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AN ANALYSIS OF ERRORS IN PRESENT INDEFINITE TENSE SENTENCES: A CASE OF 6TH GRADE ESL LEARNERS OF SIALKOT, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Reading the piece of writings in the target language is also suggested to enhance creative ability, while the basic tenets of English Grammar can also be improved through a comparative study of the grammatical concepts. The study aims to identify, discuss, explain, and categorize the grammatical errors, especially errors in present indefinite tense sentences committed by the ESL learners of 6th grade at Cantt Public High School, Sialkot, Pakistan, due to overgeneralization in written exercises. The study gathered data through a worksheet task comprising 10 items of translation sentences from Urdu to English and ten items of English fill-in-the-blanks comprised of grammatical use of present simple tense and agreement morpheme. Corder's model (1967) of error analysis has opted to analyze the errors in the present indefinite tense. This study pays great attention to overgeneralization in Present Indefinite tense sentences of ESL learners of 6th grade. The learners overgeneralize in the use of rules used for verb forms and auxiliary verbs. The present study also found that a lack of knowledge of the rules of the target language, in addition, to overgeneralization, is the cause of such errors, for instance, the inappropriate use of prepositions. The findings suggest that teachers of English should focus their attention on the troublesome aspect of the present simple tense while also encouraging students to apply the drill practice to the study of the present indefinite tense. This study has a few limitations as it was not feasible for researchers to analyze all kinds of tenses and find all types of errors according to the opted model due to time restraints.

Keywords: Error analysis; ESL; Present indefinite tense; Overgeneralization.

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INTRODUCTION

According to two recent studies (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013; Rattanadilok Na Phuket & Othman, 2015), written English is the most difficult of the four skills related with the English language. Even a person who is fluent in the language cannot always produce quality writing (van Gelderen et al., 2011). As a consequence of this, it is a very challenging job for ESL learners, and it is inevitable to detect mistakes produced by this set of learners, given the limited opportunities they have to write in English (Sermsook et al., 2017). Learning a second language, one of the most important skills, requires an accurate understanding of the various tenses and the rules that govern them. Knowledge of grammar, particularly tense, is regarded as the most important and challenging component of ESL (English as a Second Language) for those who are not native speakers (Marzulina et al., 2019). Those who aspire to have a strong command over a second language are supposed to find it enjoyable since it is considered to be both an art and a method. Translations, completion of several grammar exercises, and the act of communicating with one another are required to accomplish this instruction. It is generally agreed that the process of translation is an intellectual endeavour because it requires the transformation of meanings from one language (the Source

language) into another language (the Target Language) while adhering to certain lexical, grammatical, contextual, cultural, and syntactical constraints. The translator's fluency in both the language they are translating from (Source Language) and the language they are translating into is the single most significant qualification for comprehending and learning a foreign language (TL). Grammar is believed to be of the utmost relevance when it comes to knowing the rules and having correct identification of tenses to reduce the number of mistakes. Nonetheless, to acquire accuracy in grammar, it is required to learn grammatical principles such as identification and tense agreement morphology. This is even though achieving precision in grammar is not a simple task. The mistakes that students of a second language make highlight the aspects of the language that they have not yet mastered. So, the examination of such mistakes is the most effective method there is for determining a learner's current level of skill in the target language at a given point in time. In addition to this, it assists the researchers in identifying issues that second language learners encounter as well as factors that impede the learning phenomenon. Error analysis is an essential part of the process of improving language acquisition. In addition, the investigation of these mistakes, which are characterized as being of a systematic character, is beneficial for the classroom teaching methods of second language instructors, students, researchers, and others (Corder, 1967). Overgeneralization, failure to identify a specific tense, interference from the student's original language, and incompleteness (incomplete application or/and ignorance of grammatical rules and limits) are the four most prevalent causes of grammatical mistakes made by pupils. This kind of analysis is very helpful for educators because it enables them to provide students with the kind of feedback that is suitable for them, and it also enables them to improve their teaching strategies and create more efficient lesson plans.

Significance of the Study and Research Questions

It is hypothesized that the learning of English tense, particularly the Present Indefinite tense agreement morphology, is challenging for students in middle school; thus, the objective of this research is to investigate and investigate the acquisition of English tenses. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the mistakes that L2 students of the sixth grade make while using the simple present tense, with a particular focus on errors that are caused by overgeneralization, and to investigate these errors via written output assignments. If students in a second or foreign language are provided with the appropriate feedback from their instructors, the examination of Errors or mistakes that are made by the learners is highly valuable in enhancing the learners' language abilities (Corder, 1967). Learners of a language benefit much from reflecting on their errors since doing so enables them to accomplish their linguistic and educational goals more. The purpose of this research is to identify, analyze, explain, and categorize the grammatical mistakes that are made by students in grade 6 while using the Present Indefinite tense. Students will benefit in the long run by having fewer mistakes and improved language abilities, thanks to this. The goal of the research will be accomplished by the provision of responses to the following questions.

1. What are the common errors committed by grade 6 students in the Present Indefinite tense?
2. What are the problems faced by second language learners in acquiring Present tense agreement morphology?
3. How are these errors categorized by the English language teacher?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Error Analysis, sometimes known as EA, has been the focus of several researchers and practitioners in the field of second language acquisition for quite some time. Several authors have provided definitions of Error Analysis (EA), some of which are listed below. According to Dulay et al. (1982), error analysis is a technique that examines the mistakes that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) students make. It not only aids in exposing the strategies that students use to learn a language but also aids teachers and others in improving their own understanding of the challenges that students face. Error Analysis (EA) is the study of student mistakes, and it comprises comparing what students know with

what they still need to learn (James, 2013). It also overcomes the difficulty of adequately explaining mistakes in order to cut down on the overall amount of mistakes.

Error Detection and Correction

Corder (1967) suggests five steps to treat errors which are given below: The first step according to the coder's model of error analysis is the collection of sample from the learners' language. In other words, the piece of work which is created by the SL learner is the specimen which can be analyzed. The samples can be of many types: massive, specific and incidental. Massive sample is the collection from large number of learners, specific is the sample collected from limited number of people and the incidental is a specimen from a single learner. The next step of the thread is the identification of the produced errors. The errors are identified in the produced material. The incorrect sentence structure, wrong tense, wrong verb forms, subject-verb agreement and wrong punctuation is usually the part of identification. Moreover, the error can be overt which is easy to observe and covert which is hidden and unidentifiable unless any reference is given earlier. The third step deals with description of errors. Errors can be global as well as local. The global errors are dangerous in comparison with the local since they are illogical in conveying the thought. Local errors are mild in nature and express the idea with minute changes so in some cases these are acceptable.

Fourthly, the explanation is the key step to explain the factors behind the errors. In more clear words, it tells the source of the error that why did it happen. There can be two possibilities in general, one is the social context and the other is psycholinguistic source. The final step is to evaluate. The correction of errors is directly or indirectly related to the learning process. Seeing the bright side, it is necessary to correct global errors since it becomes the basics of learning second language. Opposing to the previous thought, it disrupts the process of learning and discourages SL learners to grow in the field of communication.

Mungungu (2010) quotes Corder (1967) as saying that the goals of error analysis (EA) are twofold. The first goal is more abstract, since it concerns the mechanics and substance of language learning. The second is more realistically practical and focuses on strategies for accelerating pupils' language learning via the application of prior knowledge. Based on an exhaustive examination of the existing literature on the topic, Hinnon (2015) finds that Error Analysis (EA) is useful. She describes how teachers may benefit from using Error Analysis (EA) in creating effective and targeted lessons for their pupils. Kaweera (2013) claims that the two most common sources of inaccuracy are (1) interlingual interference and (2) intralingual interference. One issue is that students' native tongues might interfere with their second language learning. Insufficient comprehension of the target language is the source of the second category of mistakes made by language students. Scholars like Runkati (2013) and Rattanadilok Na Phuket & Othman (2015) have since theorized that two forms of interference—interlingual and intralingual—may contribute to mistakes.

Based on her research, Penny (2001) concluded that mistakes caused by either interlingual transfer or intralingual transfer are the most common types. Heydari and Bagheri (2012) state that interlingual interference and intralingual interference are the two primary causes of errors made by students studying English as a second language. Heydari and Bagheri (2012) argue for a similar explanation, citing interaction between languages and inside individual languages as the two main culprits. After reviewing a mountain of data on student mistakes in Thailand, Hinnon (2015) concluded that three main factors contribute to the frequent blunders made by Thai students. Negative mother-to-foreign-language transfer, inadequate understanding of the target language, and discrepancies between target-language terminology and sentence patterns.

Students might benefit from their own writing blunders by reflecting on them and learning from them. Educators and scholars have taken notice of Error Analysis (EA), a method that includes rigorously examining student mistakes. Error Analysis, sometimes abbreviated as "EA," is a strategy for teaching grammar and improving writing abilities for ESL students. For instance, Zheng and Park (2013) analyzed

the problems found in the English essays written by Chinese and Korean students. According to the findings, the types of errors made by these two groups of writers were quite different. Problems with punctuation, articles, and sentence structure plagued them. Zheng and Park (2013) state that the most influential factor in the errors was the unfavorable transfer of the participants' native languages. This occurred because it was the most instinctive thing to do under the given circumstances. Researchers Liu (2013) found that ESL students often erred in their sentence construction when they were learning the language. They were all learning Chinese at school. The individual's negligence and the potential adverse effect of their mother tongue, she concluded, were the key reasons of the problem.

Khansir's (2013) study involves an examination of typical blunders made by ESL students. He studied and contrasted the many errors often made by ESL and EFL students in their written assignments. He concluded that the number of mistakes made by the two groups of authors was not significantly different. It's safe to assume that ESL/EFL students had just as much trouble putting their thoughts on paper as native English speakers. Then, using Error Analysis as a therapy, Zafar (2016) conducted an empirical study. The most common mistakes made by her pupils were verb tenses, which prompted her first research. Her pupils' work clearly improved after they took a two-month writing course that focused on using the correct verb tenses. Bennui (2008) performed a research to investigate linguistic slipups brought on by participants' first attempts to communicate in their native Thai. The findings showed that respondents' writing suffered on all fronts—lexical, syntactic, and discursive—as a consequence of their exposure to Thai. He reasoned that it was important for Thai pupils to learn about the differences between Thai and English. Similarly, Jenwitheesuk (2009) found errors in the English phrases written by Thai university freshmen. Prepositional phrases, determining words, subject-verb disagreement, and tenses were among the faults that plagued the writing. Watcharapunyawong and Usaha (2013) looked at errors caused on by the speaker's native language interfering. One major finding from their investigation was that students' writing reflected the influence of their native language.

Bumroongthai's (2011) investigation of errors in English paragraph writing piqued his interest. She arrived to this conclusion after seeing several errors in English syntax and paragraph construction on the part of her Thai pupils. The facts warranted this conclusion. In his study, Suraprajit (2006) looked at the abstracts written by Thai graduate students and identified common errors committed by those individuals. The main reasons for the erroneous findings, according to her research, were the differences between Thai and English and the difficulty of expressing oneself in English. Rattanadilok Na Phuket and Othman (2015) analyzed the narrative essays submitted by Thai undergraduates and discovered several types of errors. Inaccuracies included those involving tenses, prepositions, word choice, and commas. Based on their results, the researchers concluded that a failure to adequately transmit the learners' native language was the primary cause of the errors made by the students.

Therefore, this study set out to identify common errors made by sixth-grade ESL students in Pakistan when writing in the present indefinite tense. Additionally, it attempted to track down where the false information originated. The goal of this research is to learn more about the types of errors found in sentences written in the present indefinite tense, in addition to reviewing past studies on errors. In a perfect world, this would make students more self-aware of their mistakes and prevent them from repeating them.

METHODOLOGY

As the focus of the study was to analyze errors in present indefinite tense sentences committed by 6th-grade ESL learners of Pakistan, the researchers have used the Model of Error Analysis developed by Corder (1967) as the theoretical framework of the study. The participants of the study were 30 ESL learners in 6th grade at Cantt Public High School, Sialkot, Pakistan. A worksheet task was constructed comprised of 10 items of translation sentences from Urdu to English and 10 items of English fill-in-the-blanks comprised of grammatical use of present simple tense and agreement morpheme. The morpheme being examined is the

3sg -s. After the test, Corder's (1967) Model of Error Analysis was used for the identification, categorization assessment, and evaluation of the errors committed by ESL learners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that the highest mean stands for PRE1 and 5 among seven statements. It means that ESL learners face the highest difficulty in the usage of 's/es' with third-person singular pronouns in the present indefinite tense. For PRE 3, it is 0.4, which says 2 learners often commit errors in the usage of appropriate main verbs. The mean value of PRE 4 shows that the error of using past verbs is also committed by students. In PRE 6, the mean value of using the past verb in negative and interrogative is shown, which is low. However, the lowest mean value of PRE7 is 0.1, which shows that very few students from the given population committed the error of using 'ing' while dealing with the present indefinite tense.

Table 1. Recognized Probable Repeated Errors (PRE) Committed by Students.

PRE #	ESL learners of Grade 6	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
RRE 1	ESL learners of grade 6 often forget to use 's' with third person singular in present indefinite tense.	30	3	18	0.7
RRE 2	ESL learners of grade 6 often use 's' with third person plural in present indefinite tense.	30	5	15	0.6
RRE 3	ESL learners of grade 6 often get confusion in use of appropriate main verb.	30	3	10	0.4
RRE 4	ESL learners of grade 6 often used past verbs in present indefinite tense.	30	2	6	0.2
RRE 5	ESL learners often have confusion in 'do/does' usage in present indefinite tense.	30	5	17	0.7
RRE 6	ESL learners of grade 6 often use 'did' in negative and interrogative sentences of present indefinite tense.	30	1	4	0.2
RRE 7	ESL learners often use 'ing' with the main verbs in present indefinite tense.	30	1	3	0.1

The results in Table 2 show that the highest mean value is 0.8, which is for stand RPRE2 which shows that a great number of students feel difficulty in using s/es in the present indefinite tense. The mean value of stand RPRE3 is 0.7; I often feel difficulty in the appropriate usage of 'do/does' is very common among students of grade 6. Likewise, the mean of RPRE4, which is 0.4, shows the utilization of s/es with plural nouns due to overgeneralization.

Table 2. Recognized Possible Cause of Repeated Errors (PCRE).

PRE #	ESL learners of Grade 6	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
RPRE1	I feel difficulty in identifying present indefinite tense in Urdu.	30	5	12	0.6
RPRE2	I often forget the usage of 's/es' with present verbs.	30	6	18	0.8
RPRE3	I often feel difficulty in appropriate usage of 'do/does'.	30	5	17	0.7
RPRE4	I commit errors in the utilization of 's/es' with plural nouns due to overgeneralization.	30	5	15	0.6

The results of the study show that most participants found the dominant errors of auxiliary verbs 'do and does,' which L2 learners misapply in sentence construction in the present indefinite sentence structure. These studies collaborated with the previous studies analyzed and found that the pupils obligate mistakes

in grammatical construction, especially in the use of tense and subject-verb accordance. The learners are reluctant to utilize the auxiliary in spoken or written. The data collected and analysis made show that a great frequency of errors performed by the ESL learners of 6th grade at Cantt Public High School, Sialkot Cantt, are of the nature of inappropriate use of 's or es' with the third person pronouns and use them with third person plurals due to overgeneralization. Studies show that one of the reasons for the errors performed by students of L2 learners is the lack of recognition of the tense in the native language. Thus, the highest frequency of errors committed in the present indefinite tense is followed by other errors, including prepositions, articles, capitalization, and use of past verbs, etc. Among all the miscellaneous errors, the most dominant one is that of lack or inappropriate use of prepositions. While translating the sentence: *"Hum bus par Lahore jatay hain."* instead of using 'by bus', students have used the preposition 'on bus'. *"Tum Waqt par school nahi jatay ho."*, instead of using 'on time', students have utilized the preposition 'at time' in this sentence. Due to over-reliance on the translation method, L2 learners fail to generate the correct preposition in sentences. Thus the dependence on L1 misleads them to the appropriate use the prepositions.

The study identified numerous potential reasons for the mistakes made by ESL learners in the sixth grade at Cantt. Public High School in Sialkot Cantt. It is least responsible when dealing with the present indefinite tense, as seen by the average score of 0.6 for pupils' inability to identify the tense. The most common mistake made by L2 learners is their reluctance to memorize the proper way to utilize the pronouns "s" or "es" in the present indefinite tense. Additionally, the primary obstacle to using the target language correctly is learner overgeneralization. Jobeen et al. (2015) identified several factors that contribute to these errors, including language transfer, overgeneralization, simplification, fossilization, and ignorance of the proper morphology for a certain tense. The overgeneralization of norms for verb forms and auxiliary verbs that occurs in the sixth-grade written compositions of ESL students at Cantt Public High School in Sialkot Cantt is a major focus of this study. The current study also discovered that overgeneralization and a lack of awareness of the target language's rules are the main contributors to these errors, for instance, using prepositions incorrectly.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, the researchers can claim that the sixth-grade ESL students at Cantt Public High School continue to struggle effectively in acquiring the present simple tense. They struggle greatly to put what they have learned into practice. They made mistakes with the present simple tense, particularly when it was written. The results of this study could provide language teachers who teach the present simple tense in English grammar courses at every level with useful perception, making them warier of this tense in general and of its use in writing in particular. Therefore, some of the exercises for assisting students and L2 learners to lessen and fix those errors can be suggested through the study-based findings. However, it might be claimed that these results may not be definitive. Because non-native English speakers have a low likelihood of using English as their primary language, it is difficult to say that the usage of the present simple tense in writing is their biggest issue. We anticipate that the findings of this study will be beneficial for both English teachers and Pakistani students. The easy present tense Errors made by Pakistani English language learners are highlighted in this study, providing English teachers with new educational material that will help them better comprehend and learn from the students' most challenging blunders. The results may encourage further research from other experimentalists. It might inspire future researchers to investigate the same topics. The results would also be useful for other language learners who are considering taking up English since they would provide light on the challenges inherent in learning the tenses of that language.

English teachers would focus on the challenging subject of teaching the present simple tense. They need to discuss the rules of grammar or the structures of grammar in front of the class so that the students may see how English particulars are formed. First, it is important for instructors to clarify for their students that a

sentence may include a subject in either of the first, second, or third persons, that the 3sg-s ending can only be used with third-person singular subjects, and that both regular and irregular verb tenses are permissible. Students should be encouraged by their instructors to construct a list of verbs that accept the suffix -s or -es, in addition to other verb forms that involve phonological modifications, such as try (i.e., tries), etc. The students should have been given additional opportunities to practice writing after learning the present simple tense, time adverbs, and difficult terms. Another aspect that teachers should focus on is "subject and verb agreement." Education should also focus on subjects more than just those with pronouns, such as those with noun phrases, noun clauses, and nouns with adjective clauses. Above all, instructors and language teachers should emphasize teaching grammar through context. This study also has a few limitations as it was not feasible for researchers to analyze all kinds of tenses and find all types of errors according to the opted model due to time restraints.

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