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GRAMMATICAL ERROR- ANALYSIS IN THE ENGLISH WRITING OF YEMENI
EFL STUDENTS BASED ON COMMUNICATIVE EFFECT TAXONOMY

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to explore and describe the grammatical errors made by Yemeni students in the use of prepositions, verb form, pronouns, subject-verb agreement, articles, capitalizations, verb tense, word order, and conjunctions in the college of Education - Zingibar, Abyan University. To collect the data of the study, a test was performed and administered to the students. The participants were 55 English second-year students in the college of Education - Zingibar, Abyan University. The researcher analyzed students' writings based on Communicative effect taxonomy. The findings of this study revealed that the total of common errors is 752 errors examined and categorized into 10 error types. The results revealed that the highest frequency of errors made by students was local errors more than global errors. 536 (71%) are found as local errors and 216 (29%) are considered global errors.

Keywords: Grammatical Errors, Error Analysis, Communicative Effect Taxonomy.

Introduction

Learning English is becoming more vital and essential nowadays, as we all know that it is one of the global languages which can be used to connect with people all over the world. The English language is taught as a foreign language in Yemen, yet it is critical for major transitions in several aspects of life. Learning a foreign language is a difficult task since the target language differs from the native language in terms of components. Because of these variances, students frequently make errors when utilizing it. When students write, they must become engaged in the new language, but creating a good written text is a difficult challenge that needs mastery of several language systems at the same time. The majority of students find it difficult to compose essays that are free of different forms of grammatical errors.

Yemeni EFL students faced problems in using grammatical items in writing because each language has its own set of rules; there are different points when learning a second language (James, 2007: 95-118; Jie, 2008: 35-42). EFL students may rely on a literal translation to Arabic, which may lead to syntactic and semantic errors. Hence, student-teachers in the college of education, Zingibar at Abyan University commit errors in all aspects of language, especially in their writing skill. They commit errors in all writing such as tenses, prepositions, word

order, pronounces, conjunction, and articles that are the most common and frequent types of errors. Such errors can be seen clearly in their performance.

Errors are significantly worth studying and important in language learning and teaching. So it is natural that EFL students made errors in learning a foreign language and important as a device in order to improve their grammatical accuracy. Therefore, conducting error analysis is one of the most effective ways to describe and justify EFL learners' errors. This type of analysis will identify the source of these errors as well as the reasons that contribute to their frequent occurrence. It will be possible to evaluate the solution and sequence of future instructions once the sources and reasons of errors are established. So the current research for examining the compositions of these students with the aim of identifying, analyzing, and classifying their errors based on Communicative Effect Taxonomy from Dulay, Burt, Krashen (1982).

Grammatical Errors

Grammar plays a vital role in a language and it is an inseparable element of language. Nunan (1999:97) noted that grammar is a description of the structure of a language and the manner in which linguistic units like words and phrases are combined to create sentences in the language. Basically, grammar is the glue that holds various elements of the language together so that it can produce meaning in communication and make sense. According to Brown (2001), grammar is the system of rules that constructs the formation and connection of every word in a sentence. Brown also states that grammatical competence occupies a notable position as a main component of communicative competence.

Grammar is a theoretical side of a language, its role of how language organizes together and how it constructs (Gerot & Wignell 1994: 2). Without learning the grammar of a language, it is impossible to say that one has learned the language. Therefore, learning another language without knowing the grammar seems difficult because it tells how to use the language.

EFL students made grammatical errors in most of their English writing activities. Basically, the grammatical errors made by the learners are related to their negligence in mechanical and grammatical rules of basic writing. The errors might seem small and insignificant, but quality of writing maybe influenced by such errors.

Hendickson (1982: 7-8) proposed that errors involving general grammatical rules should be more noteworthy than errors involving lexical exceptions. It is because the errors in general grammatical rules more often generate misperception than the second one. Therefore, grammar is a scientific statement of the principles of good usage which concern with the relation of words in the sentence.

Error Analysis

Making errors can be considered as an essential part of learning. In this sense, Brown (1987) stated that language learning, as any other human learning is a process that related with making errors. So in order to understand the process of L2 learning, the errors that learners made in the process of learning another language should be carefully examined. Hence, the error analysis can be defined as a procedure that is based on an analysis of learners' errors.

According to Richard et al. (2002), in the 1960s EA established as a branch of Linguistics and it came to light to argue that the native language was not the main and the only cause of the errors made by the learners. Error analysis revealed that a large majority of errors could not be predicted by contrastive analysis, although its valuable aspects that were integrated into the study of language transfer. A key finding of error analysis was that many learner errors are produced by learners making incorrect inferences about the rules of the new language.

Chan (2004) argued that the study of error analysis is one of the most valuable methods based on the errors committed by learners in their written or spoken discourse. After examining these errors, the researcher will have better understanding of the participants' linguistic weakness so that instructors, syllabus designers, and textbook writers will be able to address these problems in future.

Error analysis approach identified the two main causes of error, are the Interlingual error which is an error made by the Learner's Linguistic background and Native language interference, and the Intralingual error which is the error committed by the learners when they misinterpret some Target Language rules, so the error cause lies within and between the target language itself and the Learners wrong use of certain target language rules. Error analysis studies the types and causes of language errors in second language acquisition.

Error analysis is the best tool to identify and explain the errors made by speakers of other languages (Johanson, 1975) in order to know the causes of these errors and the sources behind their constant occurrence with different groups of learners year after year. According to Lee (2004), students expect to receive feedback from their teachers and believe that it will be very helpful for them to have a good result to be good writers. Therefore, by evaluating the errors, teachers would be able to have knowledge of what areas should be emphasized on and what types of materials are used in their teaching. They should be able to develop curricula design such as remedial teaching, and select materials to help students to learn English. Teachers need to know the causes of errors and the reasons behind their occurrences.

Communicative Effect Taxonomy

Communicative effect taxonomy is one of the four useful descriptive taxonomies and here is description of each category used in communicative effect taxonomy based on descriptive classification of Dulay, *et.al.*:

1. Global Error

Errors that have a significant impact on the overall sentence organization prevent communication. Because of the wide syntactic scope of such error, Burt and Kiparsky have called this category "global". These systematic global errors include:

1. Wrong order or major constituents.
2. Missing, wrong connectors of sentence.
3. Missing signs for obligatory exceptions to pervasive syntactic rules.

2. Local Error

Local error affects a single element or a part in a sentence that does not usually hinder communication and does not affect the meaning of the overall sentence. The categories include these following errors:

1. Errors in noun and verb inflection.
2. Errors in article.
3. Errors in auxiliary.
4. Errors in the formation of quantifier.

Research Method

The quantitative analysis method is used in this study aimed at identifying, analysing, and categorising the grammatical errors made in the students' English writing of Zingbar College of education at Abyan University. The quantitative data are collected through grammatical achievement test. The grammatical achievement test used in this study consists of writing a composition of about 150-180 words on the topic:

Some students like to study for a long period of hour at a time. Others divide their study time into many shorter sessions. Which method do you think is better for studying and why? Explain your answer with proper elaboration. Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.

Sample of Study

The sample of this study includes both male and female students who share similar cultural and educational background. It consisted of 55 Yemeni students (35 females and 20 males) in the age range of 19 to 22 who were studying English in the second-year at the Department of English language of College of Education, Zingbar.

Discussion and Finding

The data are analyzed and then classified according to communicative effect taxonomy to describe the errors that the students committed during their English writing essays. Moreover, some examples are given underlining the wrong word, or form, following in brackets the correct word or form immediately.

The communicative effect taxonomy deals with errors from the point of their effects on the listeners or readers. This taxonomy classifies errors into two types, global and local errors. The frequency and percentage of each category in communicative effect taxonomy are as follow:

Table 1: The Frequency and Percentage of Errors on communicative effect taxonomy

No	Type of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Global Errors	216	29%
2	Local Error	536	71%
Total		752	100

Table 1. shows the frequency and percentage of two types of errors on communicative effect taxonomy that existed in the students' essays writing. 536 (71%) are found as local errors and 216 (29%) are considered global errors.

It is clear from the data that local errors are the highest percentage in the students' essays writing.

For more details about the description of each category with its frequencies and the percentages, each category in communicative effect taxonomy is discussed separately as follow:

1. Global Errors

Errors that have a significant impact on the overall sentence organization prevent communication. Global errors are ranked as the second highest frequency of errors in communicative effect taxonomy. Students made global errors 216 times during their writing. The categories include the following errors:

Table 2: The Frequency and Percentage of Global Errors

No	Types of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Missing and wrong pronouns	96	44%
2	Missing signs of syntactic rules	87	41%
3	Wrong word of major constituents	17	8%
4	Wrong and missing connectors	16	7%
Total		216	100%

The above table reveals that errors made in students' writings are 216 (29%) global errors out of the total number of the grammatical errors. There are four global error categories committed in students' essays writing. The highest number of errors accounted for 96 (44%) is missing and wrong pronouns. Next, the number of errors is found regarding missing signs of syntactic rules was 87(41%) while errors in the wrong word of major constituents are 17(8%). Moreover, 16 (7%) errors are committed in wrong and missing connectors which are regarded as the least global errors in the students' writings.

Examples:

These are examples of global grammatical errors that are found in missing and wrong pronouns, missing signs of syntactic rules, wrong word order, and wrong and missing connectors.

- I. Doing things help our [us] in learning.

This example shows the wrong use of pronoun. The EFL students substituted the possessive pronoun 'our' instead of object pronouns 'us'. Most EFL students used the subject, possessive, and object pronouns incorrectly and they change the exact meaning of the sentence.

- II. Don't use reading method because 0 [it] is bad for learning.

This example shows the missing pronouns. The EFL students omit 'it' and this omission as well can lead the reader to ambiguous interpretations of sentences.

III. Reading 0 [is] the best method

Missing signs of syntactic rules occur in the this example. In this example, the EFL students omit the helping verb 'is' which comes here as the main verb to understand the meaning of the sentence properly.

IV. My method favourite [favourite method] is reading about things.

The EFL students make wrong word order in sentences. They write the sentences in wrong order that lets reader confuse to get the correct meaning of sentences. They put the adjective 'favourite' after the noun 'method'. This is confusing sentence because they do not follow the English word order i.e. adjective comes before the noun.

V. I use the two methods 0 [even though] I like reading more.

VI. I read for a long time but [therefore] I get good marks.

The fifth and sixth examples show the global error in wrong and missing connectors. Students omit the conjunction 'even though' which the ninth sentence is in need of it to be clear and meaningful. They use the wrong connector 'but' instead of 'therefore' in the last sentence.

2. Local Errors

Local error affects a single element or a part in a sentence that does not usually hinder communication and does not affect the meaning of the overall sentence. Local errors get the highest frequency of errors in communicative effect taxonomy. Students make 536 local errors during their writing. The categories include these following errors:

Table 3: The Frequency and Percentage of Local Errors

No	Types of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Error in prepositions	194	36%
2	Errors in verb inflection	154	29%
3	Errors in auxiliary	94	18%
4	Errors in articles	64	12%
5	Error in capitalization	30	5%
Total		536	100%

The above table reveals that error categories based on the local in communicative effect taxonomy are 536 or 71% out of the total number of grammatical errors. There are five local errors categories produced in the Yemeni EFL students' essay writing. The highest frequency of local errors happened in *prepositions*: 'in, on, at' which consisted of 194 errors or 36%. Next, the number of errors is found in *verb inflection* was 154 (29%) while errors in the *auxiliary* 'is, am, are, does, do' were forming 94 (18%) local errors. Then, the number of local errors accounted for 64 (12%) in *articles*. Moreover, 30 (5%) errors are committed in *capitalization* which is regarded as the least local errors in the students' writings.

Examples:

Here are examples of local grammatical errors that were found in prepositions, verb inflection, auxiliary, articles, and capitalization.

I. The other people prefer to do everything in [by] themselves.

In this example, the students misuse the correct preposition, they used "in" instead of "by".

II. The students should divided [divide] their study time into shorter sessions.

This example shows local errors on verb inflection. Students fail to recognize the correct form of verb, the student-teachers fail to know the proper form of verb, they use simple past 'divided' by adding inflection -ed following the tense of the model auxiliary verb 'should'.

- III. The student do [does] not understand if they study for a long time:

In this example shows the local errors in auxiliary. Here the auxiliary verb does not agree with the subject in number and person. Students find it difficult in writing the right auxiliary verb; they make errors in the use of the auxiliary verb 'do' instead of 'does'.

- IV. I think learning by doing things is a [an] important method.

Here students face difficulty in using the correct article so they put "an" before important. It is clear that the students are totally confused by putting the incorrect article instead of the correct article.

- V. i [I] like to read about things more than doing things.

In this example, the students made errors in capitalization the first letter of the sentence 'I'.

Conclusion

After analyzing and interpreting the data, it was shown that Yemeni EFL students have struggled greatly when writing in English. It invariably necessitates a significant amount of effort on the part of students; as a result, students learning a foreign/second language must effectively and continuously practice the target language in order to improve their linguistic competence, regardless of the language problems and difficulties they encounter.

The results revealed that the two categories of errors in the communicative effect taxonomy are (global and local errors). Local errors were made by students more than global errors during their English writing and this referred to insufficient knowledge of grammar rules. The findings of the study also revealed that global errors are in missing and wrong pronouns, missing signs of syntactic rules, wrong word of major constituents, wrong and missing connectors, and local errors are in prepositions, in verb inflection, in auxiliary, and articles.

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