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Error Analysis in the usage of Parts of speech in the students' written composition

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Abstract

While learning English language, initially the learners are taught different parts of speech for construction of sentences in writing and speaking activities. English being the second language and with the influence of mother tongue, certain section of students fail to identify and use the parts of speech. This research identifies some common difficulties in usage of parts of speech and the reasons behind through a survey done on a sample of 60 students using random sampling method at Lords Institute of Engineering and Technology, Hyderabad, Telangana state. With the findings of the survey, a more effective teaching with examples from school level is recommended.

Key words error: condition of being wrong, parts of speech: refers to the role of a word in a sentence, Written composition: a piece of writing.

Introduction

People in India use English directly or indirectly from two centuries. Teaching of English in India as a second language starts from pre-primary or Primary level continues till higher level. English language is predominant in higher education especially in professional courses like Engineering education. Learning English becomes essential for engineering students, both for academic excellence and career growth. English is taught as a subject "Communication skills in English" to develop good spoken and written communication skills to enhance employability skills in them. Technical communication includes the ability to master all the four language skills i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening skill is important to foster communication which ensures empathy, trust, confidence, team spirit, and responsibility. Speaking skill enhance the managerial skills with good manners, etiquette, courtesies as far as the conversations over phone or in person. Reading skill helps to develop the clarity of expression and the writing skill enable the students to develop good analytical skills, decision making power by apt and error free expression of ideas. To achieve mastery over the language, the students should develop grammatical accuracy along with all the four language skills. But errors are inevitable in the usage of English language as it is a foreign language. Errors are not the signs of failure but they are the evidences of deviation from prescribed rules of a language made by a learner of a second language. These errors result from a lack of learner's knowledge in the target language. In other words, we can say that an error is something that makes communication difficult. According to Brown (1994:205), "Error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner". According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), "Errors are a natural and valuable part of the language learning process". So, the study of the errors that learners make in their speech and writing is called the Error analysis and is necessary for the pedagogic purposes like syllabus designing and planning of methods of teaching. Error Analysis is a set of procedures for assessing the relative seriousness of the learner's errors. Stephen Pit Corder, a professor of applied linguistics and the father of error analysis states that errors serve as a considerable means for teachers to observe the learners learning process and learning strategies. In the present paper, the investigator observed the learner's errors in the usage of parts of speech in the spoken and written tasks of regular class work. In the process of English language learning, parts of speech form the basic aspect of English grammar. They are the core building blocks of English grammar. Knowledge of parts of speech is essential for a student to develop reading comprehension and the writing skills. With the knowledge of parts of speech, the learner can

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understand how the language works at a sentence and also at the whole text level. According to a dictionary meaning parts of speech means "the words in a sentence categorized according to their common syntactic function". In other words, in a sentence words are categorized according to the job they perform in a sentence. Students use the knowledge of parts of speech in their writing tasks to construct the sentences. As the process of second language learning is complicated sometimes without acquiring a firm grasp of various parts of speech and the learner finds it difficult to use the parts of speech and commits mistakes. Many times, due to ignorance of the different types of all the parts of speech the learners get confused while making use of them. Carelessness in practicing the usage of parts of speech in the exercises students adds to this. As English is a vast subject with many structures in the grammar and their exceptions it is difficult for the students to learn and remember them. In the teaching learning process, it is essential to conduct error analysis to know the difficulties faced by the students and to plan the new methods of teaching by the teachers. At engineering level, the students need to take part in various activities like seminars, presentations, group discussions, interviews, profile writing, academic writing and written tests. So, they need to develop grammatical accuracy in all the topics of grammar like parts of speech, voices, tenses, subject verb agreement, question tags etc. Grammatical accuracy can be achieved by the error analysis and the error correction. So, error analysis helps a teacher to understand the problems encountered by the students and to design the better teaching methods and materials in developing the linguistic abilities among the students. It is the reason why the present study has been undertaken. The researcher observed the different types of errors made by the students in the usage of Parts of speech, the type of errors that are more frequent than other types and the sources of errors in the present study.

Review of Literature

This research considers the views of scholars and educationists which are related to this specific area of research as the powerful basic information sources. According to a study, "Analysis of errors in parts of speech in learning English as a second language (with special reference to Bengali language)" by Zawad Rami, American English E-Teacher (certified by Iowa State University, USA), Co-Authors G.M. Abu Taher, Fatima Sultana, Jamil Hussain Research scholar, Dept of English, Aligarh Muslim University India, the researcher touched on the three main areas of second language research namely, Contrastive Analysis (CA), Error Analysis (including classification of errors suggested by applied linguistics) and Inter-language (IL). This paper tried to answer, what are errors and how to deal with them, the method of analyzing errors, the significance of error of learners and models of error analysis. Moreover, this paper showed a lot of differences and variations between Bengali-English grammar and spellings. According to another study, "Difficulties in learning Prepositions and Possible Solutions" by Kristen Lorincz and Rebeca Gordon, it is found that prepositions are difficult to learn because of their puzzling nature and they should be taught by using the collocations as examples along with the traditional method of teaching. (Kristen Lorincz and Rebeca Gordon, 2012). In another study by Julia Miller in the year 2006, "An Investigation into the Effect of English Learners Dictionaries on International Students Acquisition of the English Article System", four groups of university ESL students participated in a session to improve their use of the English article system. The two groups used English Learners dictionaries and two did not. The results of the study showed that the students who used the dictionaries have achieved a slightly higher number of correct answers in the given exercises, and expressed higher level of satisfaction with the session than those who had not used the dictionaries. A study on some common difficulties in the usage of parts of speech by Ms. Neelam Chawla was the researchers' real-life experiences while teaching Diploma students at a Polytechnic college of Madhya Pradesh.

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The researcher tried to explain the basic reasons behind the difficulty faced by the students in identifying and using the different parts of speech to make the teaching more effective. The study was done by a survey on 50 students and the findings of the research concluded in one line that the students does not have the clear concepts. The study recommends that the students should be given concept-based teaching. A paper, "Analysis of Misuse of Parts of Speech in English Writing by Chinese English Learners" (Authors: Liu Xiaolei, Li Xijiang, 2018) a negative transfer of the mother tongue or first language affects the usage of parts of speech by Chinese students in a letter in English; the authors also found the main causes of misunderstandings. Based on the research and analysis two preliminary proposals were made in order to help Chinese people avoid such kinds of errors. The authors pointed out that both teachers and students should pay enough attention to this kind of mistake and apply correct and effective methods of teaching and learn the English language. Another survey, "An Analysis of Errors in Written English Sentences: A Case Study of Thai EFL Students" (Conducted by Kanyakorn Sermsook, Jiraporn Liamnimitr and Rattanee korn Pochakorn 2017) showed that the most frequently committed errors were punctuation, articles, subject-verb agreement, spelling, capitalization, and fragment, respectively. Interlingual interference, intralingual interference, limited knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary, and carelessness of the students were found to be the major sources of the errors. It is suggested that intensive knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary be taught to Thai EFL students. Moreover, the negative transfer of students' first language should be taken into account in English writing classes. Another study "The Students' Error in Using Conjunction (Because, Since, as, in Case) in the Sentences" was carried by the researchers Tagor Pangaribuan, Elisa Haddina & Sondang Manik College of AP Nommensen, HKBP University, Medan, Indonesia with an objective to find out the students' difficulties in using subordinate conjunction and the causes of the students' problems in using subordinate conjunction. The findings of the study have shown that students made errors in using subordinate conjunction (since, in case, as, because) in complex sentences and are caused due to carelessness in using them contextually. The study suggested that the teacher should give more clear explanation on English grammar rules, especially in using English conjunctions. The teachers should also give more references in order to make the students aware of the knowledge of the conjunctions. The students should be given more chance to have an exercise in order to develop their ability. The students should practice more to develop their ability by looking for other sources of knowledge in order to increase their ability such as reading many references and having more exercise to make them familiar with the subject. All of these studies strengthen the point that the learners in different nations where English is learned as a second language face problems in the usage of different parts of speech and the present study deals with this problem in the light of the research studies mentioned above.

Methodology

The present study is a quantitative study. A survey was conducted over 60 students of the college Lords Institute of Engineering and Technology, Hyderabad. The sample consists of first year Engineering students from different branches like CSE, IT, EEE, ECE, Mechanical and Civil Engineering. The researcher has chosen the sample as per the convenience sampling. The sample of 60 students were selected randomly. The students were asked to write a composition of not less than 300 words on the topic "My Holiday Trip". Other than this the students were tested by using a questionnaire of simple exercise just to assess their ability to identify the different parts of speech used in the English language. The validity of the questionnaire has been determined through the remarks given by the subject experts. In the personal interaction, the students were asked to answer the general questions related to their familiarity with

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different parts of speech to assess the difficulties in their usage and the students were also tested in the tasks like group discussion and in on-line parts of speech quiz. The students' writing skills were tested by the exercises given in their regular classes to assess their knowledge and understanding of the parts of speech in English grammar.

The questionnaires were distributed to the students in the form of google sheets due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and all the precautions like maintaining the distance, use of masks were also carefully followed. It took about thirty days to collect the filled in questionnaires.

Analysis and findings

After the collection of filled in questionnaires an analysis of answers provided by the students was done and interpretation of their responses has been carried out to understand the base problems faced by the students. The results of this were tabulated and were summed up in the bulleted points.

Table No. I: Errors in the use of Nouns, Pronouns, Adjectives and Adverbs.

Sl.No.	Type of errors	No. of errors	Percentage
1	Errors in the use of nouns		
	a) use of countable and un-countable nouns	67	24.54%
	b) use of plural nouns		
	c) use of singular nouns	44	16.12 %
	d) post head modifiers		
2	Errors in the use of pronouns	54	19.78%
3	Errors in the use Adjectives	92	33.70 %
4	Errors in the use of Adverbs	16	5.86%
Total: -		273	100%

Table No. I shows the errors in the use of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and Adverbs. The target number of errors among these various types listed above are in the use of nouns, pronouns and adjectives. They constitute 24.54%, 19.76% and 33.7 % of the total number of errors, i.e., 273. Most of the errors are in the use of adjectives. Students went wrong in writing the correct order of adjectives when they wrote sequence of adjectives in noun phrase. The errors in the use of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs in present sample of 60 students made it clear that the English-speaking student needs a kind of learning material widely available on such aspects. There should be some exercises of a basic type, by doing which, they can develop a feel for the use of adjectives in appropriate contexts.

Table No. II: Errors in the use of verbs.

Sl.No.	Type of errors	No. of errors	Percentage
a)	Tenses: -		
	i) Tense inflection	251	24.56%
	ii) Mixing of Tenses	63	06.16%
	iii) Past reference (present tense used)	232	22.70%
	iv) Present reference (Past tense used)	181	17.71%
	v) -ing forms	112	10.96%
	vi) construction of sentences with "have"	34	03.33%
b)	Modals: -		
	i) incorrect use		
	ii) deletion	105	10.27%
	iii) in-appropriate use or replacement of Modals by other lexical items.		
c)	Other Errors	44	04.31%
Total: -		1022	100%



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Table No. II shows errors in use of verbs. They represent 1022 occurrences and constitute more than 30% of the total number of errors in the sample. This finding is therefore in harmony with observations and findings in several other studies, emphasizing the importance of learning the patterns and the structures of the word phrase.

Table No. III: Errors in the use of Prepositions.

Sl.No.	Type of errors	No. of errors	Percentage
1	In-appropriate use of prepositions	251	59.34 %
2	Superfluous use of prepositions	123	29.08 %
3	Omission of prepositions	49	11.58 %
Total: -		423	100%

Table No. III shows the errors made in the use of prepositions. The majority of errors are occurred due to application of inappropriate prepositions. This constitutes more than 50% of the total errors in the usage of prepositions. This is because of the pull of the mother tongue and intra-lingual interference. More practice is needed and the teacher can plan suitable exercises by the help of worksheets.

Table No. IV : Errors in the use of Conjunctions.

Sl.No.	Type of errors	No. of errors	Percentage
1	In-appropriate use of conjunctions (and, but, so, or, otherwise, because, yet, etc.,)	79	53.38 %
2	Superfluous use of Conjunctions	44	29.73 %
3	Omission of Conjunctions	25	16.89 %
Total: -		148	100%

Table No. IV shows the errors committed in use of Conjunctions. This constitutes the least percentage among the errors made in various aspects.

Table No. V: Errors in the use of Articles.

Sl.No.	Type of errors	No. of errors	Percentage
1	Superfluous use of Articles	553	76.70 %
2	Omission of Articles	88	12.20 %
3	In-appropriate use of Articles	80	11.10 %
Total: -		721	100%

Table No. V shows the errors in the use of Articles. This constitutes 21.26 % of the total number of errors and form second largest area to be improved in the learners of the target language.

Table No. VI: Summary of the tables I to V.

Sl. No.	Type of errors	Total number of errors	Percentage
1	Errors in the use of nouns, Pronouns, Adjectives and Adverbs.	273	10.55 %
2	Errors in the use of verbs. (Tenses, Modals)	1022	39.51 %
3	Errors in the use of Prepositions.	423	16.35 %
4	Errors in the use of Conjunctions.	148	5.72 %
5	Errors in the use of Articles.	721	27.87 %
Total: -		2587	100 %

The results can be summed up in the following points



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- 1) Total number of errors out of 60 students is 2587.
- 2) Highest number of errors are in the usage of verbs that is 39.51 %
- 3) Second highest number of errors were in the usage of Articles that is 27.87 %.
- 4) Lowest number of errors were in the use of conjunctions that is 5.72% of the total number of errors.

Conclusion

The findings of the survey can be concluded in one line that the students at the college level face problems in the identification and usage of parts of speech in English. After studying English for more than 10 years at school level and at intermediate level some of them are not even able to correctly identify what parts of speech a word is. As the parts of speech forms the base of English grammar the students without this basic knowledge may face difficulty to learn other aspects of the language. It is a miserable condition that the students at the college level cannot spend time to learn the basic concepts and there will not be any one to teach them from the beginning. So, this study recommends that the students should be taught at the school level in such a way that they can develop the right concepts and use their knowledge in an appropriate manner where ever they need. Teachers must use the interesting methods of teaching and practice must be given by giving more and more exercises. In the practice sessions teachers can give more examples in the form of worksheets so that the students can revise them whenever they get time. With regard to parts of speech the students should be given clear definitions of each and every part of speech and they must be taught all the kinds of each part of speech with appropriate examples in the form of sentences. Students must be given awareness about some common difficulties in the usage of different parts of speech by giving the exercises like editing, correction of sentences because sometimes a single word in English can be used as more than one part of speech and the student should understand which parts of speech is being performed by that particular word. Not only this but Some changes must be made in the curriculum of English language in different classes and the teachers should be given some sort of training so that they can teach effectively.

Limitations of the study

The results of this study cannot be generalized to a great extent as the selection of sample in this study is from only one college that is Lords Institute of engineering and Technology, Hyderabad which is a very limited area and from the point of English grammar the study covers only one aspect of grammar i.e. parts of speech which become another limitation of this study. The present paper focusses on the problems encountered by the students in learning different parts of speech. Thus, it leaves a wide scope for further research. It suggests some other areas of research like finding out the interesting ways of teaching parts of speech, problems faced by the students of different divisions of our country in learning different topics of English grammar study leaves a wide scope for further research.

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ICHSECMICE -2025 11-12th October 2025

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