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Errors Analysis: An Exploration of Congolese Sophomore EFL Learners’ Essay

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Abstract

This paper analyzes, at the level of morphosyntax, the Congolese sophomore EFL students’ written expression. The objective of this study is to identify, classify and provide an interpretation of the various morphosyntactic errors made by the learners. To this end, a corpus of thirty-seven (37) copies of written expression was collected from students enrolled, in their second year, in the English Department of the Ecole Normale Supérieure at Marien NGouabi University, in the Republic of Congo. After the analysis of this corpus at the sentence level, the results revealed the following morphosyntactic errors: (1) word order, (2) subject-verb agreement, (3) verbal structure, (4) nominal, adjectival and adverbial structure, (5) addition of words or morphemes, (6) omission of words or morphemes, (7) abbreviations and short forms, and (8) usage of informal words. The present article concludes with some pedagogical implications that may solve the above-mentioned problems and improve learners’ performance in written composition.

Key words: Congo, Errors Analysis, Essay, Morphosyntax

Résumé

Dans le but d’identifier, de classer et de fournir une interprétation plausible des différentes erreurs morphosyntaxiques commises par les étudiants congolais, le présent article se propose de faire une analyse morphosyntaxique de l’expression écrite desdits étudiants. Pour ce faire, un corpus de trente-sept (37) copies d’expression écrite a été collecté auprès d’étudiants inscrits, en deuxième année, au département d’anglais de l’Ecole Normale Supérieure à l’Université Marien Ngouabi, en République du Congo. Après l’analyse dudit corpus au niveau de la phrase, les résultats ont révélé les erreurs morphosyntaxiques suivantes : (1) ordre des mots, (2) accord sujet-verbe, (3) structure verbale, (4) structure nominale, adjectivale et adverbiale, (5) ajout de mots ou de morphèmes, (6) omission de mots ou de morphèmes, (7) abréviations et formes courtes, et (8) usage des mots informels. Cet article se termine par quelques implications pédagogiques susceptibles de palier les problèmes mentionnés ci-dessus et d’améliorer les performances des apprenants en matière d’expression écrite.

Mots-clés : Congo, Analyse des erreurs, Expression Écrite, Morphosyntaxe

Introduction

Error Analysis is one of the major topics in the field of second language acquisition research. Learning a foreign or a second language is always subject to erroneous structures and outputs from learners. The learners' errors have long been interested for second and foreign language researchers. Thus, writing in a second language is one of the challenging tasks that may face the learners. According to J. Harmer (2004, p. 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 (J. Myles, 2002, p. 1). Moreover, M. Pearson (1976 – as cited in Welsh Assembly Government 2010, p. 24) asserts that writing covers three main cues which are: semantic cues (i.e., knowledge about topics, cultures, and ideas), syntactic cues (i.e., knowledge about grammar and the organization of texts), and grapho-phonetic 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 (R. Ellis, 1997, p. 15). As far as learners writing is concerned, there is an increasing interest in the study and analysis of errors made by second language learners, in these last decades. In general, there are two main approaches to the study of errors which are: 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 differences between two languages, predictions were made' (P. Heydari & M. Bagheri, 2012, p. 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' (P. Heydari & M. Bagheri, 2012, p. 1584). These errors made by learners during their learning process is viewed as intralingual errors.

Therefore, the present paper investigates, through Error Analysis approach, the morphosyntactic errors made by Congolese sophomore EFL students in their written compositions by identifying, classifying and providing a plausible interpretation of the various morphosyntactic errors committed by those learners. By the way, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What are types of morphosyntactic errors that occur in Congolese sophomore EFL Students' writings?

- How to overcome those errors?

Although much research has been conducted on the error analysis in EFL students' written compositions, still this topic needs further investigation with different population and different context. Thus, to the best knowledge of the present research, the problem of the present study was not discussed before at Marien Ngouabi University. That is, no teacher or student discussed morphosyntactic errors in examinations. Moreover, no one used the exam answer sheets as a corpus for study. Hence, from this originality, the present study derives its significance and is limited to morphosyntactic errors; hence, spelling and punctuation errors fall outside the scope of the study.

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our research methodology is made of the research design which describes how the corpus was constituted and the sample population.

1.1. Research design

As a lecturer of English Didactics and English Communicative Techniques at the English department of Marien Ngouabi University, and for an exam subject, I gave my second-year students an activity in which they were asked to write a composition 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 problems. Hence, their exam answer sheets constitute the corpus of the present study.

The method adopted in the present research paper is a descriptive and qualitative one. Hence, the present research analyzed the corpus consisting of 37 answer sheets of the second term exam of students' language communication essay writing (during the academic year 2019-2020).

1.2. Sample Population of the Study

The sample population of the present study consists of 37 second year students enrolled in the English department from Teachers' Training College at Marien Ngouabi University during the academic year 2019-2020. They studied English as a foreign language for at least 09 years (i.e. 7 years before University + 2 years at the University). Hence, they are expected to have a good command of English morphosyntax and to be good at writing.

2. Results

In this section, our main concern is to present and analyze the results obtained from the analysis of the learners' writing composition in terms of Error Analysis, mainly at the morphosyntactic level.

2.1. Types of Morphosyntactic Errors

The analysis of the corpus of the present study reveals that second year EFL students face a lot of troubles in their compositions. It shows that their writings contain a lot of morphosyntactic errors of different types. Hence, the following table summarizes the different types of errors found in the learners' productions.

Table 1: A Summary of the Morphosyntactic Errors Found in the Students' Essays

Type of Errors
1. Word Order
2. Subject - Verb Agreement
3. Verb Structure
4. Noun/Adjective/Adverb Structure
5. Word/Morpheme Addition
6. Word/Morpheme Omission
7. Short Forms/Abbreviations
8. Conversational Informal Words

Source: current research inquiry

The above table summarizes the eight morphosyntactic errors found in the learners written compositions. It reveals obviously that they face a real problem in academic writing. These errors are related to word order, subject-verb agreement, verb structure, noun/adjective/adverb structure, word/morpheme addition, word/morpheme omission, short forms/abbreviations, and usage of informal words. According to J. Richards (1971, p. 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. Hence, a detailed description of the errors is provided throughout *the following tables (2)*.

2.1.1. Word Order Errors

With reference to the **word order errors**, the analysis of students written compositions revealed the following errors displayed in the table 2.

Table 2: A Sample of Word Order Errors

Error Classification	Error Identification and %	Error Correction
Word Order	1. ... and <u>always</u> he felt that he <u>will soon died</u> . (SIC) 51,35%	1. ... and he always feels that he will die soon .
	2. He used the <u>pronoun personal</u> . (SIC) 18,91%	2. He used the personal pronoun .
	3. He introduced <u>expressions very clear</u> . (SIC) 29,72%	3. He introduced very clear expressions .
	4. There is an <u>existence morale</u> (SIC) 16,21%	4. There is a moral existence ...

Source: current research inquiry

This table shows that the Congolese sophomore EFL students face a problem with word order. That is, they face some problems with the rules of English syntax. Moreover, it is noticeable that within the same sentence, we may find several errors from different types. In the first example, **19** students (**51%**) used a wrong syntactic order and a faulty verb structure. It is shown in ‘... *and always he felt that he will soon died*’ instead of ‘... *and he always feels that he will die soon*’ where adverbs of frequency go before the main verb. Besides, expressing the future using will + infinitive form of the verb not with the past form of the verb. In the second example, **18,91%** of participants used ‘... **the pronoun personal**’ instead of ‘... **the personal pronoun**’ where the adjective should appear before the noun it qualifies. A plausible interpretation for this error is the French interference. That is, in French, the adjective may occur after its noun (as it may occur before it). Similarly, in the third and fourth example, the students use the wrong syntactic order of the adjectives and the nouns they qualify. That is to say, they (**29,72%**) wrote ‘... **expressions very clear**’ instead of ‘...**very clear expressions**’ and ‘... **existence morale**’ instead of ‘... **moral existence**’(**16,21%**). In addition, we notice another instance of French interference at the level of the morphology of the word ‘moral’ where the students wrote it with final ‘e’ as in French ‘morale’. Hence, all the aforementioned errors could be ascribed to incomplete application of rules and French interference.

The next difficulty that the second-year students have in writing is at the level of subject – verb agreement. This constitutes the second type of errors to be analyzed in the present study.

2.1.2. Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

Again, as in word order errors, the sophomore Congolese EFL students have problems with subject-verb agreement in their written production. This is clearly revealed in the following table.

Table 3: A Sample of Subject – Verb Agreement Errors

Error Classification	Error Identification and %	Error Correction
Subject-Verb Agreement	1. He <u>describe</u> the engine... where the miners <u>plays</u> ... 56,75%	1. He describes the engine... where the miners play ...
	2. The author <u>describe</u> the environment ... 54,05%	2. The author describes the environment ...
	3. The second paragraph show us ... 48,64%	3. The second paragraph shows us ...
	4. All <u>that</u> events <u>was</u> very harsh 27,02%	4. All those events were very harsh

Source: current research inquiry

Table 3 shows the errors made by the students at the level of subject - verb agreement. It shows perceptibly that some students do not assimilate the rules in which a verb must agree with its subject in person and number. That is, if the subject is in singular, the verb must be in singular form and the same thing is true for the plural form. Thus, it is clear in all the examples presented in table n°3 that 56,75% of students (21) did not write the third person singular marker, namely, 's' like in '*he describe the engine*', '*the author describe*', '*the second paragraph show*' instead of '*he describes the engine*', '*the author describes*', and '*the second paragraph shows*'. In the same way, in the fourth instance, instead of writing '*all those events were very harsh*' they erroneously wrote '*all that events was very harsh*'. Hence, these errors are assigned to incomplete application of rules similar to T. Hourani (2008) study which investigated the common grammatical errors made by Emirati male students in their English essays in which the findings indicated that the most common grammatical errors were 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.

2.1.3. Verb Structure Errors

Another morphosyntactic problem reflected in the participants' compositions is the verb structure. A sample of this type of errors discovered in students written composition is shown in the following table.

Table n°4: A Sample of Verb Structure Errors

Error Classification	Error Identification and %	Error Correction
Verb Structure	1.They <u>didn't found</u> anything ...45,94%	1. They did not find anything ...
	2. ... and how <u>she's lived</u> ... 40,54%	2. ... and how she is living ...
	3. He had <u>suffer</u> ... 43,24%	3. He had suffered ...
	4. ... that tragedy <u>will happened</u> ... 51,35%	4. ... that tragedy will happen ...
	5. Two words that <u>signifie</u> ... 37,83%	5. Two words that signify

Source: current research inquiry

The above table represents the errors made by second year EFL students in their written compositions related to the verb structure; either at the level of tenses or verb morphology. The first example shows that the learners made errors related to the structure of the verb after the auxiliary 'to do'. That is, 45,94% sample students wrote '*they didn't found anything*' rather than '*they did not find anything*'. They wrote the verb in past simple instead of writing it in its infinitive form. Moreover, the second example shows clearly that the students failed in using the present continuous. To be precise, they (40,54%) used '*how she's lived*' instead of '*how she is living*'. Similarly, in the third example, the learners failed in expressing the past perfect. That is, they (43,24%) wrote '*he had suffer*' instead of '*he had suffered*'. Quite the opposite, in the fourth example, the students used the past participle form in place of the infinitive form. That is to say, they wrote '*that tragedy will happened*' instead of '*that tragedy will happen*'. As far as interlanguage interference is concerned, in the fifth instance, the participants tend to write the verb '*signify*' in the French form. That is, they (37,83%) wrote '*two words that signifie*' rather than '*two words that signify*'. The aforementioned examples reveal that the students lack the mastery of the use of English tenses. So, these errors could be attributed to incomplete rules application and interlanguage interference.

2.1.4. Noun/ Adjective/ Adverb Structure Errors

Additionally, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs seem to be troublesome for second year EFL students. The analysis of their written composition has clearly shown that fact as presented in the next table.

Table 5: A Sample of Noun/Adjective/Adverb Structure Errors

Error Classification	Error Identification and %	Error Correction
Noun/Adjective/Adverb Structure	1. His long <u>sufferance</u> with ...56,75%	1. His long suffering with ...
	2. His mental <u>sick</u> ... 59,45%	2. His mental sickness ...
	3. From line eight to fiveteen.... 32,43%	3. From line eight to fifteen ...
	4. He could be seen <u>clear</u> ... 29,72%	4. He could be seen clearly ...
	5. ... the <u>fully</u> foregrounding elements ... 27,02%	5. ... the full foregrounding elements ...

Source: current research inquiry

Table 5 shows that the participants face a problem with English nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. That is, they tend to mix between them. Besides, they even generate wrong constructions such as in '*fiveteen*' (32,43%) where the students merged the word '*teen*' with '*five*' in order to get *fifteen*. This could be attributed to *overgeneralization* of rules and constructions.

Furthermore, the participants seem to confuse between the adjectives and the adverbs. For instance, they considered '*clear*' as an adverb like in '*he could be seen clear*' (29,72%) instead of '*he could be seen clearly*.' In contrast, they considered the adverb '*full*' as an adjective like in '*the fully foregrounding elements*' as opposed to '*the full foregrounding elements*'. This could be interpreted as a *false concept hypothesized*, where the learners wrongly assume that some linguistic components behave in the same way and they do not make distinctions between them (Richards, 1974: 178-181). Another trouble found in the students' writings is related to word or morpheme addition which constitutes the fifth type of error made by students.

2.1.5. Word/ Morpheme Addition Errors

A sample of Congolese sophomore EFL students' written composition analysis has shown that students face a great deal of problems related to word or morpheme addition. The

analysis of the corpus based on learners' writing has pointed out some errors related to word or morpheme addition errors. These errors are visibly explained in the coming table.

Table 6: A Sample of Word/Morpheme Addition Errors

Error Classification	Error Identification and %	Error Correction
Word/Morpheme Addition	1. The second <u>paragraphe</u> ...24,32%	1. The second paragraph ...
	2. There is <u>an existence morale</u> ... 18,91%	2. There is a moral existence ...
	3. From the first <u>ligne</u> ... 16,21%	3. From the first line ...
	4. ... where <u>the</u> both share the same feature ... 27,02%	4. ... where both share the same feature ...
	5. In this passage, the <u>writter</u> uses... 10,81%	5. In this passage, the writer uses...

Source: current research inquiry

From this table, it appears that students made errors where they added some extra morphemes such as ‘*e*’ in ‘*paragraphe*’ (24,32%) and ‘*morale*’ (18,91%); and ‘*g*’, ‘*t*’ in ‘*ligne*’ (16,21%) and ‘*writter*’(10,81%), respectively. For the addition of ‘*e*’, the plausible interpretation is interlanguage interference where the students unconsciously wrote the following words in French: ‘*paragraphe*’, ‘*morale*’, and ‘*ligne*’ instead of ‘*paragraph*’, ‘*moral*’, and ‘*line*’. Besides, whole words are inappropriately inserted such as in the following example: ‘*where the both share the same feature*’ rather than ‘*where both share the same feature*’. This error could be attributed to incomplete application of rules and L1 (French) transfer. The results portray in the above table are alike to Y. Kirkgöz’s (2010) which 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.

2.1.6. Word/ Morpheme Omission Errors

In contrast to what is presented in table 6 where students tended to add morpheme, the second year EFL students tended, once more to omit some morphemes in words during their writing process. It is noticeably shown in the below table.

Table 7: A Sample of Word/Morpheme Omission Errors

Error Classification	Error Identification and %	Error Correction
Word/Morpheme Omission	1. He continued his life <u>alon</u> ... 13,51%	1. He continued his life alone ...
	2. Paul <u>wich</u> is the actor ... 8,10%	2. Paul who is the actor ...
	3. ... these two <u>line</u> ... 16,21%	3. ... these two lines ...
	4. The narrator used some <u>explanation</u> ... 24,32%	4. The narrator used some explanations ...

Source: current research inquiry

The above table reflects the omission errors found in the learners' written compositions. In the first and second examples respectively, they omitted the final letter 'e' for the word '**alone**' and the 'h' for the word '**which**'. It is worth mentioning that the use of '**which**' in this sentence is irrelevant. Thus, the adequate word would be '**who**'. Moreover, the learners have a tendency to omit the plural marker. For instance, in the following selected sentences: '**these two line**' (16,21%) and '**the narrator used some explanation**' (24,32%) instead of '**these two lines**' and '**the narrator used some explanations**'. Hence, these errors could be considered as incomplete application of rules. Similar to Wee et al. (2010) research, the present study points out that the most frequent errors types are omission, addition, ill formation, and ordering. Moreover, there is a high frequency of errors related to the omission of the plural marker's'

Another inadequacy that occurs in the students' written compositions is related to the use of short form and abbreviations instead of writing the full form of the words as explained in the beneath section.

2.1.7. Short Forms/ Abbreviations Errors

The analysis of students' sample written compositions has revealed the presence of some errors related to the use of short forms or abbreviations. It is visibly shown in the beneath table, where some errors related to the use of short forms or abbreviations by students in their formal academic written compositions is portrayed.

Table 8: A Sample of Short Forms/Abbreviations Errors

Error Classification	Error Identification and %	Error Correction
Short Forms/Abbreviations	1. A <u>women isn't</u> happy ...13,51%	1 A woman is not happy ...
	2. ... and how <u>she's lived</u> 8,10%	2. ... and how she is living
	3. ... because <u>he's</u> always sick 2,70%	3. ... because he is always sick
	4. ... the same words in the <u>2</u> line ... 5,40%	4. ... the same words in the second line ...
	5. ... he used gothic <u>lge</u> ...5,40%	5... he used gothic language ...

Source: current research inquiry

From this table, it appears that the students tend to use short forms and abbreviations in their academic writing. For instance, they use the short form of the verb 'to be' in the following examples: '*and how she's lived*' (8,10%) and '*because he's always sick*' (2,70%) instead of '*and how she is living*' and '*because he is always sick*'. Besides, it is noteworthy to recall that one sentence may encompass different errors from different types. Hence, the present research tries to focus only on the instances that fit the type being discussed. Furthermore, the participants tend to use some abbreviations such as in '*he used gothic lge*' instead of '*he used gothic language*'. A plausible explanation could be attributed to a kind of habit formation during their in-class notes taking.

Unexpectedly, the learners have a tendency to insert even conversational and informal words in their academic writing. This is what we shall discuss in the following section.

2.1.8. Conversational / Informal Words Errors

Referring to the use of conversational or informal words in the students' written composition, some of those features have been noticed. The following table is devoted for these cases.

Table 9: A Sample of Conversational / Informal Words Errors

Error Classification	Error Identification	Error Correction
Conversational / Informal Words	1. ... always home. 13,51%	1. ... always at home.
	2. ... <u>cause</u> he is ... 2,70%	2. ... because he is ...
	3. ... <u>gonna</u> see how ... 13,51%	3. ... we are going to see how ...

Source: current research inquiry

The above table depicts the conversational and informal words found in the second year EFL students in their written productions. For example, they wrote respectively '*always home*' (13,51%), '*cause he is*' (2,70%), and '*gonna see how*' (13,51%) instead of '*always at home*', '*because he is*', and '*we are going to see how*'. A possible interpretation could be that of ignorance of rule restrictions, where the learners do not make a distinction in language use. Furthermore, they seem to ignore the conventions of academic writing.

The findings of the present study show that second year EFL students at Marien Ngouabi University in the Republic of Congo make a lot of morphosyntactic errors in their written compositions. Hence, the identified errors are classified according to the following types: word order, subject - verb agreement, verb structure, noun/ adjective/ adverb structure, word/morpheme addition, word/morpheme omission, short forms/abbreviations, and conversational informal words. Besides, most of the aforesaid errors are ascribed either to incomplete application of rules, overgeneralization of rules, false concepts hypothesized, or to interlanguage interference, mainly, with French which is their strong language or L1. In a word, all the above-mentioned errors indicate that second year EFL Students do not master English morphosyntax. Furthermore, the findings of the present study join the Mentalist Learning Theory. As R. Ellis (1997, p. 32) states: "*the systematic nature of learners' errors demonstrates that they are actively involved in constructing their own 'rules', rules that sometimes bear little resemblance to the patterns of language modeled in the input.*" It appears from this quotation that learners' writings are influenced by some factors such as generalization, language transfer, and so on.

2.2. Discussion

The major language issues in the learners' writing were full of grammar and syntax errors. These errors included incorrect use of prepositions, articles, tenses, singular/plural,

verbs, sentence structure, and the use of informal and spoken expressions (**Cf table n°1**). Vocabulary also poses a problem for learners as they are not aware of collocational and connotational meanings of the words. A. Nayernia (2011) also found similar problems of vocabulary in his study.

Corresponding to the finding of M. Al-Shormani (2012) spelling and punctuations errors were also found in abundance in writing samples as seen in **tables n°6 and n°7 related respectively to words addition and word omission**. However, these errors were not highlighted as a problematic area by any of the present research participants during the corpus analysis. ESL learners tend to write words according to their sound, a process referred to as phonetic perception by M. Basri et al. (2013) resulting in incorrect spelling. Similarly, learners do not possess topic-related knowledge. When students do not possess knowledge, they cannot write well.

The study revealed many diverse reasons such as, society, culture, the teaching-learning context and the learners themselves affecting the development of writing skills in one way or the other. The writing part in an exam paper usually has repeated topics encouraging the learners to memorize the ready-made essays on the recurrent topics. F. Al-Khasawneh (2014) also observed similar effects of examination on ESL learners' writing skills. Likewise, the classroom environment is not conducive to learning; congested rooms situated at noisy locations, large number of learners, and lack of other basic facilities hinder the process of writing skill development. The teachers also fail to impart effective writing skills and strategies to the learners.

On the other hand, as identified by A. Rostami and F. Boroomand (2015), Congolese undergraduate ESL learners are not motivated to improve their writing skills. The concentration and efforts are limited only to attempt the writing section of the exam papers. This trend further reflects in lack of interest in reading and writing practice. There can be various reasons: workload of different subjects, domestic and financial responsibilities, absence of motivational feedback, family background and simply lack of interest. The learners also rely on their first language as a backup strategy when they find difficulty in writing in English (**Cf table n°6 about Morpheme addition**). They tend to translate words and borrow syntax of French which varies from English to a great extent; this eventually results in poor writing as observed by J. Myles (2002). Effective feedback from peers and teachers can also play an important role, however, the concept of feedback is not correctly recognized in the current context. It is considered to be highlighting mistakes in writing without taking into

consideration the level, needs, and proficiency of the learners. Only trained teachers can carry out these responsibilities in an effective and productive way.

These problems and challenges can be resolved by several remedial measures at individual as well as institutional level. The participants suggested teachers should increase learners' exposure to all four skills with specific emphasis on reading and writing. M. A. Al-Khairy (2013)'s findings also emphasize the need of qualified, trained and motivated teachers. Constructive feedback should be provided by the teachers to help learners, criticism on their writings should be minimized, and writing competitions should be organized to motivate learners. We should suggest that these modifications should be implemented at secondary and intermediate levels so that learners' faceless difficulties in writing skills once at university.

2.3. Pedagogical implications

One of the issues that emerged from the study findings is that being able to write effectively in EFL is highly essential for proper foreign language learning and acquisition to occur. Writing is a complicated process which requires time and effort until we master it. The findings have important implications for integrating writing with other skills. Based on the findings of the present study, it is noteworthy to give some pedagogical implications for both teachers and students:

During courses, teachers of grammar should emphasize on the morphosyntactic rules by adopting the pertinent procedure such as the PPP, which stands for Presentation, Practice, and Production (J. Harmer, 2001, p. 80-82). Besides, teachers of English grammar should work in collaboration with teachers of English Language Communication Techniques. That is, their syllabuses should complement each other in theory and practice. Moreover, they have to encourage their students to read English texts from different genres in order to acquire vocabulary and get familiar with English structure and system. Accordingly, students are invited to practice free writing and peer – review and assessment. Besides, they have to be aware of the writing conventions and different genres restrictions in specific types of writing (J. Harmer, 2004, p. 41).

Teachers should help students with several useful writing strategies and techniques which could help them improve their foreign writing skills. Teachers should help students increase their stock of vocabulary by providing them with extensive reading assignments on different topics. They should give immediate oral and written feedback to the students' writing performance. Learners should practice writing more essays on different genres. The number of

hours allocated to the teaching of writing per week should be increased. Learner-centered curricula to cater to the specific learners' needs should be reconsidered.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze, at the level of morphosyntax, the Congolese sophomore EFL students' writing composition errors. It emerged from the results that the analysis of the corpus has showed the following morphosyntactic errors: (1) word order, (2) subject-verb agreement, (3) verbal structure, (4) nominal, adjectival and adverbial structure, (5) addition of words or morphemes, (6) omission of words or morphemes, (7) abbreviations and short forms, and (8) usage of informal words. The results of the study show that errors that participants made were basically grammatical. The participants also had a relatively weak vocabulary and their sentences were sometimes incomprehensible. They committed errors in applying sentence structure rules in the English language. Hence, we can conclude that these participants have problems in applying normal grammatical rules in English especially in academic writing. This study has shed light on the manner in which students internalize the rules of the target language. It further shows that error analysis can help the lecture to identify in a systematic manner the specific and common language problems students have, so that they can focus more attention on these types of errors. Such an insight into language learning problems is useful to lecture because it provides information on common trouble-spots in language learning which can be used in the preparation of effective teaching materials.

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