

A Consideration of English Education in Japan through a Perspective of Students' Recognition of English Suffix 3rd Person Singular Present Indicative

Makiko Tamoto

Introduction.

English as a second language (ESL) education in Japan has been considered more seriously and is now taught even at the elementary level. Moreover, many schools in Japan now have native speaker of English language teachers, often referred to as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs). The reason for having English education from the earlier stages is that it can help the pupils acquire more fluent English by the time they advance to the later stages. In addition, another reason for having native English teachers is that they are entrusted to teach students more natural English.

As an instructor of English language at the university level, I often consider the overall situation of English education in Japan whenever I come across common mistakes by university students in general. In this case, I focus on a common mistake of forgetting the suffix of the third person singular present indicative, both in English writing and speaking classes.

In this article, I aim to highlight this common mistake by Japanese university students who study ESL. Accordingly, I advocate for a more profound English education in both Japan and other countries where English is not their native language. My discussion is organized under the following headings, which may indicate the reasons for making the common mistake:

- 1) Lack of the tie-ups among the entire English education,
- 2) Dependency on the English natives in teaching English language,
- 3) Lack of unity regarding the contents of English classes.

After discussing the above three reasons for the common mistake, in my final remarks, I will suggest possible solutions for rectifying the problems.

Dependency on English Natives in Teaching English Language.

It is impossible to deny the improvement of students' English-speaking skills through interaction with native speakers of English, the value of conversation time in learning the subtle nuances of using the English language, or the quality of English education provided by native speakers of English in Japan. However, I must highlight the necessity of paying attention to the fact that students at universities make simple mistakes in writing and speaking English such as dropping the suffix 's' of the third person singular present indicative, forgetting if it is plural or singular, or mismatching the subjects and the predicative etc. These are the language competencies that university freshmen should have already mastered throughout earlier levels of English education.

Undoubtedly, the common mistakes that university students make do not necessarily reflect a complete lack of competence. In many cases, these students can comprehend the grammar logically, however, they often make the mistakes unconsciously or carelessly. Of course, not all students make those mistakes, but it is a predominant mistake that should have been dealt with by the time they become university

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students.

It may seem pity to criticize students forgetting the recognition of the suffixes. However, composing incorrect grammar, even if minor, causes miscommunication and may even convey an impression of poor academic background, which has implications for their future careers. People in general, are fostered at school academically so that they learn some knowledge and skills to survive in societies. With Japan becoming more globalized, English language skills are becoming increasingly necessary for their successful career.

I, therefore, doubt if it is certainly correct to depend on native English teachers to ensure that students acquire the required English language competencies. I admit teaching English both in the students' mother language (Japanese) and the target language (English).

Lack of Unity Regarding the Contents of English Classes.

In this section, I would like to focus on the content of the textbooks used in English classes and what materials are covered. Currently, the textbook and the class achievement goals often differ depending on the schools or universities. It is common that the course syllabus and the learning materials are arranged by the instructor, according to the levels of the students. Moreover, the instructor who is in charge of the classes can choose the textbook, even as a part-time instructor. This kind of situation is not ideal for ensuring that students learn and acquire different language competencies on a step-by-step basis.

From my experience and view, university lecturers or professors cannot help but repeat the fundamental and primary English grammar

that should have been acquired at the junior high and high school levels. This is a missed opportunity and the reason for lost time when university instructors need to teach the fundamental and primary English grammar that is needed in order to progress to higher levels of English competence. I feel that the levels of the freshmen or sophomores' English skills are getting ever worse compared to the previous time before inducing the native teachers or English education at elementary schools. I cannot help but reconsider the acquisition and the achievements of English learning before the admission to universities.

If the Ministry of Education decides the aims and achievement goals, outcomes of English education at the respective educational institutions and at each stage of education the situation might improve dramatically. Perhaps, the ministry could present a model with a chart or table on the official home page; then it would be easier for English educators from all over the countries and at all stages to have more unified goals.

Final Remarks.

The article discussed the problems of English education in Japan. They are as follows: 1) Lack of the tie-ups in the Education in Japan, 2) Independency on the English natives in teaching English language, 3) Necessity of recognition of learner's common problems in English classes.

My aim is to assist with the improvement of English education in Japan by drawing some attentions to the problems. I would like to suggest the following ideas as the solutions to the educational problems discussed above:

1. The Ministry of Education in Japan should establish and clearly

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communicate national goals for English education which are based on step-by-step achievement of certain language competencies.

2. Japanese native English language teachers have their own merits in teaching English language.
3. Every English teacher, instructor or professor should pay their attention to the common mistakes which were discussed above. Recognition of learners' common problems is the first step in helping them improve their language skills.