



AN ANALYSIS OF TENSE ERRORS IN THE ENGLISH ESSAYS OF GNS 201 STUDENTS OF RAMAT POLYTECHNIC MAIDUGURI

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Abstract: This study is aimed at analysing tense errors in the English Essays of GNS 201 students of Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri. The research is conducted on essays written by fifty (50) students of the above school. In analysing the data, the essays are presented as data and subsequently the tense errors are identified, classified and analyzed using Error Analysis Theory. The analysis of the essay revealed the efficiencies of some students in using English tense. In the use of present tense, for instance, students had more difficulties in the use of present tense compare to the other tense. It had also been observed that the student commits these errors as a result of their mother tongue interference. It was also found out that the errors as a result of poor teaching methods, lack of adequate textbooks and qualified English teachers.

Keywords: Language, Essay, Error, Education, Students.

INTRODUCTION

Error Analysis theory which is concerned with the study, compilation and analysis made by the second language learners will be used to explore writing errors made by GNS 201 students of Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri. Errors are unavoidable in writing and the need to correct an error as it occurs in the essays of the students is vital. Students are expected to write effectively in the English language and their writings should not contain error that will affect the process of learning the second language effectively.

For the purpose of this study, fifty (50) randomly selected GNS 201 students of Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri will be selected. The study will focus on error analysis method and limiting to only written essays of the selected GNS 201 Students

English language is very important to many people who use English as a second language as well as those who use it as their mother tongue. Quirk et al (1972) state that English is the important language today. This statement cannot be disputed because (many people use English language as their second language because, for them English language are relevant to our present century. It is an instrument of world exchange

English is a language of variation shipping, sports, as well as literary and public communication (Quirk et al, 1972)

This study deals with various tense errors observed in essays of selected GNS 201 students of Ramat Polytechnic. Thus, it will be of benefit to the students of GNS 201 in Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri as well as second language learners (L2). This is due to the fact that the study is poised to identifying and analyzing tense errors made by GNS 201 in Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri with the aim of finding solution to the problem.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Learners of English language as second language in schools have been exhibiting deficiencies in speaking or writing good English. This has been observed to have adversely affected sentence formation as well as use of English tenses in essay writing of students taking GNS 201 in Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri. This therefore has prompted the researcher to carry out an analysis on tense error in the written essays of selected students of GNS 201 in Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. identify various tense errors in the essays.
- ii. categorize such tense errors into their various types.
- iii. discuss and analyze the source and cause of tense errors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This is a review on the concepts of tense, type of tense. Concept of errors it types and also the studies on error analysis.

THE CONCEPT OF TENSE

Tense refers to the grammatical expression of the time of the situation describe in the preposition, festive to some other time. This other time may be the moment of speech, e.g the past and future designated designate time before and after the moment of speech, respectively. Tense is expressed by infection, by particles or by auxiliaries in construction with verb (Encyclopaedia of linguistics Bybee, 1992:223f)

2.2 TYPES OF TENSE

1. Present tense: It donate habitual action, custom, practice, repeated action, permanent/enternal, general truth e.t.e **EXAMPLE**

- i. Yasmin drink a lot of water
- ii. He plays the piano well

2. PAST TENSE: Expresses something that happened or took place and was completed in the past. **EXAMPLE**

- i. The committee members arrived thirty minutes ago.
- ii. Amina ate food in the morning.

3. FUTURE TENSE: This indicates an action that will take place in time to come or yet to happen. **EXAMPLE**

- i. Then teacher will come to school
- ii. We shall talk to the man

4. PRESENT PROGRESSIVE TENSE: Is used to show what is happening now or still happening at the time of speaking or writing. **EXAMPLE**

- i. I am writing a project
- ii. The student are reading the novel

5. PAST PROGRESSIVE TENSE: This emphasizes the continuity of event in the past. **EXAMPLE**

- i. We were watching movie, when the light went off.
- ii. They were playing fervently for God's intervention.

6. PRESENT PERFECT TENSE: This tense is used to show an action that started in the past and is still continuing. **EXAMPLE**

- i. Farmers have been planting maize.
- ii. She has been writing JAMB.

8. PAST PERFECT TENSE: This indicates an action that was completed before another in the past. **EXAMPLE**

- i. They had finished the work before we arrived.
- ii. The armed robbers had left before the police showed.

9. FUTURE PERFECT TENSE: It indicates an action that should be completed before a given time in the future. **EXAMPLE**

- i. You would have eaten by then.
- ii. By tomorrow Haruna would have finished his assignment.

CONCEPT OF ERROR ANALYSIS

Order (1978), explains error analysis as one of the measurement topics in the field of second language acquisition research. Errors are an integral part of language learning. The learner of English as a second language is unaware of the existence of the particular system or rules in the English language. Learner errors have long been of interest for

second and foreign language researches. The basic task of error analysis is to describe how learning occurs by examining the learners output and this include his/her correct and incorrect utterance or essay writing. Order maintain that interview language can be seen as a restructuring or recreating continuum and, therefore evaluates their role in second language acquisition.

2.4 TYPES OF ERROR

1. MISTAKE

Mistake are errors that arise from inattention, in experience, carelessness and poor judgment or confusion in the mind of the observer. If mistake is undetected, it produces a serious effect on the final results. Hence every value to be recorded in the field must be checked by some independent field observation.

2. SYSTEMIC ERROR

A synthetic error is an error that under the conditions will always be of the same size and sign. A systemic error always follows some definitely definite mathematical or physical law, and a correction can determined an applied. Such errors are of constant character and are regarded as positive or negative according as they make the result to great or too small their effect is therefore cumulative.

If undetected, systemic errors are very serious therefore.

- i. All the surveying equipments must be designed and used so that whenever possible sytemics errors will automatically eliminated and
- ii. All systematic errors that cannot be surely eliminated by this means must be evaluated and their relationship to the conditions that cause them must be determined.

3. ACCIDENTAL ERROR

Accidental errors are those which remain after mistakes and systematic errors have been eliminated and are caused by a combination of reasons beyond the ability of the observer to control. They tend some times in the other i.e are equally likely to make the apparent result too large or too small.

An accidental error of single determination is the difference between.

- i. The true value of the equality.
- ii. A determination that is free from mistake represents limit of precision in the determination of a value.

STUDIES ON ERROR ANALYSIS

Many studies have been conducted on Error Analysis. For instance, Bukar (2016) carried out a study on the tense errors in the English essays of ss 11 student of Albdulkadir Benisheck Staff Model School, Kashim Ibrahim College Of Education, Maiduguri the research was conducted on essay written by thirty (30) student of the above school, it found out that the errors were most probably as a result of poor knowledge of English and laziness of students to study. To minimize or to eradicate these problems it was

suggested, that corporate bodies of the school should organize extra lessons and also the students as in the lower classes should be exposed to the various situation in which tenses should be used. The study this reveal that majority of the students have not mastered use of tenses in their writing.

A similar study to the present study is Muhammad (2008). This research put more effort toward the errors committed by ss1 and ss 11 students of MINPASS and BMDSS Maiduguri Borno State. Tense errors are frequent - particularly in terms of present pass forms and concord. The errors can be said to be due to poor teaching method e.t.c. It is therefore recommended that qualified teachers should be employed to teach English language, guide composition and reading should be encouraged in the secondary schools.

Miriam (2007) is a study that focuses on the finding of tense errors among ss 11 students of Command Secondary School Jos. It is found that possible causes of the error include interference, overgeneralization and non usage of the target language. From the result of the study, it recommended that students should be exposed to the English language through literature and they should be well drilled in English verb tenses to enable them to use them effectively.

Ba'aba (2012), in his study, points out the errors committed by the ss1 student of Government Day Secondary School Potiskum Yobe State in the use of tense in the essays is as result of poor teaching methods, lack of adequate text book and qualified English teachers. To eradicate these problems, it is suggested that government and school authority should provide adequate textbooks and also employee qualified English teachers.

METHODOLOGY

The primary data for this study are selected essays written by fifty (50) GNS 201 students of Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri. Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri named after former Nigerian Head of State, Murtala Ramat Muhammad, was established as a technical college in 1973 and letter upgraded to a polytechnic in 1979. The School currently has thirty (30) departments under five (5) schools.

SAMPLE SELECTION

Fifty (50) students are selected for the study, and in selecting the students, certain variable or factors are considered. 1: these students must have acquired languages such as Kanuri, Babur as their first language (L1). 2 they all can speak English as their second language (L2)

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The method used for data collection in this research is testing method as this is to obtain first hand sample of writing from their level performance. Essays topics are given to the students to choose which topic they want. The set of students are given essay topics, followed by composition topics to write on. They are required to fill in the questionnaire on the test paper first. The questionnaire and the composition topics are

typed together on each question paper. Each student is allowed to write in the class and scripts are collected at the end of the given period (60 minutes).

From the population of one hundred (100) students fifty (50) of them were randomly selected to write the essays. This will be marked to determine the frequency of occurrence of the wrong use of tenses made by them.

METHOD OF DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In analysis the data, the essays are presented as data. Secondly, the essays are classified analyzed using tables. The data is subsequently analysed to enable the researcher enumerate the possible cause of the errors in the essays.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data is presented and analysed here. The errors made by GNS 201 students of Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri are analysed. The percentage of this data is based on errors identified. And the data was collected through a written test by GNS 201 students’ of Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri which lasted for 45 minutes. The data is presented in statistics tables showing frequency of tense errors, numbers of the script assessed and presented of occurrence of each tenses and the necessary substitution of the wrong usage are provided. Data on the wrong use of simple present tense are presented in the statistical table below.

Table 1: ERRORS INVOLVING THE USE OF THE PRESENT TENSE.

TENSE	FREQUENCY OF ERRORS	PERCENTAGE OF ERRORS
Present tense	162	17.0%
Present progressive tense	231	24.3%
Present perfect tense	201	21.12%
Present perfect progressive tense	354	37.3
Total	948	100%

From the above table, the analysis of this data reveals that out of the scripts of forty (40) students examined for wrong use of the present tense, two hundred and thirty- one (231) errors of the present progressive tense. The present perfect progressive tense was difficult for the students to use in their written

essays. By looking at the table it can be observed that all students have a problem in the application of this tense.

Some examples of tense are found from present perfect progressive tense are found from the scripts e.g. I was visiting my brother..... Was "visiting" which is the perfect progressive tense is wrong in the above sentence. It supposed to be I "visit" my brother.....

Improper use of present tense where the present progressive is required e.g

I am come.....

Hauwa is written the letter

The verb written in the sentence is in the past participle tense which is supposed to be in present progressive where the "ing" from the verb "written" should be used to indicate progressive tense.

The correct sentence is

Hauwa is writing a letter

Some examples of errors on the use present tense are;

She lefted our house not long ago

He has wash the car

Instead of the main verb to be in the simple past, it should be in the perfective form "left"

She left the house not long ago

so also the verb "wash" in it's simple present is not the right form to be used because of the perfective native of the sentence. The correct form is the "ed" form of the verb which should be washed so that the sentence should be read.

He has washed the car

The wrong use of verb in the present simple for instead of the present perfect progressive.

I have been attending lesson

My friend has been attended to a birthday party.

The sentence arises as a result of the wrong use of the verb "attend"

The sentence is in the progressive aspect because of the use of "has been". Therefore, the verb which follows must be in progressive aspect/from "ing" instead of "en" so that the sentence should be read:

I have been attending lesson

The same thing with the sentence above. Data on the wrong used of the past tense is also presented in the statistical table below.

Table 2: ERRORS INVOLVING THE USE OF PAST TENSE

TENSE	FREQUENCY OF ERRORS	PERSENTAGE OF OCCURRENCE
Past tense	364	40.7
Past perfect tense	274	30.6
Past progressive tense	255	28.8
Total	893	100

Based on the table above, three hundred and sixty four (364) instance of errors of the simple past tense in the scripts are found, while there are two hundred and seventy four (274) instances, errors of the past tense are two hundred and fifty-five (255).

Below are some extracts from the students' wrong use of present where the past tense is required.

I spend my holiday

We came to our house

We went to the zoo

We went to our village

Examples of the wrong use of the past progressive in the research are presented below;

I had been attend lesson

I has been spending my birthday at home

In sentense two the problem arises from the wrong use of "has with first person pronoun " I" the right form of the sentence should be "had" as

I have been spending my birthday at home

I have been attending class

Data on wrong use of the future tense is also presented in the statistical table below;

Table 3: ERRORS INVOLVING THE USE OF THE FUTURE TENSE

TENSE	FREQUENCY OF ERRORS	PERCENTAGE OF OCCURRENCE
Future tense	305	34.0
Future progressive tense	215	24.0
Future perfect tense	196	22.0
Future perfect progressive tense	178	20.0
Tota	898	100

From the table above, it is clearly shown that there are three hundred and five (305) errors of simple future tense in this analysis and there are two hundred and fifteen (215) discovered errors lastly the used of future perfect progressive tense shows that there are one hundred and seventy eight (178) errors committed by students in it's usage.

Below as some examples of the wrong use of simple future tense.

I will be there

We shall talk to the man

From the sentence above the appropriate lexical verb marker for future aspect is "be" and "talk" so the correct sentence is;

I will be there

We shall talk to the man

The wrong use of the future progressive tense is presented below

I will come tomorrow

I shall be attend

I will soon be come back

The sentence above has to carry out the "ing" inflection to form the progressive form so the appropriate sentence is.

I shall be attending

I shal be coming back

I will soon be coming back

The data is discussed using table to show the number and percentage of occurrence of each of the sentence to show the number and percentage of occurrence of each of the tense errors and analysis carried out. Before this is done, a statistical table showing the number and percentage of first language spoken by the fifty (50) students who wrote the essay test is presented and analysis carried out below.

The students who speak karai-karai as the first language out of fifty (50) students, twenty (20) had karai-karai as their first language while eleven (11) students acquired Bolewa as their first language, five (5) students speak Bade as their first language and lastly four (4) student also acquired Gamawa as their first language. This summary reveals (4) language groups are presented in the study from the data collected, it clearly shows that most of the students have already acquired their first language. This research discover that the students speak their first language in their home and also out of the class room but they often speak English in the class which is their second language. The students also speak other language a part from their language and English. The table below show the analysis of the errors in the three tenses studied is given in the table below.

Table 4

TENSE	FREQUENCY OF ERRORS	PRESENTAGE OF OCCURRENCE
Present tense	948	34.6
Past tense	893	32.6
Future tense	898	32.7
Total	2739	100

The result presented above shows that the total of nine hundred and forty eight (948) errors have been made by the fifty (50) students in the present tense, following through analysis of the data the researcher discovered that about eight hundred and ninety three (893) errors where been made by the students in the aspect of past tense and lastly the total of eight hundred and ninety eight (898) errors was observed in the future tense by the students. This shown that the student tried their best well because forty (40) scripts are assessed and the number of tense errors identify are minimal with two thousand seven hundred and thirty nine (2739).

CONCLUSION

Based on this research, it is clearly noticed the inability of students to correctly errors in their essays which lead to student inability to intelligible essays. Most of the students were not sure on where to place or not to place given tense. The student find it difficult to express themselves using the present, past and future tense rather they put the tense were it is not supposed to be also they limited themselves on certain tense and left others out due to ignorance of certain tense which is understood by the students to some extent but used wrongly in expressed as the present tense as such showed their inadequacy in the use of tenses in English. The study reveals that the students have not mastered the use of tenses in writing.

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