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An Error Analysis of Japanese Business Writing

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Business Writing is a type of written communication, usually with standard structure and style. Japanese business writing should follow the customary format and etiquette of formality and politeness. It is necessary to follow proper etiquette to leave a good impression on business partner. Thus, it is one of the main concerns to know about formal style of Japanese business writing by the students learning Japanese in Sri Lanka. In this paper, examples of errors made by the students learning Japanese when writing Japanese business letters were collected, analyzed, and evaluated. The data were collected by analyzing twenty business writings of the first year students reading for Japanese Language Special Degree at University of Kelaniya. Many types of errors related to word choice were identified. Particularly, inappropriate combinations of recipient name and honorific title, inappropriate combinations of verbs and objects, mixing of polite and humble language, and insufficient understanding of fundamental Japanese constructions were prevalent. Other types of mistakes included inappropriate layout, incorrect use of abbreviations, and incorrect use of Arabic and Japanese numerals. There was a tendency to make the same mistakes repeatedly, and it was concluded that the guidance offered by textbook examples is insufficient and that systematic training in formal written Japanese is essential.

Key words: Business Letters, Error Analysis, Honorific, Japanese