UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

ERROR ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY 6 GUIDED-COMPOSITIONS THREE SELECTED KUCHING SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Most ESL teachers face challenges in teaching writing as it involves demanding processes and requires some conscious mental effort to combine and arrange the sentences. As a result, errors and mistakes in learners' writings are common and inevitable. Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine some linguistic errors that were found in the Primary 6 students' guided-compositions in three selected schools in Kuching Districts, Sarawak Malaysia. The samples comprised 60 students, randomly selected from Sekolah Kebangsaan Laksamana, Kuching, Sekolah Kebangsaan Satria Jaya, Kuching and Sekolah Kebangsaan Green Road, Kuching. Authentic learners' compositions were collected and analyzed according to the seven categories derived from the UCL Editor error-tagging scheme (Granger, Dagneaux, Denness, and Meunier, 1996) and follows the principles of Error Analysis suggested by Corder (1974). Findings revealed that generally students made high frequency errors in grammatical items, especially with tenses and use of verbs. The errors were mainly misselection of tenses and verbs used as a result of overgeneralization and ignorance of rule restrictions. There were no strong significant correlation between the variables correlated but errors with redundant words did exist among female students. These findings imply that students might probably lack exposure to the grammatical rules for English. Therefore, it is recommended that grammar be taught explicitly in order to improve grammatical competence in English writing.

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0   Introduction

This chapter discusses the central issues relevant to the study of error analysis in students' guided-composition writings. It begins with the background, problem statement and the purpose which the study hopes to achieve. Following that, the research objectives and questions are indicated to facilitate the development of the study. The significance of this study is suggested. Finally, the operational definition and limitations are established.

1.1   Background of Study

Blue (1988) states that most writing courses attempting to help students develop language skills, feature students from diverse content areas as well as specializations (in Zuraidah & Melor, 2004). At the primary school level students are taught the basic skills of writing such as constructing simple sentences and to achieve the skills, most of the activities are in the form of guided-writing.

In Malaysia, the English language writing programme in the Integrated Curriculum for Primary School (KBSR) calls for ESL teachers to guide learners 'to write simple paragraphs of several sentences' with the aim of enabling learners to write for different purposes using simple language'. On the other hand, grammar is taught 'to help pupils master the structures of English on selected grammar items and sentence patterns, and teachers are advised to limit the number of structures used in any lesson to ensure that learners master the structures well,' (Ministry of Education, 2003:4-5).

Upon undergoing six years of learning English language, Malaysian Primary 6 students must sit for the Primary School Assessment or Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR), before proceeding to secondary school. In this assessment, one of the components tested is writing

1

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents reviews of literatures that provide relevant and important information related to this field of study. It looks into the challenges of the writing process and definitions of language errors. The concepts of Error Analysis and corpus-based research are defined for a better understanding of the purpose of the study. The role of Error Analysis in Second Language teaching and learning is also discussed in relation to its significance in ESL classrooms.

2.1 The Challenges of Teaching Writing

Writing is regarded as a difficult skill. This is often attributed to its inherently complex characteristics which according to Wall (1981:53) as cited in Zahariah (1993) "range from mechanical control to creativity, with good grammar, knowledge of subject matter, awareness of stylistic conventions and various mysterious factors in between." It is a demanding process as it requires some conscious mental effort; thinking out the sentences and considering various ways of combining and arranging them. A writer needs to plan, retrieve information, create new ideas, revise and edit what is written. According to Ng (2002) writing is such a 'tortuous ordeal' and quoted Flower and Hayes (1980) liken it to 'a wrestle with the devil'.

Writing becomes such a challenge that it is not possible for learners not to make errors. Being L2 learners they 'bring an enormous amount of knowledge to the task of learning' (Ellis, 1997: 5), which contains errors of different kinds' (ibid, 1997:12).

In Malaysia, empirical research has showed that students obtain no higher than grade D (21 -25) marks out of 80% in continuous writing as there are many errors detected in their essays due to lack of grammar knowledge by students and students from different backgrounds indicated