ERROR ANALYSIS OF THE WRITTEN PRODUCTION OF THE UNDERGRADUATES OF ENGLISH LITERATURE: A STUDY AT THE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract

In the tertiary level English literature classes learners have to attend written exams. The learners need to incorporate the critical and analytical discussions of particular literary texts in English. The teacher has to assess the English literature exam papers from both language (Form) and literature (Content) points of view. It is essential for the tertiary level English literature learners to have knowledge of possible errors in writing English. The aim of the paper is to develop awareness of both teachers and learners about the Error Analysis to ensure error-free writing of English literature study that will help the undergraduates not only in having standard grades in the exams but also the nation will get competent undergraduates of English literature classes. The qualitative research methodology has been followed to collect data adequately by supplying questionnaire and checking written scripts of the undergraduates in this study.

Keywords: English Literature Study, Error Analysis, Undergraduates.

INTRODUCTION

A proverb says “To err is human”, that is equally applicable to the second or foreign language acquisition. Similarly, in the written production of the undergraduates of the English literature study, ‘Error’ is an inevitable state of affairs. Throughout the world, English as a second or foreign language research area, Error Analysis has been widely discussed since the late nineties. The term Error Analysis for second/foreign language acquisition has reflected the notion of analysing the errors to have the revised corrected language. According to Rod Ellis:

Error Analysis consisted of little more than impressionistic collections of ‘common’ errors and their linguistic classification. The goals of traditional Error Analysis were pedagogic-errors provided information which could be used to sequence items for teaching or to devise remedial lessons. (Ellis, 1995)

The term ‘Error Taxonomy’ has stood for the categories of errors. Larsen-Freeman, et al have mentioned Richards (1971) in the discussion of EA. The categories and their definitions are as follows:

1. Interlingual Errors
2. Intralingual Errors
3. Simplification or Redundancy Errors
4. Communication-based
5. Induced Errors
At present, due to the establishment of so many private universities in Bangladesh, a number of students pursue higher studies in English literature, and to attain higher studies in English literature, proficiency in the English language is obviously expected. But relating to the scenario of the undergraduates of English literature study at the private universities in Bangladesh, now a day the question arises is: How much successful are those universities regarding the written production in English literature classes? It is time to give due attention to the context of tertiary-level English literature classes in Bangladesh to have error-free written English.

**Background of the Study**
As a matter of fact, in every sector of profession efficiency in the English language has been given special attention. But in most of the cases, the private university teachers have to take the challenges of developing the proficiency of the undergraduates in the tertiary level. The undergraduates have committed a few common errors as the survey for the research has identified. The undergraduates have a major problem in the correct English language writing. Because of grammatical errors, the undergraduates of the English literature study have not got a standard score. Again, the tertiary level study has required a depth study of the subject, i.e. for the English literature undergraduates it is the literature that would have got the priority to understand. Moreover, after having twelve years of experience in English language study, at the tertiary level, it has been expected that the undergraduates have knowledge of correct English language writing. As a matter of fact, in the private universities in most of the time, there have been different category learners who have got admission in the undergraduate level. Among this variety of the level, either a number of undergraduates have been dropped out, or they achieve a poor score in the written exams of the English literature study. No doubt, it can never be the expectation of the university authority.

To overcome the backdrop of the undergraduates of the English literature study in their writing production, it is essential for the tertiary level English literature learners to have knowledge about common types of errors in writing English. The awareness of both teachers and learners about the Error Analysis may help them to ensure error-free writing of English literature study, they will be benefitted not only in the standard grade and position in the exams but also the nation will get competent undergraduates of English literature.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**
The following research questions will try to specify the issues of the research topic:

a. What are the common types of language errors done by the undergraduates of English literature in the written production at the private universities in Bangladesh?

b. What are the causes of language errors in the written production of the undergraduates of English literature at the private universities in Bangladesh?

**Purposes and Benefits of the Study**
In the study on an error analysis of the written production of the undergraduates of English literature the purposes and benefits of the study can be written in the following ways:
The study may motivate the teachers and undergraduates of the English literature study to apply error analysis to develop awareness for identifying types and causes of errors and to take necessary steps and produce correct English language in their English literature courses. The following aspects of this study may be beneficial to both teachers and learners of the Department of English Language and Literature:

a. Error Analysis may help both teachers and learners to be aware of the types and causes of errors in the university level English literature study.

b. The undergraduates may produce correct and standard written productions of the English literature study.

METHODOLOGY
The research methodology has been pulsating to authenticate the data collection and analysis for the study.

Research Design
For the study, the empirical research design has been followed due to the nature of the study. To investigate the research questions the research has followed qualitative research methodology to describe the types and causes of common errors in the English written production of the English literature undergraduates. As a qualitative data collection design, the study was initiated at the fairly lengthy and deep involvement in the natural setting of the private universities of Bangladesh where the Department of English in every university has got plenty of students. These populations willingly have participated in the data collection procedures.

The sample of the study has been from the seven medium standard private universities of Bangladesh (Dhaka-2, Chittagong-3, and Khulna-2). For the reliability and validity of the data collection, the endeavour has chosen probability sampling as it has been using unbiased simple random sampling of the undergraduates of the English literature study.

There have been 300 students from the undergraduate levels of the English literature study. The sample framing has been done by selecting 50 undergraduates from each of the private university. Approximately 6/7 English literature students of the undergraduate level have been taken from each semester. (1st- 8th Semesters).

Instrumentation
Almost 300 students of the above-mentioned number of universities have fulfilled questionnaires (10 questions) of both open and close-ended questions. To get valid and reliable data the study has collected 60 exam scripts from the six private universities of Bangladesh. The written skill of the English literature study undergraduates has been investigated from those scripts. Thus, the questionnaire and the test of the written skill have helped to find the necessary data for the research work.

Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures
The respondents have received a brief introduction to the research and its objectives to hand over their responses within seven days. The respondents have been assured regarding the ethical issue of confidentiality. The respondents have not been biased or forced by the researcher to respond to the
data collection procedures. Moreover, the data analysis is authentic and has been done according to the collected data from the respondents. As qualitative research the study has followed the following Data collection methods:

(i) Questionnaire fill up by the students and
(ii) Exam scripts review.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION
The data have been analysed and the graphs have been made by an excel worksheet. This chapter has been organized into two segments. The study has highlighted error types, causes of the errors, and participants’ suggestions regarding overcoming the common errors in the written production of the undergraduates of the English literature study in the private universities of Bangladesh.

Analysis of the Undergraduates’ data based on the questionnaire
The following data analysis has revealed the types and causes of errors and other factors related to the learning of English language and literature:

Analysis Findings 1: Importance of English Grammar
The noteworthy linguist Noam Chomsky (1969) has delivered a theory declaring of ‘language acquisition as the rule formation’ (Freeman and Long, 1994). Since language acquisition is a rule formation factor, it has been essential to have adequate knowledge of grammatical structures. The data have shown the following facts of the concept of Error Analysis among the teachers and the undergraduates of the English literature:

Pie Chart 1: Importance of knowing English grammar

The chart shows among the 300 students of the English department 45% agree regarding the importance of English grammar in the English literature scripts. It has shown the highest number of undergraduates agree that there is an importance of knowing correct English grammar in the English literature study.
Analysis Findings 2: Teachers predict grammar errors in the literature class

As grammar knowledge is important, 40% of the undergraduates have assured that teachers do not inform and predict about the grammar errors in the English literature classes so that the English literature undergraduates can easily identify their error areas and correct those.

Analysis Finding 3: Teachers have developed awareness among the undergraduates about the error analysis

Almost 46% of the undergraduates have disagreed that in the English literature classes the teachers have not developed the awareness of error analysis. It shows that English literature classes mostly focus on the analysis of literature, not any awareness is made for the English language directly.
Analysis Findings 4: Learners learned all basic grammar rules in the Secondary and Higher Secondary Level

Pie Chart 4: Learnt all basic grammar rules in the secondary and higher secondary level.

The undergraduates of the English literature study have come to the department with their twelve years’ experience of English language learning. They have been supposed to learn and know all the basic rules of English grammar during the time. But only 37% of the undergraduates of English literature study agree that they have learned all the basic grammar rules while getting admission to the department. As a result, the remaining students have not been adaptable to the identification of the English language errors in the written scripts.

Analysis Findings 5: Teachers have provided special attention to the grammatically weak students

Pie Chart 5: Teachers provide special attention to the weak students

The above pie chart has shown almost 44% of the undergraduates have declared that grammatically weaker students get special attention from the teachers in their English literature classes.
Analysis Findings 6: Students get immediate grammar correction in the English literature classes

Pie Chart 6: Students get an immediate correction of the errors

The interesting part is that though almost 44% of the undergraduates agree that grammatically weaker learners get attention from the teachers, 43% of the undergraduates disagree with the fact that they get an immediate correction of the language errors in the English literature classes. According to the fact, literature class has given more emphasis on English literature content discussion, not language correction.

Analysis Findings 7: Erroneous English language should be corrected in the literature classes:

Pie Chart 7: Erroneous English language should be corrected in the literature class

To get the error correction of the English language in the English literature classes almost 33% of the undergraduates have supported that erroneous English language should be corrected in the English literature classes.
Analysis Findings 8: Feedback of the written exam scripts

The percentage (49%) of the undergraduates have shown that sometimes they have received feedback on the written scripts regarding their grammatical errors in the English literature exams.

Analysis Findings 9: Types of Errors

The percentage of the common grammatical errors has identified that mostly the undergraduates do error in the subject-verb agreement which has been 22% and the lowest one is article error in the written script which has been 7%. However, the undergraduates have identified the common errors like Subject-Verb Agreement (22%), Spelling and Tense (14% of the undergraduates for both these types), Preposition (13%), Pluralization (11%), Punctuation (11%), Capitalization (8%), and Article (7%).

Analysis Findings 10: Causes of Errors According to the Error Taxonomy

According to Error Taxonomy the causes of the errors in language acquisition have been these:

i. Mother-tongue Interference (Interlingual Error)
ii. Faulty or Partial English language learning (Intralingual Error)
iii. Self-content in English language learning (Fossilization) (Larsen-Freeman, 1994).

The following table has shown the percentage of the causes of the errors in doing common errors in the written production of the English literature undergraduates:
Most of the participants (31%) in the data collection procedures have viewed in Intralingual errors, that means because of faulty or partial learning they have overgeneralized the grammatical structures and produce wrong English sentences in the written scripts of the English literature analysis. These undergraduates have no idea about the concept of the Error Taxonomy. In the interview session when they have been explained different kinds of causes for the errors, they could identify the similarities of their experiences.

**Data collection from the exam scripts for common grammatical errors of the undergraduates:**

The study has collected 200 final term written exam scripts of the undergraduates of the English literature study to identify common errors of the learners. The data has been collected taking permission from the teachers and to maintain the ethical issue the identity of the examinees has not been disclosed. The common errors in the scripts are as follows:

**Errors in Pluralization and Subject-Verb Agreement**

The following image of the exam script has shown the errors in pluralization and subject-verb agreement.
Errors in Tense sequence and Spelling:
The following image has shown three common errors in the single sentence such as pluralization, tense sequence and spelling mistakes. The examinee has begun the sentence in the past tense but ended it in the present form. Again he has indicated a plural (two poems) but the determiner is singular (this).

Errors in article and spelling
The examinee has multiple errors in a single sentence like missing the article (instead of ‘a wonderful’, only ‘wonderful’) and spelling error.
Image 3: Errors in article and spelling

Error in Capitalization
The name of the historical event should be capitalized. But the examinee has written it in small letters.

Image 4: Error in Capitalization

The collected data has shown that the examinees of the English literature study have done multiple errors in a single sentence. The kinds of errors the undergraduates have admitted in the questionnaire part have been reflected in the survey of the written exam scripts of the undergraduates in the Department of English.

CONCLUSION
Having all-encompassing undergraduates regarding the usage of the English language in the English literature study is a dream of the teachers of the Department of English. In order to help the undergraduates of them to know about the types and causes of common errors in their written production of the English literature study, this academic venture has been taken. This study has found the most common types of grammar errors done by the undergraduates are: Spelling, Article, Subject-Verb Agreement, Tense, Capitalization, Preposition, Pluralization, and Punctuations. If the tertiary level teachers
have guided and developed awareness among them in the initial semesters, the percentage of the errors may be reduced and the undergraduates will be able to produce correct English writing of the English literature study. As for the causes of the errors, from the identified factors of Error Taxonomy (Larsen-Freeman, 1994) most of the undergraduates have been suffering from Interlanguage error-cause that is either they have overgeneralized the prior grammar knowledge or their partial or faulty English grammar learning has induced them to commit errors. As the error is part of learning, Lightbown and Spada (2000) have argued that when an error has occurred frequently, it has been useful for teachers to bring the problem to the students’ attention. Considering that observation, it can be said the identified types and causes of errors might help the teachers and undergraduates of the English Department to overcome their existing common errors in English language writing in the private universities of Bangladesh. The language development study is a never-ending process, even then, the study has the hope of contributing to the correct written production of the undergraduates in the Department of English Literature at the private universities in Bangladesh.

REFERENCES