

Error Analysis:

An Investigation of the Writing of English as a Second Language

Prof. W.M Wijeratne

Senior Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
wmwije@kln.ac.lk

Subajana Jeyaseelan

Vavuniya Campus of the University of Jaffna subi_08@hotmail.com

Errors are significant in the teaching and learning process of English as Second Language learners. Error analysis is a useful practice in second language learning because it reveals the problematic areas to teachers, syllabus designers and text book writers. Therefore, it is mandatory for teachers to summarize these frequently appearing errors, and stress to students of these errors as often as possible so that they can make greater effort to avoid them and improve their writing. The purpose of this study was to investigate the errors committed in using the articles, the past tense and the irregular past tense made by Vavuniya Campus first year English as Second Language learners in their English writings. For this study seventy-two students were taken as a sample and the same number of scripts were collected as a data and analyzed. Based on the Corder's error analysis method the data was analyzed qualitatively. The findings reveal these errors are mainly caused by over-generalization. Intralingual errors occur due to the difficulty and irregular nature of the English language. Further, the failure to learn, understand the concept and use grammatical elements highlights the excessive use of the articles and irregular past tense in their writing. This study reveals that the performance of the Sri Lankan university students in the use of the rules of grammatical morphemes in concrete entities and events are yet to be improved. This poses a serious problem in using the grammatical morphemes with abstract entities and events of management discipline with sophisticated linguistic and theoretical expressions at the tertiary level. To be sustainable, this recommendation has to be implemented at the school level as well.

Key Words: Error, Error Analysis, ESL