

ERROR ANALYSIS ON STUDENTS' ESSAY COMPOSITIONS: REFERENCE FOR A CORRECTIVE FEEDBACKING MECHANISM

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: Error analysis can help teachers discover and analyze language learners' mistakes, allowing for opportunities for growth and optimization of their language learning. Hence, this descriptive-qualitative study analyzed learners' errors in their essay composition. Corder's stages in error analysis was employed analyzing the errors committed by the fifteen participants from Special Program for Journalism. The results showed that the participants committed twenty types of errors which can be categorized into sentential level and word level errors. Incorrect subject-verb agreement, erroneous verb tense, flawed use of preposition were among the frequently erred grammar concepts in the participants' essay composition, while inappropriate pronoun usage was the least error type committed among the participants. The errors committed by the participants are linked to their first language, carelessness, and lack of mastery in the target language. This scenario necessitates language teachers to rethink, restructure and recalibrate their strategies, and teaching methods towards mastery of these grammar concepts. The findings of this study imply that language teachers and curriculum designers can utilize them to create an intervention or a corrective feedback mechanism to address these grammatical learning gaps and assist students grasp the subject.

Key Words: Error Analysis, Corrective Mechanism, Corder's EA Stages, Sentential and Word Level Errors

I. INTRODUCTION

Grammar was prioritized in the first phase of language instruction as the foundation for language proficiency. They were founded on the premise that grammar could be learned by direct instruction and a technique based on repetition, drilling, and practice (Obeso, 2014). By connecting grammatical growth to communicative ability, the student's communicative talent is developed. This means that mastering the fundamentals of grammar will aid in the development of a student's ability to speak effectively.

Grammar mastery is the foundation for language proficiency; hence grammar instruction is an essential aspect of language instruction. Language does not exist without grammar. It is also tricky for language learners to communicate effectively in English and write in English without first knowing English grammar. As a result, it is unavoidable for teachers of foreign languages and English as a second language to teach informal grammar education. (Wang, 2010).

Aside from speaking, writing is a valuable skill in a language. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing is the four talents of language, and writing comes at the end of one's mastery of the other three. It is not a natural ability. It must be learned and practiced in a structured learning environment or context. It necessitates both cognitive and linguistic abilities. This talent requires the learner to produce and translate ideas into text. Students are equipped with different logical organization skills in writing, which helps them improve their writing skills (Temporal, 2016).

As a result, writing is a complex process, and honing this talent in order to generate any type of write-up in L1 is a challenging task. It is difficult in L1, but it is worse in L2. Because a student must consider the target language's grammar, writing conventions, and other aspects of the target language standard, the difficulty level rises. As a result, grammar is an integral part of a language that a learner must acquire in addition to all other aspects of language. Grammar serves as the language's skeleton.

The study of linguistic errors, often known as error analysis (EA), is a trending topic in the field of English as a Second Language. Second Language Acquisition includes a thorough examination of grammatical faults (SLA). Grammar knowledge is vital for acquiring linguistic competence, according to linguists, educators, and academics. To produce the correct language, a learner must master a specific structure or grammar. The concept of mistake analysis comes into play whenever there is a departure from accepted linguistic rules.

Most students in the Philippines learn English as a second language, which makes language learning more difficult. There were few studies undertaken to assess the faults made by students in their essay creation due to the particular context and location of the study. As a result, this work is a significant step in paving the way for error analysis research in the researcher's context and location Bangayan-Manera (2019).

Furthermore, the researcher will be able to use the results of this study as a reference to craft a corrective feedbacking mechanism to address the grammatical problems of students studying and analyzing the grammatical errors committed by students in their essay compositions.

Research Question

Generally, this study aims to analyze the grammatical errors committed in the essay composition of students of Cauayan City National High School-Main (CCNHS-Main). It specifically seeks to answer the question “what type of errors are frequently found in the essay composition written by Special Program for Journalism students?”

Literature Review

On Error Analysis

Error Analysis (EA) has piqued the interest of many scholars in the field of second language acquisition for decades. The definitions of Error Analysis (EA) provided by some scholars are as follows.

Error Analysis is a method of linguistic study that focuses on the mistakes that students make and helps educators understand the language acquisition process. Because varied faults are viewed as a means to an end, some studies tend to uncover appropriate correction approaches that can aid in effective English learning and teaching. This is due to the fact that writing allows one to assess linguistic competency, recall capacity, and thinking ability (Javed et al., 2013).

According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), the analysis of errors is a method for analyzing errors made by EFL and ESL learners when learning a language. It not only helps disclose the techniques used by learners to learn a language, but it also helps teachers and other concerned individuals understand the obstacles learners face in order to enhance their teaching.

As per Crystal (1999), error analysis in language teaching and learning is the investigation of inappropriate forms produced by someone learning a language, particularly a foreign language. Agreeing to James (1998), Error Study (EA) is the analysis of learners' errors by contrasting what they have learned with what they lack. It also addresses the issue of explaining errors in order to decrease them accurately.

Error Analysis (EA) has two goals, according to Corder (1974, referenced in Mungungu, 2010). The first is a theoretical goal, which is concerned with what and how learners learn a language. The other is a practical one that deals with how to assist learners in learning a language by making use of prior information.

Classification of Errors

Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) divide errors into six categories based on their characteristics: removal of grammatical morphemes, double marking of semantic aspects, use of irregular rules, use of incorrect word forms, alternating use of two or more forms, and misordering.

Sermsook, Liamnimitr, and Pochakorn (2017) focused on faults in English sentences, analyzing errors identified at the sentential and word levels. Fragments, subject-verb agreement, word order, tenses, capitalization, and punctuation were all examples of sentential level faults. Articles, prepositions, word choices, nouns, pronouns, and verbs were also problematic at the word level. Other types of analysis, such as addition and omission, were also referred to as sub-categories of sentential and word-level errors.

In categorizing errors, Runkati (2013) classified the flaws she discovered in her study into two groups. The first category dealt with sentential problems such as fragments, run-ons, subject-verb agreement, word order, tenses, capital letters, and punctuation. The latter involved word-level errors, such as articles, prepositions, word choices, nouns, and numbers.

Hengwichitkul (2006) examined errors at the sentential level in another study. Subject-verb agreement, tenses, parts of speech, participial phrases, relative clauses, passive voice, parallel structure, punctuation, run-ons, and fragments were all classed as mistakes.

On the other hand, James (1998) proposes five types of errors: grammatical errors (adjectives, adverbs, articles, nouns, possession, pronouns, prepositions, and verbs), substance errors (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling), lexical errors (word formation and word selection), syntactic errors (coordination/subordination, sentence structure, and ordering), and semantic errors (ambiguous communication and miscommunication).

Addressing Errors

Sarasua (2018) crafted a game-based learning approach through the creation of S-V Bingo. It is a card game to address the academic performance in learning subject-verb agreement among ESL students. It was found out that the post-test mean scores of the experimental group who received the intervention have significant differences over the post-test mean scores of the control group. Further, using Cohen's D, it was found that the S-V Bingo had a very large effect size, which means that the intervention is effective in improving the academic performance of students in learning subject-verb agreement.

Wee et al. (2009) employ overt teaching to reduce subject-verb agreement (SVA) errors among Malaysian EAP students. The subjects have benefited tremendously from the exposition of the laws of a new structure, whether through the deductive or inductive approach. A comparison of data from the subjects' pre-test and post-test reveals a significant reduction in the incidence of errors in the targeted SVA error forms following overt teaching.

Ruziah (2006) has enhanced the correct use of prepositions through error identification drill exercises among the 17 KPLI (M) students. Even though both findings showed positive outcomes, these outcomes are only applicable for specific aspects that are on SVA and prepositions in writing. Further research is needed to explore better ways to reduce the grammatical and mechanical types of errors in L2 student writing.

Game-based learning was also the approach of Sarasua & Tadije (2019) in addressing ESL students' mastery of the different tenses of verbs. Their intervention using a game called CaLTen is a card game similar to the Uno cards, which contained sentences and tenses. The results showed that the intervention has a very large effect on the mastery of the different tenses of verbs among the subjects of the study.

Based on observations of these methodologies, it is believed that error analysis can assist teachers in detecting and analyzing students' errors, hence providing opportunities for growth Bangayan- Manera, (2020). Indeed, this approach will shed light on the learners' issues while also showing the fundamental causes of these blunders. Teachers can also benefit from developing or preparing techniques and measures to assist learners in overcoming obstacles and improving their language skills.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study made use of a qualitative approach, specifically a descriptive research design. This design enabled the researcher to clearly identify, describe and analyze the errors committed in the essay compositions of the participants.

Participants and Sources of Data

Because they were easily accessible to the researchers, the sample was chosen using convenience sampling. Participants of the study were the fifteen 10th Grade students under the Special Program for Journalism curriculum of Cauayan City National High School-Main for the school year 2021-2022. All participants were English as a Second Language learner and were taught journalism using the English language.

Instrumentation

Fifteen essay compositions were the primary sources of data. The researcher required the participants to write an essay about their realizations during the pandemic with a minimum of 500 words. All essays were written in the English language. The researcher monitored the participants while writing their essays simultaneously.

Data Gathering Procedure

The following stages were performed in the collection of data. Generally, clinical elicitation was employed in this study. Clinical elicitation entails getting the informant to provide data of any kind, such as through a general interview or writing an essay of some sort. After agreement and signing of consent letters by parents since the participants were minors, the researcher oriented the participants about the topic of the essay and the length of the essay to be written. Students were tasked to write an essay about their

realizations during the pandemic. Later, the researcher collected the essay outputs and started to mark the errors committed by the participants in their essay composition.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis procedure was anchored on the different stages of error analysis according to Corder (1967), as cited by Ellis (1999). The study only focused on the first three stages to align them with the research question.

1. *Collection of Samples.* Essay compositions with a minimum of 500 words were collected from the 15 participants.
2. *Identification of Errors.* After the collection of errors, the researcher read each composition and started marking the errors found. The different errors were identified, categorized, and tallied.
3. *Description of Errors.* Identified errors were described by comparing participants' excerpts with errors to that of the standard form in the target language.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussions of this study are presented in accordance with the research question proposed earlier.

A. Type of Errors Frequently Found in the Essay Composition of the Participants

After the analysis of errors, the researcher found 20 types of errors in the essay component of the participants. The errors at the sentential level comprise incorrect subject-verb agreement, incorrect verb tense, unnecessary comma, missing comma, comma splice, missing apostrophe, sentence fragment, redundancy, a missing hyphen, capitalization, incorrect word order, and missing verb. On the other hand, incorrect spelling, incorrect preposition, incorrect article, missing determiner, wrong pronoun usage, unnecessary article, unnecessary preposition, and unnecessary conjunction were recorded at the word level.

Table 1. Types, Frequency, and Percentage of Errors Committed by the Participants in their Essay Composition

Item	Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Sentential Level Errors			
1	Incorrect Subject-Verb Agreement	183	14
2	Incorrect Verb Tense	154	12
3	Unnecessary Comma	64	5
4	Missing Comma	108	8
5	Comma Splice	111	8
6	Missing Apostrophe	18	1
7	Sentence Fragment	14	1
8	Redundancy	53	4
9	Missing hyphen	21	2
10	Capitalization	30	2
11	Incorrect Word Order	20	1
12	Missing Verb	25	2
	Total	801	65.12
Word Level Errors			
13	Incorrect Spelling	18	1
14	Incorrect Preposition	158	12

15	Incorrect Article	47	4
16	Missing Determiner	36	3
17	Wrong Pronoun Usage	10	1
18	Unnecessary Article	33	2
19	Unnecessary preposition	79	6
20	Unnecessary Conjunction	48	4
	Total	429	34.88
	Overall Sum	1,230	100

As shown in Table 1, participants had more errors in the sentential level (65.12%) compared to the word level (34.88%). Incorrect subject-verb agreement (14%) was the most frequent error committed in the essay composition among the participants of the study, followed by an incorrect preposition (12%) and incorrect verb tense (12%). On the other hand, wrong pronoun usage (1%) was the least error committed, followed by sentence fragment (1%), and incorrect spelling (1%), and missing apostrophe (1%).

It can be found in the deeper analysis that five errors contributed to more than half of the total number of errors committed by the participants in their essay compositions. These are an incorrect subject verb agreement (14%), incorrect preposition (12%), incorrect verb tense (12%), comma splice (8%), and missing comma (8%).

A.1. Sentential Level Errors

A.1.1. Incorrect Subject-Verb Agreement

The results above showed that participants of the study erred most frequently in employing correct subject-verb agreement in their sentences.

*Example 1. My experiences during the pandemic **were**n't quite well in general.**

*Corrected form: My experiences during the pandemic **were not** quite well in general.*

*Example 2. For starters, my dad **do** home services as a hairdresser.**

*Corrected form: For starters, my dad **does** home services as a hairdresser.*

*Example 3. His clients **calls** him to make a schedule for them.**

*Corrected form: His clients **call** him to make a schedule for them.*

In the above sentences, participants of the study erred in considering the appropriate verb form according to the singularity or the plurality of the subject of the sentence. The error can be caused by the interference of the first language of the participants. In Filipino, regardless of the singularity or plurality of the subjects, the verb form remains the same.

Subject-verb agreement is another typical problem in Thai EFL students' writing (Jenwitheesuk, 2009; Bumroongthai, 2011; Runkati, 2013; Rattanadilok Na Phuket & Othman, 2015 as cited by Sermsook, Liamnimitr, & Pochakorn, 2017). It is a common error made by other EFL students from various nations. (Huang, 2006; Wu & Garza, 2014).

A.1.2. Incorrect Verb Tense

Incorrect verb tense is another frequently committed error in the participants' essay composition.

*Example 1. I stopped answering my modules and **take** care of my brother with every time I **have**.**

*Corrected form: I stopped answering my modules and **took** care of my brother every time I **had**.*

*Example 2. He started working again and there **are** still times that we **have** no money.**

*Corrected form: He started working again and there **were** still times that we **had** no money.*

*Example 3. My mother worked overtime and she **spends** more time with her job as a vendor.**

*Corrected form: My mother worked overtime, and she **spent** more time with her job as a vendor.*

Above are excerpts from the participants' essay composition. It can be gleaned from the sentences that participants wrote correct verb tenses on the first part of their sentences. However, there were inconsistencies in the next verbs used which made the sentences erroneous in verb tense.

The error can be caused by the participants' carelessness while writing since they have provided a correct verb tense in the first part of their sentences. Further, the error can also be caused by the participants' lack of mastery in this particular grammar concept. Interlingual error cannot be the primary cause of the participants' error in verb tense because the Filipino language has its own forms of verb tenses.

A.1.3. Comma Splice

When two independent clauses are linked with a comma but no conjunction, this is referred to as a comma splice. Some regard this to be a form of run-on sentence, while others consider it to be a punctuation issue. In general, comma splice is a type of comma error that occurs when a comma is used to combine two independent clauses. Among the participants in this study, comma splice is one of the most commonly committed errors.

*Example 1. It's hard to maintain this lifestyle, I need to accept it for me to move on.**

*Corrected form: It's hard to maintain this lifestyle, **but** I need to accept this for me to move on.*

*Example 2. COVID19 have been reported on every country and it started to spread like a wildfire.**

Corrected form: COVID 19 had been reported in every country, and it started to spread like wildfire.

*Example 3. Online classes was conducted I started to adjust to the new normal.**

*Corrected form: Online classes were conducted, **and** I started to adjust to the new normal.*

The occurrence of these errors can be linked to participants' lack of mastery in the grammar concept. Comma splice is not too evident in the Filipino language. This can have an effect on ESL learners who are writing essay in the target language.

A.2. Word Level Errors

A.2.1. Incorrect Preposition

Preposition errors are one of the most frequently committed errors among the participants of the study.

*Example 1. Since this pandemic, I've tried my best to keep **on** my mind that this experience would be a temporary obstacle.**

*Corrected form: Since this pandemic, I've tried my best to keep **in** my mind that this experience would be a temporary obstacle.*

*Example 2. In these times, I tried to push aside my overthinking habits and just have faith and hope **to** God.**

*Corrected form: In these times, I tried to push aside my overthinking habits and just have faith and hope **in** God.*

*Example 3. I started to adjust **on** that kind of living.**

*Corrected form: I started to adjust **to** that kind of living.*

Participants' first language (Filipino) can be the primary cause of this error. Preposition in the Filipino language has a single word that can mean all the other prepositions in the English language. It can therefore be problematic for Filipino speakers since in their native language, there is no different forms of preposition.

Preposition is also regarded as one of the most prevalent grammatical errors made by pupils, suggesting a lack of knowledge of prepositions. The prepositions were utilized interchangeably in the pupils' written reports. Prepositions had no effect on the meanings of the pupils' sentences. As a result, they are less concerned with the usage of prepositions in their sentences (Singh, Singh, Razak, & Ravinthar, 2017)

A.2.2. Incorrect/Missing Article

Articles were also one of the most frequently committed errors among the participants of this study.

*Example 1. This is a **adventure** that keeps a lot of experiences.**

*Corrected form: This is **an adventure** that keeps a lot of experiences.*

*Example 2. Luckily my parents still continue to work during the pandemic, we still have **a source** of income.*

*Corrected form: Luckily, my parents still continue to work during the pandemic. We still have **a source** of income.*

*Example 3. **Enhance** community quarantine restricted us from going outside our homes.*

*Corrected form: **The Enhanced** community quarantine restricted us from going outside our homes.*

Errors in articles are shown above. These errors can be incorrect usage, missing an article or including unnecessary article in the sentence. These errors can be caused by the native language of the participants. Filipino language only uses one article, which is used in different sentences.

One of the participants' errors were discovered in the articles. Thai EFL students seemed perplexed by the use of the articles a, an, the, and zero. The discovered errors can also be classified as omission and addition (Sermsook, Liamnimitr, & Pochakorn, 2017).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The results above show that there are twenty types of errors committed by the participants of the study. Twelve of these errors are under the sentential level. It includes incorrect subject-verb agreement, incorrect verb tense, unnecessary comma, missing comma, comma splice, missing apostrophe, sentence fragment, redundancy, missing hyphen, capitalization, incorrect word order, and missing verb. 8 of these errors are under the word level. It includes incorrect spelling, incorrect preposition, incorrect article, missing determiner, wrong pronoun usage, unnecessary article, unnecessary preposition, and unnecessary conjunction. It can be gleaned from the error analysis of students' essay composition that many students have poor grammatical knowledge. This is evidenced by the number of committed errors in their essay composition. Further, it can also be noted that many grammar concepts are still not mastered by these participants. The errors committed by the participants are linked to their first language, carelessness, and lack of mastery in the target language. The concept of verb forms and prepositions in the English language is different from the participants' native tongue. The rest of the errors committed are linked to their lack of mastery in the different grammar concepts. These results raise several issues to the language teaching processes of ESL teachers in the Philippines. This scenario necessitates language teachers to rethink, restructure and recalibrate their strategies, and teaching methods towards mastery of these grammar concepts. Indeed, no one can deny the significance of grammar mastery in effective communication. The results of the study suggest that language teachers and curriculum designers may use these results to craft an intervention, or a corrective feedback mechanism to address these learning gaps in grammar, and to help students achieve grammar mastery. Although the teaching of grammar is incorporated in every lesson, teachers must always be keen in detecting these learning gaps in grammar by providing more writing activities, explicit instruction, and by employing varied strategies in teaching grammar. Based on these results, Filipino learners still need more reinforcement and guidance in the mastery of the different concepts in grammar, so that they may be able to achieve their optimum potential in reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

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