Finding Mistakes in an IELTS Line Graph

Aim:

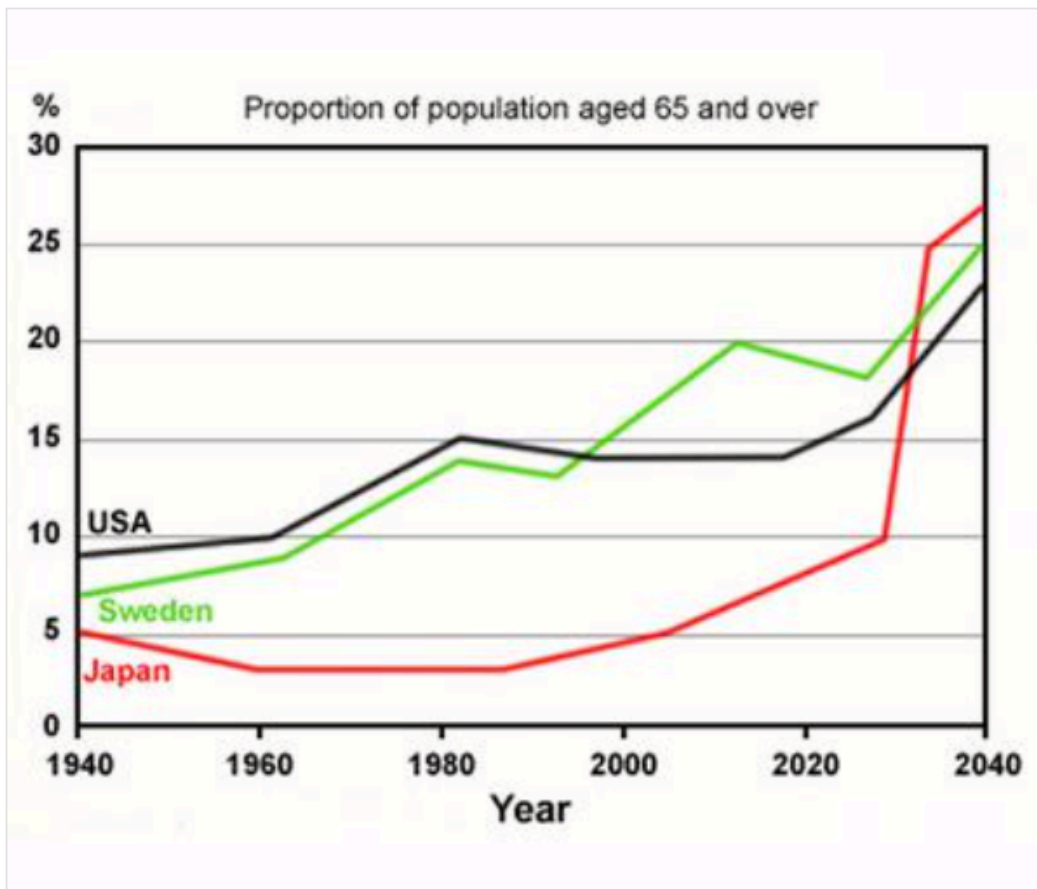To help students identify common mistakes made when writing IELTS line graphs

Teacher notes:

- Get the students in pairs or groups and give the students a copy of the line graph and the sentences (not the answers)

- Tell them the sentences are descriptions of the trends in the graph, but some of them are wrong. They need to identify and correct the mistakes

- The mistakes are not necessarily grammatical so they need to look carefully and compare the sentence with what is happening in the graph

- After each pair has finished, mix up the groups and get them to discuss and compare their answers

- Some mistakes are tricky to find, so if students have not found a particular mistake, guide them to where it might be and try to elicit the error with a series of questions.

    e.g. with question one, ask them which voice should be used with verbs to describe an IELTS line graph? Active or passive? Etc

Finding Graph Errors

Take a look at the graph below. There are five sentences below that describe the graph. However, there is an error with each one. Compare each sentence carefully with the graph and decide why it is wrong. Then make the correction.

1. *From 1960 to 1980, the proportion of elderly in the USA was increased by 5 per cent.*

2. *In 2017, the percentage of elderly in Sweden will reach a peak of 20 per cent.*

3. *Elderly people in Japan started at 5 per cent.*

4. *The proportion of elderly in Japan rises sharply from around 2030 to 2033.*

5. *In 1997, the proportion of elderly in the USA exceeded that of Sweden for the first time.*

Answers

1. From 1960 to 1980, the proportion of elderly in the USA was increased by 5 per cent.

   *Correct: From 1960 to 1980, the proportion of elderly in the USA **increased** by 5 per cent.*

   *Reason: 'Increase' is the verb, so it should be past simple. Don't use the **the passive** by adding the verb 'to be' (was) for graphs. It's the active.*

2. In 2017, the percentage of elderly in Sweden will reach a peak of 20 per cent.

   Correct: In 2017, the percentage of elderly in Sweden will reach (or 'hit') 20 per cent.

   Reason: 'A peak' is the highest point on the graph. The highest point is not 20%, but 25% 23 years later. So that phrase should not be in there.

3. Elderly people in Japan started at 5 per cent.

   Correct: The proportion (or percentage) of elderly people in Japan started at 5 per cent.

   Reason: 'Elderly' is not the subject of the graph. It's the proportion / percentage of elderly (or old people). See this lesson on getting the subject correct.

4. The proportion of elderly in Japan rises sharply from around 2030 to 2033.

   *Correct: The proportion of elderly in Japan **will rise** sharply from around 2030 to 2033.*

   Reason: This part of the graph is about the future, so future tenses should be used, not present or past.

5. In 1997, the proportion of elderly in the USA exceed that of Sweden for the first time.

   Correct: In 1997, the proportion of elderly in Sweden exceeded that of the USA for the first time.

   Reason: The countries were the wrong way round.