THE PATTERN OF MISUSE OF "*NI*" AND "*DE*" AS THE PARTICLES THAT FUNCTION AS PLACE MARKERS

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Abstract

Japanese has many particles that confuse students, including students from Indonesia. This is because many particles, when translated into Indonesian, have the same meaning even though their use is very different in Japanese. This research aims to analyze the misuse patterns of the particles "*ni*" and "*de*", which function as place markers, and what caused them. This research used a qualitative approach on 60 students learning elementary Japanese, consisting of 23 males and 37 females. The data collection technique was a test filling in the correct particles in the blank spaces in sentences. Based on the results of the analysis, it can be seen that (1) learners tend to use the particle "*ni*" as a place marker, either indicating activity or simply indicating presence; (2) the use of the particle "*de*" as a marker for the location of activity tends to be more confused with the use of the particle "*ni*" as a marker for the location of objects or people and animals; (3) whether the particle "*ni*" or "*de*" is located at the beginning of a sentence, namely following the first word in the sentence, then students tend to use the particle "*wa*" (the particle marking the subject/point of the sentence), because the first word is considered the subject or main sentence; (4) If the particle "*ni*" or "*de*" is located at the end before the predicate in the sentence, then students tend to use the particle "*o*/*wo*" (object marking particle), because the previous word is considered the object of the sentence. The causes of errors found were the influence of the mother tongue, overgeneralization, and fossilization.

Keywords – Japanese, misuse, particles, *ni, de*

Introduction

Japanese is a language studied by 3,794,714 learners in 133 countries (The Japan Foundation, 2023:7) and has unique complexity, especially in terms of the use of particles. Particles in Japanese are divided into six types: modal particles, conjunction particles, case particles, adverbial particles, final particles, and interjection particles.

Particles are small grammatical elements that show the relationship between words in a sentence. Even though it is a small unit, the presence of particles determines the clarity of the meaning or intention of the sentence. An example can be seen in the following sentence.

(a) 彼　私　怒った。
Kare___watashi___okotta.
He/him___ I/me___ mad.

There is no particle added to this sentence, so who is angry and to whom he/she was angry is unknown. Therefore, particles are needed so that their meaning can be understood clearly. Let's compare this sentence with the following sentence.

(b1) 彼が私に怒った。
*Kare **ga** watashi **ni** okotta*.
He got mad at me.

Or it could be like the following sentence:

(b2) 彼に私が怒った。
*Kare **ga** watashi **ni** okotta*.
I was mad at him.

Example (a) is a sentence that has no meaning because it is not equipped with a particle. This prooved that the existence of particles in the sentence is essential because it determines the meaning. The case of this sentence is called "naked noun". Naked nouns consist of two types, namely "particle-omitted nouns" and "particle-less nouns". Nouns whose meaning does not change whether a particle is used or not are called “particle-omitted nouns,” and nouns whose meaning changes whether a particle is used or not are called “particle-less nouns” (Kariyado, 2014:148). Sentence (a) is an example of the second sentence case (particle-less nouns).

Another unique fact about particles in Japanese is that many of them have different functions, but when compared to Indonesian, they have the same meaning or function. This often needs to be clarified, and students need to correct usage. Examples of particles that usually confuse Japanese language learners are “*ni*” (に) and “*de*” (で). These two particles are paired with the preposition “di” in Indonesian which has a function as a place marker preposition. Although they seem simple, these two particles have particular functions and are used in Japanese that, if misused, can change the meaning of the entire sentence.

The “*ni*” particle has twelve functions (Ashino dan Itō, 2022: 117-118).

1. Destination: 子供が学校に行く。(*Kodomo ga gakkō **ni** iku*) ‘A child goes to school.’ (Destination of movement)

2. Partner: (1) Partner of action: 隣の人に話しかける。(*Tonari no hito **ni** hanashikakeru*.) Talk to the person beside you. (2) Partner of giving: おばあさんが孫に絵本をやる。(*Obāsan ga mago **ni** ehon o yaru.*) ‘A grandmother gives a picture book to her grandchild.’ (3) Partner of passive action: 犯人が警察に捕まった。(*Han'nin ga keisatsu **ni** tsukamatta.*) ‘A criminal is caught by the police.’ (4) Partner as a reference: 体格が大人にまさる。(*Taikaku ga otona **ni** masaru.*) ‘A person with a larger physique than an adult.’

3. Place: (1) Place of existence: 机の上に本がある。(*Tsukue no ue **ni** hon ga aru*.) ‘There is a book on the desk.’ (2) Place of appearance: あごに髭が生える。(*Ago **ni** hige ga haeru*.) ‘A beard grows on the chin.’

4. Cause/ground: (1) Cause of emotion/sensation: 職員の横暴な態度に腹を立てる。(*Shokuin no ōbōna taido **ni** harawotateru*.) ‘I get angry at the tyrannical attitude of the staff.’ (2) Cause of continuous state: 潮風に帆が揺れていた。(*Shiokaze **ni** ho ga yurete ita*.) ‘The sails are fluttering in the sea breeze.’

5. Subject: (1) Subject of possession: 私には大きな夢がある。(*Watashi **ni** wa ōkina yume ga aru*) ‘I have a big dream.’ (2) Subject of ability: この子に専門書が読めるはずがない (*Kono ko **ni** senmon-sho ga yomeru hazu ga nai*.) ‘There is no way this child can read a specialized book.’ (3) Subject of mental state: 私には弟の成功が心からうれしい。(*Watashi **ni** wa otōto no seikō ga Kokoro kara ureshī*.) ‘I am truly happy about my younger brother's success.’

6. Object: (1) Object of action: 親にさからう。(*Oya **ni** sakarau*.) ‘I disobey my parents.’ (2) Object of mental activity: 先輩にあこがれる (*Senpai **ni** akogareru.)* ‘I admire my senior.’

7. Means: (1) Contents: 新入生の顔は希望にあふれている。(*Shin'nyūsei no kao wa kibō **ni** afurete iru*.) ‘The faces

of the new students are full of hope.' (2) Attached matter: 全身が泥にまみれる。 (*Zenshin ga doro **ni** mamireru*.) 'Their whole bodies are covered in mud.'

8. Time: (1) Time noun: 1 時に事務所に来てください。(*Ichiji **ni** jimusho ni kite kudasai*.) 'Please come to the office at 1 o'clock.' (2) Period noun: 午前中に用事を済ませた。 (*Gozenchū **ni** yōji o sumaseta*.) 'I finished my errands in the morning.'

9. Area: 私には、山本さんの意見は刺激的だった。 (*Watashi **ni** wa, Yamamotosan no iken wa shigekiteki datta.*) 'Yamamoto's opinion was stimulating to me.' (Area in which cognition takes place)

10. Purpose: 母が買い物に行く。 (*Haha ga kaimono **ni** iku*.) 'My mother is the one who goes shopping.' (Purpose of the move)

11. Role: お礼に手紙を書く。(*Orei **ni** tegamiwokaku*.) 'I write a letter of thanks.' (Nominal)

12. Proportion: 一週間に 2 日は酒を飲んでいる。(*Isshūkan **ni** futsuka wa sake o nonde iru*) 'I drink alcohol two days a week.'

The "*de*" particle has eight functions (Ashino dan Itō, 2019: 105).

1. Subject: 私と佐藤でその問題に取り組んだ。 (*Watashi to Satō **de** sono mondai ni torikunda*.) 'Sato and I worked on the problem.' (Subject of action)

2. Place: 庭で犬が吠えている。(*Niwa **de** inu ga hoete iru*.) 'A dog is barking in the garden.' (Place of action)

3. Means: (1) Tools: ナイフでチーズを切る。(*Naifu **de** chīzu o kiru*.) 'Cutting cheese with a knife.' (2) Method: 遠近法で図を描く。(*Ochikochihō **de** zu o kaku*.) 'Drawing a picture in perspective.' (3) Materials: 千代紙で鶴を折る。 (*Chiyogami **de** tsuru o oru*.) 'Folding a crane with *chiyogami* paper.' (4) Components: 委員会は 5 人のメンバーで構成されている。 (*Iinkai wa gonin no menbā **de** kōsei sarete iru*.) 'The committee comprises five members.' (5) Contents: 会場が人でいっぱいになる。(*Kaijō ga hito **de** ippai ni naru.*) 'The venue is filled with people.' (6) Adherence: 服がホコリで汚れる。 (*Fuku ga hokori **de** yogoreru*.) 'Clothes are stained with dust.'

4. Cause/Reason: (1) Cause of change: 強い風で看板が倒れた。(*Tsuyoi kaze **de** kanban ga taoreta.*) 'A signboard falls over in a strong wind.' (2) Reason for action: 急用で家に帰った。 (*Kyūyō **de** ie ni kaetta*.) 'I went home for urgent business.' (3) Cause of emotion/sensation: 友人とのことで悩んでいる。 (*Yūjin to no koto **de** nayande iru*.) 'I am worried about a friend.' (4) Reason for judgment: 隣の部屋の人物が誰なのか，甲高い声で分かった。 (*Tonari no heya no jinbutsu ga darena no ka, kandakai koe **de** wakatta*.) 'I knew the person in the next room from a high-pitched voice.'

5. Limit: 先着 30 名で締め切る。 (*Senchaku 30 mei **de** shimekiru*.) 'The deadline is the first 30 people to apply.' (Upper limit of range)

6. Domain: 富士山が日本で最も高い山だ。 (*Fujisan ga Nihon **de** mottomo takai yamada*.) 'Mt. Fuji is the highest mountain in Japan.' (Domain of evaluation)

7. Purpose: 観光で京都を訪れた。(*Kankō **de** Kyōto o otozureta*.) 'I visited Kyoto for sightseeing.' (Purpose of action)

8. Modality: 裸足で歩く。(*Hadashi **de** aruku*.) 'Walking barefoot.' (Modality of movement)

One particle with many functions as described above or similar or even the same functions when translated into the learner's mother tongue often caused repeated errors, both beginners and those at an advanced level learners.

Research related to particle usage errors is extensive and provides opportunities for Japanese language researchers and teachers to understand the characteristics of their learners. Research on particles can be comprehensive because the number of particles is enormous in Japanese. A particle even has many functions that can differentiate meaning in Japanese sentences. For example, the particles "*ni*" and "*de*".

The particles "*ni*" and "*de*" are two examples of case particle types. Many studies have been conducted regarding errors in using case particles made by students in Japanese. Murao & Itō (2014) examined the misuse of case particles in the spontaneous speech of Japanese children with SLI (Children with specific language developmental disorders). This ten-year longitudinal study found that the frequency of particle misuse cases decreased significantly at the end of the collection period. Dalkiran & Xu (2014) analyzed the misuse of Japanese case particles, especially the instances "*de*" and "*ni*" through contrastive analysis with case forms in Turkish. In Indonesia, it is still difficult to find research results related to errors in using the particles "*ni*" and "de" by Japanese language learners, especially in the last ten years.

Research on error patterns in using the particles "*ni*" and "de" is essential to understand the difficulties Japanese language learners. By understanding these error patterns, Japanese language teachers can develop more effective teaching methods and help students master the use of these particles better.

This study aims to analyze common error patterns when using the particles "*ni*" and "de" among Japanese language learners. This exploration of various examples of error patterns allows teachers and researchers to identify error patterns that frequently occur among learners. Understanding the most common mistakes is also helpful for teachers so they can anticipate and focus on areas that require special attention in the learning process. The results of error analysis can be used to (1) develop more effective learning materials, (2) evaluate and adjust the teaching methods used, (3) make students more alert and focused in improving areas of their weaknesses, (4) develop more targeted learning strategies, and (5) error analysis allows teachers to provide more specific and constructive feedback to learners.

Methodology

This research used a qualitative approach. Data were collected using test techniques carried out on 60 elementary-level Japanese language students consisting of 37 females and 23 males aged 18 to 20 years. The test is in the form of questions that must be solved by filling in the correct particles in the blank spaces in the sentences. The test material given consists of the particles "*ni*" and "*de*" which function as place markers contained in the book "*Minna no Nihongo Shokyu* I" lessons 1-25. The collected data was then analyzed using qualitative descriptive methods.

Findings and Discussions

Findings

Table 1 below shows the findings of sentences that contain errors in using the particles "*ni*" and "*de*". In each sentence, the "misuse" column is the wrong answer written by the student.

Table 1. Sentences containing errors in the use of the particles "*ni*" and "*de*"

Sentences	Misuse	Data
お風呂に入ります。	を	6
	が	1
	へ	1
学校に食堂があります。	で	6
	X	1
	の	8
賑やかな町に住みたくないです。	で	3
	が	6
	には	2
	は	6
あそこにいる人は田中さんです。	で	3
	は	1
	の	3
棚の上にカタログを置きました。	が	3
	の	1
	を	1
	NA	1
あの棚にある服を見せてください。	で	1
	の	7
	が	6
	は	11
家族はどちらにいらっしゃいますか。	が	18
	へ	1
	を	1
	*NA	1
駅の前でタクシーを降りました。	に	39
	は	1
あの桜の木下で遊びましょう。	に	18
	を	3
	へ	1
	NA	2
春はこの公園で花見ができます。	に	10
	は	1
	へ	1
	X	1
	を	1
	の	1
一週間に2回プールで泳ぎます。	で	2
	を	9
	が	2
	は	4
どこで国際会議がありますか。	に	14
	の	1
	も	2
	へ	1
どこでパーティーをしますか。	に	5
	へ	1
	は	2
	が	2
パーティーで友達に会いました。	に	8
	は	4
	が	1
会議で何か意見を言いましたか。	に	8
	の	1
	は	10
	X	1
プレイガイドでコンサートのチケットを買いました。	にと	4
	の	4
	は	4
		8

*NA: No answer

Of the sixteen sentences containing errors in the use of the particles "*ni*" and "*de*", 104 data were found for errors in the use of the particle "*ni*" and 151 data for errors in the use of the particle "*de*". This data includes several respondents who still need to fill in answers (NA) to the questions.

Based on this data, the isuse patterns in the particles "*ni*" and "*de*" can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. Patterns of errors in the use of the particle "*ni*"

Patterns of errors		Data
Alternating form	– Place marker "*de*"	15
	– Place marker "*e/he*"	2
	– Others	84
Omission	– There are no particles	1
Others	– No Answer	2
Total		104

Based on Table 2, it can be understood that elementary-level Japanese learners still have confusion regarding the use of the particles "*ni*" and "*de*" which both mean "di" in Indonesian. The confusion between using the "*ni*" particle and other particles is also very significant, with the total error data reaching 84.

Table 3. Patterns of errors in the use of the particle "*de*"

Patterns of errors		Data
Alternating form	– Place marker "*ni*"	105
	– Place marker "*e/he*"	4
	– Others	36
Omission	– There are no particles	2
Others	– No Answer	4
Total		151

In contrast to the use of the "*ni*" particle, based on the data, the elementary-level Japanese language learners who were respondents to this study were more confused about using the "*de*" particle. The "*de*" particle interchanged with the "*ni*" particle reached 105 cases. The number of cases that were confused with other particles was also higher than when using the "*ni*" particle, namely 36 data.

Discussions

Alternating Form Error Patterns

Based on the findings of this research, it is known that learners still make the wrong choice (Corder, 1981:36) in using the particles "*ni*" and "*de*", which in Indonesian are translated only as the preposition "di". In Indonesian, there is no difference in the use of the word "di" is the main cause of errors. Interference with the learner's mother tongue is very obvious in this case. The preposition "di" in Indonesian can be used as a place marker without paying attention to whether the place is just an indication of the presence of objects or people or as a place for carrying out activities. Example:

(1) 駅の前でタクシーを降りました。
*Eki no mae **de** takushī o orimashita*.
I got out of the taxi in front of the station.

In this sentence, alternating form pattern error occurred between the particles "*de*" and "*ni*". A total of 39 respondents answered by adding the particle "*ni*". Errors occured because the learner may need to consider that the verb *orimasu* is an activity or not. The place where the activity occurs is marked with the particle "de".

In sentence (2) and (3) often traps the learner's decision in determining the correct particle. This sentence ends with the verb *arimasu* or *aru*, which means "existence". Usually, students receive sentence pattern material that shows the existence of objects and humans or animals earlier than the sentence pattern which states that there are activity or events such as summits, concerts, festivals, etc. In the case of indicating the existence, the particle used is "*ni*", whereas when a sentence describes an activity or events, even though it ends with the verb *aru*, the particle marking the event's location used is "*de*".

(2) どこで国際会議がありますか。
Doko de kokusai kaigi ga arimasu ka.
Where is the international conference held?

The "*ni*" particle is used in sentences with verb predicates that express the

existence of objects (*aru*), humans and animals (*iru*), and other verbs that do not contain the meaning of activity in Japanese. Based on the analysis results, in sentences that only state existence and should use the "*ni*" particle, students also make mistakes by answering it with the "*de*" particle.

(3) 学校**に**食堂があります。
*Gakkō **ni** shokudō ga arimasu*.
There is a cafeteria at the school.

These errors also occurred in Li's (2022) research, which analyzed the causes of errors in using the particle "*de*" with the particle "*o/wo*", which both function as place markers. According to the results of his research, the error pattern occurred due to confusion caused by the influence of the learner's mother tongue (Chinese).

Alternating form error patterns (Ishikawa, 2001) also occur because learners overgeneralize it (Selinker, 1970:215). When the particle is located after the first word in the sentence, they assume that the word is the subject marked with the particle "*wa*" (48 data), as seen in a sentence (4). On the other hand, when the particle is located before the verb (predicate), which is located at the end of a sentence, such as a sentence (5), they assume that the word in front of the particle is an object marked with the particle "*o/wo*" (15 data). Example:

(4) 会議**で**何か意見を言いましたか。
Kaigi de nanika iken o iimashita ka.
Did you offer any opinions at the meeting?
(5) 一週間に 2 回プール**で**泳ぎます。
*Isshūkan ni 2-kai pūru **de** oyogimasu*.
I swim in the pool twice a week.

This overgeneralization can occur in learning any language, including the mother tongue. This error due to overgeneralization also occurred in Moriya's (2014) research, which found cases of overgeneralization in Japanese English language learners. When a person has acquired a certain level of mastery of the target language, a phenomenon known as "overgeneralization" has been observed, in which, because the person has progressed somewhat in mastering the rules of the target language, they mistakenly generalize the rules of the target language and apply them in places where they should not be used (Su in Zhang, 2014:38).

Another cause of this pattern of alternating form is fossilization (Selinker, 1970:215). Example:

(6) 家族はどちら**に**いらっしゃいますか。
*Kazoku wa dochira **ni** irasshaimasu ka*.
Where does your family live?

In sentence (6), many students mistakenly fill in the particle "*ni*" with "*ga*". This error shows the tendency of fossilization of expressions that have previously been studied, namely the sentence pattern that expresses the choice or comparison どちら + が + Adj +ですか。 (Dochira + ga + adj + desuka?) 'Which is (more) Adj?'. The word *dochira* seems to have been permanently paired with the particle "*ga*". Sentence (6) ends with the verb *irasshaimasu*, which is used to politely ask about someone's whereabouts or residence. *Irasshaimasu* is the same meaning with *iru*, thus, the most appropriate particle to use in this sentence is "*ni*".

Apart from answering with the particle "*ga*", there are also those who answer with the particle "*e/he*". The word *irasshaimasu* is a polite form of the words *iru* to describe existence of humans and animals and also as polite form *iku* which mean 'to go'. In this case, it can be

predicted that students mistakenly think that the word *irasshaimasu* comes from the word *iku*, which means 'to go' so they use the particle "*e/he*", to express the direction of movement.

Omission Error Patterns

The pattern of omission errors (Dulay et al., 1982:55) also occured in errors in the use of both "*ni*" and "*de*" particles. However, statistically, the number is not much, 0.1% for errors in using the particle "*ni*" and 1.3% for errors in using the particle "*de*".

As seen in Tables 2 and 3, some respondents stated, "There are no particles" in the sentences. In this study, although blank spaces were provided in the question sentences, actually no particles were needed in these blank spaces. If particles were added to the sentence, it would be wrong answer. This is also one of the skills that Japanese language learners must master. After analyzing the sentence, they must determine whether it would be meaningful if particles were added or vice versa. Students are usually asked to write "X" in the blank space in test questions like this. Example:

(7) 春はこの公園で花見ができます。
Haru wa kono kōen de hanami ga dekimasu.
In spring, you can enjoy cherry blossom viewing in this park.

Students write in the part that should be filled with the "*de*" particle.

Conclusions

In this study, it can be concluded that there are more errors in using the "*de*" particle than the "*ni*" particle, which is possibly caused by the influence of the Indonesian language, which does not have rules that differentiate the reposition "*di*" as a place marker for whether there is activity or only indicates existence. In the book *Minna no Nihongo*, as the main textbook used in grammar class, the "*ni*" particle material is taught arly than "*de*" particle. In this case, it is necessary to consider again whether the material given should follow the material flow in the *Minna no Nihongo* book or whether it should be grouped based on the type of material. For example, "*ni*" and "*de*" are taught simultaneously to familiarize students with place-marking particles and their functions.

Both mixed error patterns and over-generalization are possible due to gaps in the flow of the grammar material provided so that the material that is learned first becomes the knowledge that remains in the learner's memory the longest. This may also lead to fossilization in their acquisition of the Japanese language.

The causes of errors reviewed in this research are still predictions supported by theory, future research must explore the causes of errors further. For this reason, researchers plan to use several data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and think-aloud protocols to examine the causes of errors more validly.

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