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A comparison of errors of concord students often conflict

Egbai Florence Omotese

Department of English and Literary Studies, Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines to analyze and compare errors of concord students often conflict when speaking or writing essay. The comparison was made after 4 month of first term, examination in the case of the SS1 and SS3 classes respectively. The respondents were made up of Senior Secondary one (SS1) and Senior Secondary three (SS3) classes of Ogbemudein Mixed Senior Secondary School, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. Both respondents were asked to write an essay twice with four months interval on the same topic. In each writing sessions, there were 60 essays written by respondents, giving a grand total of 120 essays being analyzed. The results showed an increase in errors resulting to 3.40% among students in the senior secondary one (SS1) but with drastic reduction of 10.48% among the Senior Secondary three (SS3) which of course performed below expectation.

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Introduction

It is a known fact that errors are bound in the process of teaching and learning. These errors should however not be pushed aside since they provide necessary information about the learners' errors, it is pertinent to differentiate between mistakes and errors. Corder (1981) distinguishes between "mistakes" and "errors" by referring to mistakes as "errors of performance" and "errors" as "errors of competence". According to Corder (1981) "mistakes" are character unsystematic while "errors" are systematic.

In differentiating between "mistakes" and "errors" Brown (2000:217) defines errors as "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker (which) reflects the competence of the learner".

It is worthy of note to appropriate the contribution of another scholar, James (1998) who distinguishes the meaning between "errors" and "mistakes" based on the criteria of self-correctibility. The postulate that an "error" cannot be self-corrected because of the learners' insufficient knowledge in the target language but a "mistake" can be self-corrected.

Another scholar worthy of mention is Richards.

According to Richards (1985) "errors" refers to the use of linguistic item in a way in which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards a showing of faulty or incomplete learning. (Brown 2000:217) further refers to mistake as a performance error that is either a random guess or a "slip", in that it is failure to utilize a known system correctly.

Notwithstanding the above differentiation for the aim of this research paper, the term "errors" will be employed to refer to any wrong usage of verb dealing with error of concord (verb agreement) whether or not the students were able to make correction on their own. The items analyzed were limited to some pre-established variables laid out by the researchers. We shall highlight more about this in the Methodology section.

Viewing on the issue or (reflecting) of idea of learners committing language errors, the idea was previously looked at as

a mark of lack of not adequately acquired a learned item. This can be seen as lack of mass which of course may lead to reactions such as follows:

- Squashed
- Bent
- Not there
- Sort of Spinny
- Sort of Lifeless
- Bored

As a result, many scholars came up with the view that errors should be done away with. According to Lengo (1995) cited in Erdogan (2005) was caused by "the teacher" false impression that output showed be an authentic representation of input".

The above postulation which of course was the believe of the structuralist views of language and behaviourist view of human learning was done away with by the society. Linguists like (Bartlette, 2002) started to view at learners' language errors in a modern way, which suggests that learners' errors without doubts are very pertinent since it provides insight into how far a learner has progressed in acquiring a language and showing how much more the learner needs to learn. Wenfren (2010) in his contribution highlighted that learners' errors, to a large extent, are not caused by the influence of their first language. Instead, their errors reflect some common learning strategies.

These researchers define errors as that which can be caused by the teacher's constant use of lexical items that are not quite explicit to the full understanding of the learners, thereby causing skipped gradients, and sort of confusion to the learners not being able to comprehend something. (definition ours, Egbai, F.O).

Errors can be caused why the teacher who gives wrong interpretation meanings to some registers that function in a passage contextually rather, gives the dictionary meanings (definition ours Egbai, F.O). A learner should be able to learn that words function in a passage according to contextual situation. The teacher should teach the students distinction

between contextual meaning and the dictionary meaning of a word.

Considering the above it can be agreed that errors perform two important functions. First, they elicit the true state of second language learners' proficiency of the recent language they are learning at a specific point in time. Secondly, according to Siti Hamin Stapa and Mohd Mustafe Izahar, (2010), they also revealed what the second language learners do not know and what they have internalized of the new language system.

Many researchers have given errors a great attention of analysis due to the new perception towards errors. It is quite recommendable that the study of English Language proficiency levels of the students with the purpose of analyzing, identifying and grouping their errors will disclose the most regular errors and areas of linguistic deficiencies. When a distinction is made between the two compositions written by the same learners, valuable information about their performance could be gotten.

Base on this, this study examines to compare students' performance in using errors of concord and sentence structure in their composition after an interval of 3-month gap. This study specifically aims on the use of concord since it was discovered that many students are guilty in the usage of these tenses both in writing and in speaking, this they have been taught both the simple present tense and simple past tense at their lower levels in the teaching of English language at schools in this country (Nigeria). As relates to concord, only the simple present and the simple past tenses were analyzed in this study. This is because the questions given to the students to respond to in this study were descriptive as well as expository in nature. The students were required to use more of the simple present tense and the simple past tenses than the simple future.

This simple present form is used to refer to 'timeless state, actions and events or tentative state which involves the present state. It is also used to express habitual action and to make future reference in which it is said to have overtones of "definiteness" such as timetable announcement (Jackson, 1990). The simple past tense, on the other hand, will occur when viewed as having no connection with the present but are located at a definite time in past time. According to Jackson (1990), it is usually used to narrate the sequence of action or events.

To accomplish the objective of this study, the researchers critically studied the essay written by the students with particular attention to the simple tenses in terms of concord and verb structure. The students wrote two essays with an interval of three months on the same questions. The engaged in this study were of two groups-each group made of 14 respondents and each with a coordinating leader. The first group consisted of Senior Secondary School one (SS1) and Senior Secondary 3 (SS3). Both schools were from Ogbemudein Mixed Senior School, Agbor, and Mary Mount College, Owa, both in Delta State. Ogbemudein Mixed Senior Secondary School performed better than Mary Mount College. The second group was college of Education, Agbor, made up of second semester year one Social Studies (SOS 102), and first semester year two in accounting regular (ACC. 201) and the second semester diploma students in information and Library Science (ILS 202).

Methodology

In this study two data collection were adopted. The first was collected during the second term test, a month preceding the second term examination of the school calendar. The College of Education students came up mid-way of the second semester. The collection of the second data came up after an interval of

four months. There was no break with the secondary school students since they move ahead with their studies in the same classes while college of Education students moved ahead to the next semesters. The respondents involved were the same in both sessions of essay writing because it involved the analysis of students' progress. The researchers employed the use of both random sampling in writing and oral interaction technique in this study because they were quite appropriate.

The total numbers of respondents concerned in this study were in 5 groups. There were: Junior Secondary School 3 (JSS3), Senior Secondary School 3 (SS3), second semester year one, SOS 102, first semester year 2, Accounting Regular (ACC. 201) and second semester diploma students in Library and Information Science (LIS 202), both of College of Education.

Another data employed in this study was a random sampling of oral speech from individual respondents as can be seen below.

The responses were expected in the past tenses rather they responded as follows:

"I am not in school yesterday"

"I am not well"

"I does not know him"

"I did not said so"

"I have not eat since morning"

"I have saw him"

"I did not told her her, she is lying"

"I have not saw him since he left for Lagos"

"Did you came to school yesterday?"

"My mother told me to told you to come"

"We were much in the class yesterday (uncountable)

"All the whole bags are present"

"The committee are meeting at Abuja tomorrow"

"I will alert from the vehicle at the next bus stop".

"The Governor with his entourage are meeting at Abuja tomorrow".

"if you climb that tree you will fall down".

"Tell the boy to go and stay under the tree".

"My short knicker is wet".

"I am who is mad?"

"Jane attend the graduation party".

"was you a king?"

"I has a biro".

"The lecturer has just round up".

"My mother's brother is sick".

"Everybody are present".

"The members of the class congratulated each other". (Only two persons are involved).

"I waited for her, still yet, she did not come"

"I have two junior brothers".

"One of three boys are here".

"Bread and butter are good for me".

"It is you who is lying".

"You who is listening to me now".

"Please call me the man on suit".

"I will go to the garage to take a car".

"The members of the class congratulated one another" (many persons).

"The musician as well as his boys were not ready to play".

The researchers considered necessary to analyze, interpret and correct the above misunderstood or conflicted errors made by the various respondents at different times. We did not actually lay more emphasis on sentence construction in the

sentences above, but error of concord was our main concern as below:

I was not well (indicating past tense)

I do not know him.

I did not say so.

I have not eaten since yesterday.

I did not tell her she was lying

I have seen her.

I was not in school yesterday.

I have not seen him since he left for Lagos.

Did you come to school yesterday?

My mother told me to tell you to come or ask you to come

We are many in the class (countable noun).

The whole boys or all the boys were present.

The committee is meeting tomorrow (collective noun taking a singular verb).

The Governor with his entourage is meeting at Abuja tomorrow.

I will alert from the vehicle at the next bus stop.

If you climb that tree you will fall.

You are listening to me now (2nd person plural).

It is you who are lying.

Tell the boy to go under the tree

My short is wet

I am who I am mad?

Please, call me the man in suit.

Jane attended the graduation party.

Were you a king?

My uncle is sick.

I have a biro

My lecturer has just rounded off.

I will go to the car park to board a curb.

The members of the class congratulated one another (many persons).

The members of the class congratulated each other (two persons).

I waited for her, yet she did not come or still she did not come.

I have two younger brothers.

The musician as well as his boys was not ready to play.

One of the three boys is here

Bread and butter are good for you.

Another source of data used in this study was sampled from the various speeches of the students who took part in the inter-school debate organized recently by the De Saint International Club in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Delta State.

The topic of the debate was: "Take-over of schools by the missionaries, what is the positive impact to the secondary schools in Delta state". The assessment was based on appearance, comportment, Diction/Expression, relevance or understanding of the topic, Presentation/points and conclusion.

A total number of fifteen (15) schools were in attendance. They are:

Baptist Girls Model School (BGMS), Agbor, Ime-Obi Mixed Secondary School, Agbor, (IOMSS), Agbor, Ogbemudein Mixed Secondary School (OMSS), Agbor, Gbenoba Grammar School (GGS), Agbor, Abavo Mixed Secondary School (AMSS) Abavo, Agbor, Agbor Technical College (ATC), Agbor, Ekwukwu-Agbor Grammar school, Ekwukwu-Agbor (EAGS), Agbor, Jegbefumeme Grammar School (JGS), Abavo, Iwu-Iyase Grammar (IYGS), Agbor, Emuhu Secondary School (ESS), Emuhu, Agbor, Agwu-Ewuru Secondary commercial (AESC), Agbor, Obiayinma Secondary Commercial (OSC), Agbor,

Abavo Girls Grammar School (AGGS), Abavo, Agbor, Agbor-Alidima Secondary School (AASS), Agbor and Ozanogogo secondary commercial School (OSCS), Agbor.

For time limit, it was not possible to have the whole schools involved to participate. However, a reasonable number of about ten (10) schools took active part in the debate. The following two schools; Baptist Girls Model school (BGMS), and Ime-Obi Secondary School (IOMSS) both in Agbor, took their first turn.

How they went as below:

The following grammatical errors were observed, noted and corrected at the end of the debate. It was also observed that these grammatical errors were common to the entire speakers:

Guests of honours – instead of Guest of honour.

Peoples who are present– instead of those present.

Imposed on their children – instead of invest on their children.

Using has to indicate plural – instead of have

More costlier – instead of more expensive to run

Emerges – instead of emerged

Religional – instead of religiously

Panel of the judges – instead of panel of judges

Those things have been expires – instead of those things have expired

Not well salary – instead of poor salary

Is a lie – instead of that's not true.

Assuming on retirement – instead of on retirement

Cost was so high (past action) – instead of cost of living is so high (present action).

More larger than – instead of "larger than"

All my mates is – instead my mates are

They helps – instead of they help

I have never go to – instead of "I have never gone too"

To provide a well library – instead of well equipped library

Like for example – instead of for instance or for example

This things keeps on going – instead of indiscipline is on the increase.

Those who does not have money – instead of those who don't have the money (in speech).

More proper adequate – instead of adequate care or proper care.

Staffs – instead of staff (not pluralized).

quality of teacher – instead of qualified teachers

to earn the war against examination malpractices – instead of to achieve the fight against examination malpractices.

It enhance – instead of – it enhances

The law who said – instead of the law which says.

Teachers that does not know how to teach – instead of teachers who don't know how to teach.

It will increase teaching and learning instead of – it will improve teaching and learning

Things that are present – instead of things available

It is pertinent to emphasize here that this study did not actually differentiate between errors and mistakes; rather, our main focus was grammatical errors which were discovered quite similar.

Conclusion

The study under review concluded that Baptist Girls' model School (BGMS) emerged the winner with 16 points, Gbenoba Grammar School (GGS), came second with 14 points, Ime-Obi Secondary School (IOSS), and came third with 13 points. Ogbemudein Mixed secondary (OMSS) came fourth with 12 points with Agbor Technical College (ATC) came fifth respectively.

The three best speakers however, came from Baptist, Above Girls and Agwu-Ewuru based on fluency, knowledge of the

topic, and comportment, content and good presentation of points. From the results, it was observed that there were some similarities in the types of grammatical errors that occurred among the school students that participated in the debate. It was found that the largest type of error committed by all students under expression where by words are wrongly collocated, use of past tense instead of present tense in a present context was obvious. Other errors such as pluralizing nouns that are in singular forms were also discovered. For time constrain, we cannot really carryout full-scale analysis of the total number of errors discovered.

A situation whereby simple tense are used wrongly by the students should be given serious attention as majority of our students are still battling in the use of the simple past tenses and the past perfect tenses. It was observed also that mother tongue interference contributes a lot to a large extent to the high level of errors committed by the students. They tend to interpret or relate their intended idea to their own native language, otherwise known as their mother tongue, thereby hindering their language acquisition proficiency. It is our humble opinion that with constant and regular lesson in English from primary to secondary school levels, it is expected that the regular occurrence of these errors would have be drastically reduced.

It is our humble advice to teachers of English to devote more time to the teaching of simple tenses since they form the basis for effective communication. We also need to study English grammar for us to understand the various other subjects we are taught in school since the mode of communication is English. For this reasons, teachers of English should lay emphasis on the teaching of simple tenses and the rules guiding them. It is also very pertinent that when these tenses are taught to the students, constant and copious exercises to enhance the understanding of these items should be done in an integrated manner to stress these two simple tenses.

The researchers highly recommend that English curriculum include more real life practice and usage to disabuse the minds of some persons who posit that is not important to study grammars since they believe, they could be understood by whoever the message is meant for, whether they follow grammatical rules or not. It is believed that with greater awareness of the correct use of English grammar those who see it as cumbersome and inapplicable to everyday needs, at least the technicalities of it. This also goes to assist our second language learners to become not only accurate, but also fluent when using the language.

Suggestions for further study Research

We limited this study to the comparison of concord (Verb agreement) students often conflict. Further research could be extended by looking into other aspect of English grammar which we did not use in this study. This study could be repeated with more details about essay samples either oral (speech) or written using students of other tertiary institutions from various

programmes. It is advised also that future research could be carried out ascertained the amount of emphasis given to students by teachers on different proficiency levels which can provide support to justify that the students who did not perform very well in the debate stand chance of better performance at later or subsequent debate even better than these who emerged first and second position with constant practice and regular teaching.

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Assessment Guides/ Grading

| | AASS | BGMS | IOSS | OMSS | GGG | AMSS | ATC | EAGS | JGS | IYGS | ESS | AESC | OSC | AGGS | OSCS |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|------|
| Appearance 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Comportment 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Diction/ Expression 5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | - | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Relevance to Topic 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Presentation & Content 5 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Points 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Conclusion 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total=20 | 09 | 16 | 13 | 12 | 14 | 10 | 08 | 04 | 10 | 09 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 10 |