1st class: Explanation of how to use Google Translate

2nd class: Noun

- ① Are the “です” in “父は会社員です” and the “です” in “父は今会社です” the same?
- ② Are the “たち” in “子供たちに会いました” and the “たち” in “山田君たちに会いました” the same?

3rd class: Adjective

- ① Is “彼女はきれい人です” correct Japanese?
- ② Is “その映画はとても面白いでした” correct Japanese?
- ③ Is “私が帰国しないと、母が悲しいです” correct Japanese?

4th class: Verb

- ① Why aren't the past forms of “きる (切る)” and “きる (着る)” the same?
- ② What should I learn first, “食べる” or “食べます”?
- ③ What is the difference between “八百屋がある” and “八百屋がいる”?

5th class: Part of speech classification

- ① The English word “different” is an adjective. Is “違う” in Japanese also an adjective?
- ② What is the difference between “ほしい” and “ほしがる”?
- ③ Is “もってこい” in the sentence “渋谷は買い物をするにはもってこいだね” a verb?

6th class: Particle

- ① What is the difference between “私はキャサリンです” and “私がキャサリンです”?
- ② What is the difference between “昨日、友達に会った” and “昨日、友達と会った”?
- ③ When I said a joke to my Japanese friend (Tatsuya-kun), “達也君と一緒に結婚したい!”, he said, “That Japanese is strange.” What is wrong with my Japanese?

7th class: Voice

- ① Is “今日はケーキが食べれる” correct Japanese?
- ② Is “私に読まさせてください” correct Japanese?
- ③ Is “私の頭が先輩に殴られました” correct Japanese?

8th class: Tense and Aspect, Negative

- ① What does “あっ、明日は試験があった!” mean? Is “あった” a past form of “ある”?
- ② What is the difference between “ている” in “先生が走っている” and “ている” in “先生が座っている”?
- ③ I was told by a Japanese friend, “テスト、来週じゃないじゃない。今週じゃない。” What does “来週じゃないじゃない” mean? Why did the friend say “じゃない” twice?

9th class: Modality

- ① What is the difference between the meanings of “あの人はまるで男のようだ” and “あの人はどうも男のようだ”?
- ② What is the difference between “雨が降りそうだ” and “雨が降るそうだ”?
- ③ What is the difference between “由美さんには恋人がいるようだ” and “由美さんには恋人がいるらしい”?

10th class: Benefactive, Honorific

- ① You can say “それを達也にあげてください”, but you cannot say “それを私にあげてください”. Why?
- ② I was told that “先生に本を貸してあげました” is a bit rude expression. Why is it rude? How can I make it not rude?
- ③ When I said “ここでお待ちしてください,” I was told that the Japanese was strange.

Why is it strange? What should I say?

11th class: Synonym (1)

- ① You can say “牛肉を炒める,” but you cannot say “ステーキを炒める.” Why?
- ② You can say “麺をゆでる,” but you cannot say “麺を煮る.” Why?
- ③ You can say “たくさん食べてね,” but you cannot say “多く食べてね.” Why?

12th class: Synonym (2)

- ① You can say “ハンドルを握ると人が変わる,” but you cannot say “ハンドルをつかむと人が変わる.” Why?
- ② You can say “人に頼るな,” but you cannot say “人間に頼るな.” Why?
- ③ You can say “彼はマラソンが得意だ,” but you cannot say “彼はマラソンが上手だ.” Why?

13th class: Synonym (3)

- ① You can say “弁護士（にん）,” but you cannot say “弁護士（じん）.” Why?
- ② You can say “先生、おはようございます,” but you cannot say “教師、おはようございます.” Why?
- ③ You can say “さっさと帰りなさい,” but you cannot say “はい、さっさと帰ります.” Why?

14th class: Synonym (4)

- ① You can say “試験の準備をする,” but you cannot say “試験の用意をする.” Why?
- ② You can say “待ち合わせに10分遅れた,” but you cannot say “待ち合わせに10分遅くなった.” Why?
- ③ You can say “すぐ来てください,” but you cannot say “あつという間に来てください.” Why?

The following grammar categories are dealt with in the 2nd to 10th classes.

(13) Noun, Adjective, Verb, Part of Speech Classification, Particle, Voice, Tense and Aspect, Negative, Modality, Benefactive, Honorific

Compound sentence and noun modification clause are not dealt with, but other major Japanese linguistic topics are mostly dealt with. Moreover, in 11th – 14th classes, the focus is not on grammar but on synonyms.

In Japanese language education classrooms, it is important to consider the difference in the meaning of synonyms. Japanese learners speak and write unnatural and wrong Japanese on a daily basis, as in the case of the utterance “ステーキを炒めて食べました.” When a



Japanese teacher hears the utterance, the teacher corrects it to “ステーキを焼いて食べました。” Then, the learner asks, “Why is 炒める unusable when 焼く can be used?” Therefore, the teacher must explain the difference between “炒める” and “焼く.” Therefore, it is very important to consider the proper use of synonyms.

## 5. Impressions of the Classes

The “Japanese Linguistics” course just started last year. I have only experienced this course twice yet. So far, I have a very good impression of the answers the students make. I give students three tasks each week and tell them that they may only work on one task. Nevertheless, many students work on all three tasks. In addition, most students majoring in Japanese literature are not good at English, and some even refuse to use English. However, for this course, students seem to be relaxed in writing English, perhaps for the following three reasons:

- ① Most of the students are interested in Japanese language education. Therefore, it is possible to positively tackle the task of “answering questions about Japanese from international students in English.”
- ② Because Google Translate is used, writing in English itself is easy.
- ③ The teacher does not correct the English expression and continues to give only positive comments.

Students who write easy-to-understand and decent Japanese have succeeded in writing easy-to-understand English answers. Students use Google Translate, so writing English should not be arduous. Therefore, what I am asking students to do can be summarized in the following two points.

- ① Write an easy-to-understand explanation in proper Japanese.
- ② Carefully read the English answers translated by Google Translate.

Students interested in Japanese language education will be able to work positively on ①. Moreover, regarding ②, students satisfied with the Japanese answers they wrote should be patient in reading English.

There are many students in the Department of Japanese Literature who are interested in Japanese language education but are not good at English. Writing English with the help of Google Translate, driven by an interest in Japanese language education, is the aim of this course.