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## ***Government College Nanilam Study on Morpho Syntactic Issues in Learning among Under Graduate Students***

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### **Abstracts**

Language study includes different branches such as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Morphology is one component that has proved supportive of learning vocabulary, grammar, reading, and writing. However, earlier studies have mostly focused on morphology as an integrated aspect in language classes, and not much has been done in the context of its being a separate academic subject in the English language curriculum. Therefore, this article aims to explore teaching and learning practices in Morphology classes and ascertain teachers' and learners' beliefs toward the subject. The study used semi structured interviews to collect qualitative data from ten English major students just completing their Morphology course and four teachers of the subject at a university in Vietnam. The findings show that both learners and teachers have positive attitudes toward Morphology, affirming it is challenging but worth studying and emphasizing the importance of its inclusion in the English language curriculum. This research argues that teaching and learning Morphology should prioritize explicit instructions in learners' utilization of their mother tongue accompanied by tasks and discussions.

### **Keywords**

Investigates, Professional, Communication, Essential, Morphological, Analytical, Accuracy, Purposive, Frame work, Inadequate, Interference, Prevalence, Enhance, Emphasizing, Curriculum.

### **Introduction**

Introduction Learning a foreign or a second language is always subject to erroneous structures and outputs. Thus, writing in a second language is one of the challenging tasks that may face the learners. According to Harmer (2004: 3), the spoken language is naturally acquired by contact and exposure, while the written one is intentionally learned. Therefore, academic writing involves conscious attempt and practice in writing, building, developing, and analyzing ideas (Myles, 2002:1). Moreover, Pearson (1976 - as cited in Welsh Assembly Government 2010:24) asserts that writing covers three main cues which are: semantic cues (i.e., knowledge about

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topics, cultures, and ideas), syntactic cues (i.e., knowledge about grammar and the organization of texts), and graphophonic cues (i.e., knowledge about words and how they are pronounced). Hence, second language writing assessment witnessed considerable developments in the last twenty years. Many scholars focus on the types of writing errors and how these errors may recognize developmental patterns in the acquisition of particular grammatical features (Ellis, 1997:15). Therefore, the present paper attempts to investigate the morphosyntactic errors made by Algerian EFL students in their English learning.

**Statement of the Problem** As a lecturer of Stylistics at the English department of Bejaia University, Algeria, and for an exam subject, I gave my second year students an excerpt from Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* to analyze in a well structured essay with academic and intelligible English. Surprisingly, during the exam correction process, I noticed that my students made a lot of errors at the level of morphosyntax when writing their essays. From this fact, I saw that a morphosyntactic analysis of my students' writings is highly needed in order to diagnose their writing skill. Hence, their exam answer sheets constitute the corpus of the present study.

**Questions of the Study** The present study attempts to answer the following research questions: What are the different morphosyntactic errors that occur in Bejaia EFL Students' writings? What are the reasonable explanations for these errors? What are the plausible solutions to overcome those errors?

**Null Hypothesis** The present researcher hypothesizes that second year EFL Students do not master satisfactorily English morphosyntax that is why they make errors in their writings.

### **Theoretical Background**

**Theoretical Background** In last decades, there has been an increasing interest in the study and analysis of errors made by second language learners. Error analysis is under consideration and investigation by many linguists, language teachers, and researchers worldwide (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012:1583). In general, there are two main approaches to the study of errors i.e., contrastive analysis (CA) and error analysis (EA). CA is 'the comparison of the learners' mother tongue and the target language. Based on the similarities and differ-

ences between two languages, predictions were made' (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012:1583). Conversely, EA is 'a procedure used by both researchers and teachers which involves collecting samples of the learner language, identifying the errors in the sample, describing these errors, classifying them according to their nature and causes, and evaluating their seriousness' (Corder 1967 - as cited in Heydari & Bagheri, 2012:1584). As far as learning theories are concerned, there are two main theories related to language learning errors. They are the Behaviorist Learning Theory and the Mentalist Learning Theory. According to Ellis (1997:31), the Behaviorist Theory is the prevailing theory of the fifties and the sixties. It claims that language learning involves habit formation. That is, a habit is stimulus-response connection. Later on, the Mentalist Theory came as an alternative to the Behaviorism. It claims that human language is innate. Furthermore, it asserts that input is used only to activate the process of the language acquisition device. Besides, they can generate infinite numbers of constructions. Thus, during this process, errors may occur but they are considered as natural and part of the learning process (Ellis, 1997: 32 33).

According to Richards (1971: 174 181), intralingual errors are of four types, namely, (1) overgeneralization, (2) ignorance of rule restrictions, (3) incomplete application of rules, and (4) false concepts hypothesized. The first concerns examples where the learner generates unusual structures on the basis of his preceding knowledge of other structures from the target language. The second deals with the faulty structures because of ignorance of restrictions. That is, the use of rules out of their contexts. The third takes place when the learners fail to build and develop a complete structure in the target language. And the fourth concerns the missing comprehension of differences in the target language. Hence, the learners tend to substitute erroneously some structures for others.

**Literature Review** Error analysis has been an area of interest for many researchers and scholars from different countries. Although many studies seem to share the overall aims of the study but still they are conducted in different contexts and conditions. The present researcher selected some reviewed studies to put the reader in the field of error analysis and to show in the last paragraph the contribution of

his present study. Hourani (2008) investigates the common grammatical errors made by Emirati male students in their English essays. The study is conducted in five Emirati schools with the participation of 105 students and 20 teachers. The findings of the study indicate that the most common grammatical errors are at the level of passivization, verb tense and form, word order, prepositions, subject verb agreement, articles, plural forms, and auxiliaries. Moreover, these errors are intralingual. At last, the study presents some recommendations such as school textbooks should cover more free and controlled writing activities in order to improve the learners' writing performance. Kirkgöz (2010) examines the written errors of Turkish adult learners of English. The purpose of the study is to identify and classify the errors according to two categories: interlingual and intralingual errors. The corpus of the study consists of 120 essays written by 86 Turkish learners studying in Çukurova University, Turkey. The results of the study show that most of the students' errors are interlingual and they are instances of the first language interference.

Moreover, the study suggests that students' errors should be perceived positively because they are steps towards the target language learning. Wee et al. (2010) examine the written verb form errors in the EAP writings of 39 second year Malaysian students enrolled in a public university, in Malaysia. The study seeks to find out the frequency and types of verb form errors. The findings point out that the most frequent errors types are omission, addition, misformation, and ordering. Moreover, there is a high frequency of errors related to the omission of the third person singular marker's'. Besides, the learners have difficulties in using the auxiliary 'to be'. At the end, the researchers emphasize on the importance of grammar in learning a foreign language. Nayernia (2011) studies the writing errors of Iranian EFL students in order to recognize the different intralingual errors and whether L1 plays a role in learning L2. For the purpose of the study, the researcher asks his students to write some paragraphs on a topic of their choice. After that, 30 incorrect sentences are selected for analysis. The findings of the study reveal that most of the errors are intralingual and only few (16.7%) interlingual errors that are present in the students' writings. At last, the study highlights the importance of error

analysis in the better understanding of the language system.

Al Shormani (2012) investigates the sources of syntactic errors made by Yemeni learners' in their English written compositions. The sample of the study consists of 50 third year students of English at Ibb University, Yemen. The researcher adopts James' (1998) error taxonomies in which he classifies the syntactic errors into 4 categories, namely, L1 transfer, L2 influence, L1&L2, and unrecognized. The findings of the study reveal that Yemeni students face real problems in English syntax. Moreover, it is highly recommended to teach syntactic categories inductively in order to extract rules rather than memorizing them. At length, the study suggests a solution for the syntactic errors by adopting the 'discovery' technique initiated by Celce Murcia and Hilles (1988) which consist of: (i) presentation, (ii) focused practice, (iii) communicative practice, incorporating information gap, choice and feedback, and (iv) supplying teacher feedback. Basri et al. (2013) explore the syntactic errors occurring in the descriptive paragraphs of Indonesian students of English. The purpose of the study is to identify the types and manners of English syntactic errors in the students' writings. The findings of the study indicate that 16 types of syntactic errors occur in the descriptive paragraphs such as auxiliaries, word form, and word class. As far as the manners of errors are concerned, the result reveal 18 errors such as misuse of verb form, omission of auxiliaries, and misuse of word order. It concludes that the English phrases are the main problem that faces the Indonesian learners because of the syntactic differences that exist between English and Indonesian.

Al Khasawneh (2014) explores the writings of Jordanian undergraduate students. He aims at analyzing a corpus of 26 English paragraphs written by 26 students from different majors studying at Ajloun National University, Jordan. After data collection, all the errors made by the students are identified and categorized. The results of the study reveal that most of the students made errors at the level of spelling, subject verb agreement, word order, and the English articles misuse. The study concludes with some implications such as Jordanian EFL students should practice English writing regularly in order to improve their writing skill.

Rostami and Boroomand (2015) explore the sources of errors made by 100 Iranian EFL

learners in their written compositions. The purpose of the study is to identify, describe, and classify the errors according to their sources. Considering gender as a variable of the study, 50 male students and 50 female students are randomly selected and their written compositions constitute the corpus of the study. The findings show that the majority of errors are due to unsatisfactory mastery of the target language while few errors are due to L1 transfer. Besides, female learners tend to make more errors than males do but the classification of errors in the two groups is the same.

### **Undergraduate Students Learning English Verbs Noun Verbs Analysis In Learning Thiruvavur District**

#### **1) Suggested study design**

**Aim:** Examine common difficulties with English verb forms and subject-verb agreement among undergraduates in Thiruvavur and what factors (schooling medium, exposure, etc.) relate to performance.

#### **Objectives**

1. Measure accuracy on verb morphology (tense, aspect, irregulars, auxiliaries).
2. Measure accuracy on subject-verb agreement (singular/plural, proximity, collective nouns, quantifiers).
3. Identify frequent error types via brief production tasks.
4. Explore links between background variables (medium of schooling, time on task, confidence) and scores.

**5. Participants:** 120-200 undergraduates across 2-4 colleges (mixed departments/years).

**6. Sampling:** Stratified by college and year (e.g., I/II/III year).

**Ethics:** Anonymous IDs, voluntary participation, no grades affected; brief consent in English.

#### **2) Instruments (with examples)**

##### **A. Verb test (objective; 20-30 items)**

##### **• Gap fill (tense/aspect)**

1. She (go) to class every day. → goes
2. They -(finish) their work by 6 pm yesterday. → finished
3. He - (be) studying when I called. → was

**4. Irregular verb forms:** 4) We have -(write) two tests. → written 5) She - (take) the bus last week. → took

**5. Auxiliaries/modals:** 6) You -leave early if you want. → may/can (specify one key)

**Error tags to use:** tense, aspect, irregular, auxiliary/missing aux, agreement, other.

#### **B. Subject-verb agreement test (20 items; MCQ or fill in)**

##### **• Number agreement**

1. The list of items -on the table. (is/are) → is
2. **Proximity error traps:** 2) Either the students or the teacher -present. (is/are) → is
3. **Collective nouns:** 3) The team -winning today. (is/are) → is (Indian English often allows plural-pick one convention and stick to it)

**Quantifiers/indefinites:** 4) Everyone -ready. (is/are) → is

#### **C. Short production task (10-12 minutes total)**

**• Free writing (5-7 sentences):** "Describe your daily routine on a weekday."

**• Guided translation English, 3-4 sentences):**

ohave been waiting for two hours.

**Coding rubric (per 100 words):** count Verb\_Errors, Noun\_Verb\_Agreement\_Errors, Other\_Errors.

#### **D. Background survey (10 items, 5 point scales)**

Confidence using English, use outside class, preference for explanations, weekly time spent, device/internet access, etc. (Columns already set up in the Excel file.)

#### **3) Scoring & analysis plan**

**• Item scoring:** 1 = correct, 0 = incorrect (see "VerbTest" & "NounVerbAgreement" sheets).

##### **• Subscores**

oVerb Morphology Accuracy = mean of VerbTest correctness × 100.

oSVA Accuracy = mean of NounVerbAgreement correctness × 100.

oProduction Error Rate = errors per 100 words.

### o **Group comparisons**

o Medium of schooling ( /English) → independent t test.

o Year of study (I/II/III) → one way ANOVA.

o Associations with survey scales → Pearson/ Spearman correlations.

**Error analysis:** frequency of error types; top 5 patterns to inform teaching.

### 4) **Sample consent text (short)** **English**

“Your participation is voluntary. Your responses are anonymous and used only for academic research on learning English verbs and subject-verb agreement. You may stop at any time. By proceeding, you consent to participate.”

### 5) **Administration tips (Thiruvavur context)**

• Allow brief instructions, but collect answers in English.

• Pilot the test with ~15 students first to adjust difficulty and timing.

• Quiet room, 25-30 minutes for objective tests + 10 minutes production + 5 minutes survey.

For inter rater reliability on production tasks, double score 15-20% of scripts and compute agreement ( $\geq .80$  desirable).

### 6) **What you can do next (quick)**

1. Use the Excel file to enter student info, test items, and responses.

2. After you collect data, I can help you compute accuracy, run t tests/ANOVAs, and make charts.

If you want, I can also draft a 5-6 page **mini report** (Intro → Method → Results → Teaching Implications) based on your findings

### **Interviews And Conclusions** **Morphology**

Research methodologies can be broadly categorized into quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Quantitative research focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis, while qualitative research explores in-depth understanding through descriptions and interpretations. Mixed methods research combines both approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

## 1. **Quantitative Research**

• **Focus:** Numerical data, statistical analysis, and objective measurements.

### • **Methods**

o **Surveys:** Using questionnaires to gather data from a large sample.

**Experiments:** Conducting controlled studies to establish cause-and-effect relationships.

**Correlational research:** Examining relationships between variables.

o **Longitudinal studies:** Tracking data over time.

**Observations:** Using structured observation to collect numerical data.

## 2. **Qualitative Research**

### • **Focus**

Understanding experiences, perspectives, and meanings through in-depth analysis.

### **Methods**

**Interviews:** Conducting one-on-one or group interviews to gather detailed information.

**Focus groups:** Facilitating group discussions to explore opinions and attitudes.

**Ethnography:** Immersing oneself in a specific culture or setting to observe and understand social phenomena.

**Case studies:** In-depth analysis of a particular case or situation.

**Document analysis:** Examining texts, images, or other documents to gain insights.

**Observational methods:** Observing behaviors and interactions in natural settings.

Mixed Methods Research:

### o **Focus**

Combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to provide a more holistic understanding.

### • **Advantages**

Can provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of the research topic by leveraging the strengths of both approaches.

### **Examples**

Combining survey data with interview data to explore the reasons behind survey findings.

**The fine out the category and type of words that belong to root word (RW): inflated**

word (IW); Derived Word (DW) and compound word (CW)

**Table: 1.1**

**Types of words out of 80 students - Data Report Nannilam Government arts and science college Thiruvavur**

	0-	1-	2-	3-	4-	5-
<b>Noun</b>						
	5	18	35	13	9	
<b>Verb</b>						
	8	5	12	20	21	14
<b>Adjective</b>						
	4	11	9	27	27	
<b>Adverb</b>						
	1	3	9	20	36	12
<b>Root Word</b>						
	1	6	6	33	34	
<b>Inflected Word</b>						
	1	1	11	27	25	11
<b>Derived Word</b>						
	1	1	3	17	33	12
<b>Compound Word</b>						
	1	1	2	20	30	25

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the morpho-syntactic errors in the narrative essays of first-year undergraduate students of English in southwestern Nigeria. The analysis revealed a pervasive presence of morpho-syntactic errors, including violations of Spec-Head Agreement. Specifically, the specifier and head failed to agree in number, tense, and aspect, resulting in incorrect subject-verb agreement. The analysis also revealed morphological inaccuracies, characterised by redundant duplication of inflectional morphological features and omission of inflectional markings. Furthermore, the study found inconsistent verb tense usage, which resulted in noticeable tense errors, disrupting the coherence and clarity of the writing. The study found that these errors compromise the clarity, coherence, and overall effectiveness of the students' writing. According to Hinkel (2004), "language learners' grammatical errors are often the result of incomplete or inaccurate linguistic knowledge.". This is evident in the students' writing, where inadequate grammar instruction and insufficient writing practice may

have contributed to the errors. Additionally, the influence of the students' native language (L1) on their English language (L2) writing may also be a factor, as noted by Ferris (2002), who states that "L1 influence can affect various aspects of L2 writing, including grammar, vocabulary, and discourse structure." Furthermore, Hyland (2003) highlights the importance of explicit instruction and feedback in improving students' writing skills, particularly in areas such as grammar and vocabulary.

To address these errors, educators and instructors should emphasise grammatical accuracy, provide targeted support, and offer extensive writing practice with constructive feedback. Additionally, explicitly highlighting differences between spoken and written English grammar will prevent learners from transferring spoken language features to written language. By providing targeted instruction and support, educators can help students develop the writing skills necessary to produce coherent, well-structured, and error-free written texts.

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