A STUDY OF VERB ERRORS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH BY CHINESE ESL STUDENTS

KONG YUAN WEN

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR

2013

A STUDY OF VERB ERRORS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH BY CHINESE ESL STUDENTS

KONG YUAN WEN

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS, UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF LINGUISTICS

2013

UNIVERSITI MALAYA

ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

Name of Candidate: **Kong Yuan Wen**   (I.C/Passport No: **850528-08-6772**)

Registration/Matric No: **TGC 080017**

Name of Degree: **Master of Linguistics**

Title of Project Paper/Research Report/Dissertation/Thesis ("this Work"):

A Study of Verb Errors in Written English by Chinese ESL Students

Field of Study: **Syntax**

I do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

(1) I am the sole author/writer of this Work:
(2) This Work is original;
(3) Any use of any work in which copyright exists was done by way of fair dealing and for permitted purposes and any excerpt or extract from, or reference to or reproduction of any copyright work has been disclosed expressly and sufficiently and the title of the Work and its authorship have been acknowledged in this Work;
(4) I do not have any actual knowledge nor do I ought reasonably to know that the making of this work constitutes an infringement of any copyright work:
(5) I hereby assign all and every rights in the copyright to this Work to the University of Malaya ("UM"), who henceforth shall be owner of the copyright in this Work and that any reproduction or use in any form or by any means whatsoever is prohibited without the written consent of UM having been first had and obtained;
(6) I am fully aware that if in the course of making this Work I have infringed any copyright whether intentionally or otherwise, I may be subject to legal action or any other action as may be determined by UM.

Candidate's Signature   Date:

Subscribed and solemnly declared before,

Witness's Signature   Date:
Name: **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Toshiko Yamaguchi**
Designation: **Supervisor**

ABSTRACT

The research study aims to examine verb errors committed by Chinese ESL students in their written English based on Corder's (1981) Taxonomy of errors. Errors are viewed as important elements which are able to represent a learner's stages in language learning and reflect their difficulties in the learning process. Studies of error analysis have provided useful guidelines and measurements in improving both teaching methods and materials needed in the learning process. The objectives of this study are to identify and classify verb errors, and to determine the probable causes of such errors. Analysis of the data revealed that the verb errors are due to selection errors, addition errors and omission errors. In addition, the study also highlights verb errors that affected the syntactic function of the sentences. The study reveals that the students' language background, language exposure and learning environment affect how they learn the English language. The analysis established that Chinese ESL students are confused by the many verb forms of English and have yet to master the language. This study will serve as a work of reference in the pedagogical field to highlight the problems faced by Chinese ESL learners in learning English verbs, and to suggest remedial works to improve the teaching and learning process.

ABSTRAK

Kajian penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji kesalahan kata kerja yang diperolehi daripada tulisan bahasa Inggeris hasil kerja murid-murid Cina ESL. Kesalahan yang diperoleh dianalisis berdasarkan Taksonomi Kesalahan Corder (1981). Kesalahan dilihat sebagai elemen penting yang mampu untuk mewakili peringkat seorang murid dalam pembelajaran bahasa dan mencerminkan kesukaran mereka dalam proses pembelajaran. Kajian analisis kesalahan telah menyediakan garis panduan dalam meningkatkan kaedah pengajaran dan bahan bantu mengajar yang diperlukan dalam proses pembelajaran. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti jenis kesalahan kata kerja yang dibuat oleh murid Cina, mengklasifikasikan kesalahan kata kerja, dan mengkaji punca berlakunya kesalahan itu. Analisis data menunjukkan bahawa kesalahan-kesalahan kata kerja adalah disebabkan oleh kesalahan pemilihan, kesalahan tambahan dan kesalahan peninggalan. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan kesalahan kata kerja yang menjejaskan fungsi sintaktik ayat. Di samping itu, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa latar belakang murid, pendedahan bahasa dan persekitaran pembelajaran mempengaruhi keberkesanan pembelajaran murid. Analisis ini menunjukkan bahawa murid ESL Cina keliru dengan jenis kata kerja bahasa Inggeris yang kompleks. Oleh itu, mereka masih belum dapat menguasai bahasa Inggeris. Adalah diharapkan kajian ini dapat membantu dalam bidang pedagogi untuk menangani masalah yang dihadapi oleh pelajar Cina ESL dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris. Selain itu, kerja-kerja pemulihan boleh dicadangkan untuk meningkatkan proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the people who had helped me in completing this research paper. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Associate Prof. Dr. Toshiko Yamaguchi, for her precious guidance, patience and advice throughout the process of this paper. The completion of this paper would not be possible without her effort and great supervision. I am thankful to my mother and sisters who gave me moral support and advice during my hard times. I would also like to express my gratitude to my friend, Soo Pui Ling, who generously shared her ideas and helped me whenever I faced difficulties in doing the research paper. Last but not least, I would like to thank god for giving me strength and determination to handle and complete this task.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

L2   Second language

L1   First language

ESL   English as a second language

EFL   English as a foreign language

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Language Policy in Malaysia

Since Malaysia achieved independence in 1957, the educational system has experienced considerable changes and changes in the status of the English language have indirectly affected the English proficiency level of its people. After 1957, English was an established language of administration and education, particularly in urban settings.

However, there was a change in the status of English after some time. In 1967, the government declared the Malay language the country's only national language and English became an added official language. The racial disturbances that occurred in Kuala Lumpur in 1969 caused an extreme change in the education system. In July 1969, the Education Minister at that time announced that all English-medium schools were to be withdrawn gradually in Malaysia from the beginning of January 1970. All former English-medium ('national-type') schools would become Malay medium ('national') schools by 1985 (Solomon, 1988, p. 46).

Before 1976, all English medium schools were fully changed into schools that were required to operate using the Malay language. However, the role of English remains as an important second language taught in schools.

1.2   The Role of English in Malaysia

It is evident that the role of English is becoming more important, in line with globalization and its international status. In 2002, English once again became the medium for education due to the demand of the people. A survey conducted by the New Straits Times Press in May 2002 shows that the majority of people wanted English to be

reintroduced as the medium of education. Many were concerned about the falling standard of English among Malaysians.

The role of English remains important today and English is taught as an essential L2 in the country. The learning of English is compulsory, beginning at Standard One at the age of seven for all Malaysians. English is widely used in both spoken and written forms and has become an important communication tool in a multiracial society. Because of its rising importance, more emphasis and effort are put in the teaching of the language, especially writing. The ability to write has become essential in communication, employment and production in the contemporary world. Society requires individuals with a good command of English in the fields of business, media, science and technology, education and so on.

1.3   The Importance of Verb Forms in Sentence Formation

A verb is a part of speech that describes an action, serving as a predicator in a sentence. Sentences are structured around verbs, so verbs are central to the construction of sentences. It is important that words are combined in their correct syntactic categories to form a correct sentence. In English, a basic sentence typically has an 'SVO' (subject-verb-object) structure. Learners must be able to put the verb phrase in the correct order to create sensible, correct sentences. Besides determining verb form errors, this study also looked into verb errors that affect the syntactic function of sentences. This study will draw attention to the importance of verb forms as an essential part of sentence formation.

In this study, the researcher reveals that the acquisition of verb forms in English is considered a difficult task for many Chinese ESL students. For instance, most action verbs are inflectional, as they have singular and plural forms, progressive form, and

perfect form, as well as simple past tense in regular and irregular forms. These verbs have different forms when used in different aspects of time.

In addition, verbs that are in the 'to be' form must agree with the subject of a sentence. There are rules for the use of verb forms and all L2 learners must understand them. Learners should always practice by doing grammatical exercises and apply the right forms of verbs in their writing tasks.

It is very important for the L2 learners to master verb forms in order to be able to use the correct forms of verbs in different situations. As this serves as the foundation of the English language, L2 learners will then be able to produce grammatically correct sentences and write with confidence. After that, L2 learners then must integrate other language skills and knowledge such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and listening comprehension to really master the language.

1.4   Statement of the Problem

This research study is concerned with the English proficiency level of Chinese ESL students in Malaysia. Most Chinese ESL students acquire Mandarin or a Chinese dialect such as Hokkien, Cantonese, or Hakka as their mother tongue and learn English at school as a second language. At a primary school, Mandarin is taught as the standard Chinese language, with a standard written form recognized internationally. These students generally face problems in mastering the English language and studies of their written work have shown that their writings are full of errors. To make things worse, an alarming number of Chinese ESL school learners continue to struggle with even the most basic grammatical rules and sentence structures.

1.4.1 Differences between the two languages

Many Chinese ESL learners are confused by the various verb forms and grammatical rules of the English language. They are already familiar with word structures in Mandarin, which are essentially simpler and have no complicated verb patterns and sentence structures. Verbs in Mandarin are all fixed and not inflectional, unlike the English language. In Mandarin, the time of an expression is indicated by adding an adverbial of time and the verb still remains the same in past, present as well as future tenses. It is a burden to these students to fully understand and apply the correct verb forms in different aspects of time.

Despite learning the grammar rules and structures of the English language, these students still make errors repeatedly in their writings. What is most disconcerting is the fact that L2 learners continue making the same errors even when such errors are pointed out to them by their teachers. It is not easy for L2 learners to master the language without an effective teaching method that focuses on grammar and language skills. According to Brown (2000), learners have to be adequately exposed to all of the language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing, in order to master the target language. Writing should be given more emphasis as it is a complex aspect as well as the most essential. With strong writing skills, students will not only be able to express themselves effectively but also have more success in applying for positions at companies of an international standing.

1.4.2 Language transfer

The second reason why L2 learners do not normally achieve a native-like proficiency believed to be caused by language transfer. According to Odlin (1989, p. 27), language transfer is the influence caused by the similarities and differences between the target language and the language previously acquired. English and Chinese are two distinct

languages that are different in grammatical structures, linguistic elements and verb forms. With L1 rules deeply implanted in their minds, Chinese ESL learners face the problem of adapting to a different set of linguistics rules, which results in the transfer of their L1 into L2. When these students face problems in learning L2, they may refer to familiar L1 structures for help. This phenomenon happens all the time in the L2 learning process and students tend to confuse L1 structures with L2 structures. When the transfer of language affects the process of L2 learning, it is known as negative transfer. In contrast, several researchers have come to the conclusion that positive language transfer may facilitate learning the L2.

1.4.3   Lack of exposure to the target language

The third factor that hinders the progress of learning English is a lack of exposure to the language. These students come from an environment where Mandarin is used in everyday communication at home and in schools. The situation is worsened when English language educators at school do not even converse well in the language. Some of them are not even qualified enough to teach the language. The reluctant involvement of the teachers in optimizing the use of language also affects students' proficiency in the language. According to Ellis (1994), motivation affects the extent to which language learners persevere in learning, the behaviour they exercise, and their actual accomplishment. When there is no motivation during the learning process, students may not be able to effectively learn the language.

1.4.4   Educator's perspective

To solve these problems, the Education Ministry and educators are striving to adopt and develop methods to accomplish effective teaching of English writing. This of course is not an easy task, considering the difference in the standards of English and the different

language backgrounds of Chinese ESL students. Matters such as how Chinese ESL students learn English, how their L1 affects the learning of the L2, and their learning environment must be taken into consideration in developing effective methods for the teaching of English. The field of education in Malaysia places its focus on the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Despite these efforts, the standard of English among Malaysians has not shown much improvement. To find out the proficiency level of Malaysian graduates, the English Language Assessment (ELA) test was carried out on graduates of five countries in Southeast Asia by an online recruitment company, Jobstreet.com, in June 2011. The results showed that Malaysia ranked the third out of five, falling behind Singapore. This has proven that the English proficiency level of Malaysian graduates is still considered not up to par. For that reason, improved and more practical teaching methods must be implemented to improve the standard of English among Malaysians (reported in The Star 7/6/2011).

1.5   Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to identify and classify verb errors, and to determine the probable causes of such errors. The study also aims to investigate verb errors that affect the syntactic function of the sentences.

1.6   Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed and answers will be provided in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

1. What are the types of verb errors made by Chinese ESL students in written English?

2. What are the frequencies of each type of verb error?

3. To what extent do verb errors affect the syntactic functions of sentences?

4. What are the factors that cause verb errors found in the written English of Chinese ESL students?

1.7   Scope of Study

This research was conducted based on a selected group of Chinese ESL students of a secondary school in Gopeng, Perak. The subjects are 30 upper secondary Chinese ESL students, aged between 15 and 16, who learned English as their L2. They acquired Mandarin as L1 and learned English as L2. Their English proficiency level is generally below satisfactory. Students with a lower English proficiency level were chosen as subjects in the study as they were believed to produce more language errors than higher proficiency students, so the data collected was sufficient for the purpose of analysis. It is believed that the group selected will represent the overall Chinese ESL students in Malaysia who have yet to master the language and are facing difficulties in learning.

The study aims to identify, categorize and explain written verb-form errors found in the past, present and future tenses. Corder's Taxonomy of errors was used as a guideline to categorize the errors under selection errors, omission errors and addition errors. Errors were identified and were related to features of the L1 carried over to L2 (English). Possible causes of verb-form errors which were related to the learning difficulties found within the L2 were also discussed in the study.

1.8   Significance of the Study

Obviously, language errors are repeatedly made by learners of English as a second language. Analysis of such errors is valuable to educators and curriculum planners. This study highlights the importance of verb formation and structure in teaching English writing. By identifying types of verb errors and the causes of these errors, it is assumed that the findings can contribute to the pedagogical aspect. Chinese ESL students will better understand the errors they made, hence try to avoid making the same errors in the future. With mastery of the rudiments of grammar and verb form, students are able to compose any type of writing with confidence.

In addition, this research also serves as an insightful case study of the causes of ESL learners' errors, so that teachers have a clearer picture on how and why mistakes are made. Analysis of the errors relating to verb forms of the students' L1 will show the differences of verb forms in Mandarin and English. This will help teachers recognize these differences and relate them to their students. When students' errors are pointed out with an explanation of the differences between the two languages, students will become aware of their verb choice in English writing.

However, teachers must realize that the ability to learn an L2 varies from person to person. Very often, students of the same ethnic group are assumed to have the same language-learning eccentricities and the same learning experiences. This may be somewhat true, but there are other aspects, often left out, which may explain how every learner is unique. Unfortunately, in terms of the current education policy of Malaysia it is not possible to have a wide variety of teaching methods to suit all types of learners. This study will serve as a guideline for language planners to develop teaching methods for target groups of language learners who are especially weak in English. They can also monitor lessons by focusing on aspects in which most students are weak.

1.9 Definition of Terms

The definitions of the terms as follows are based on *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*, *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* and *The Functional Analysis of English: A Hallidayan Approach.*

1.9.1 Agreement

Syntactic relation between words and phrases which are compatible, in a given construction, by virtue of inflections carried by at least one of them. For instance, the relationship between a subject and its verb; '*I look/she looks…*'

1.9.2 Auxiliary verb

One of the verbs *be*, *have*, and *do* when they are used with a main verb to form tenses, negatives, questions, and so on. These are also simply known as auxiliary. Modals are also auxiliary verbs.

1.9.3 Copular verb

This term is sometimes used to refer to the *be* verb. It is a grammatical verb (as opposed to a lexical verb) which indicates relation, typically relating subject and an intensive complement in a relational process; e.g., *be, seem.*

1.9.4 Modal verb

An auxiliary verb which is used with a main verb to indicate a particular attitude, such as possibility, obligation, prediction, or deduction; e.g., *may, might, can, could, shall, should, will, would, must*. Where present in a verbal group, it is the first item or the 'operator.'

1.9.5   Past participle

A verb form such as *seen*, *broken* and *given* which is used to form perfect tenses and passives, or in some cases, an adjective.

1.9.6   Progressive

This is a feature of verbal forms used to refer to actions, seen as 'in progress' without necessarily having a time limit. The progressive in English is marked by a construction in which a form of the auxiliary 'be' (*am, was*, etc.) is linked to an *-ing* form.

1.9.7   Syntax

Syntax refers to the study of grammatical relations between words and other units within the sentence. It is the study of rules that govern the ways in which words combine to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. Words need to be in their correct order to make sense.

1.9.8   Syntactic function

A syntactic function is a role that a word of other units fills in relation to other elements in its construction. Thus the construction of *My brother saw her* relates the syntactic roles of subject and predicate, or subject, predicator, and direct object. That of subject is filled by *my brother*, that of e.g. predicate by *saw her*.

1.9.9   Tense

In English, this term is an inflectional category whose basic role is to indicate the time of an event, etc. in relation to the moment of speaking. Divided notionally into 'present'

(at the moment of speaking), 'past' (earlier than the moment of speaking), and 'future' (later than the moment of speaking).

1.9.10 Verb

A verb is one of the classes of lexical units whose characteristic syntactic role is as a 'predicate' or 'predicator' and which is characteristically that of words denoting actions and processes; e.g., *run, make, melt*.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1   Introduction

During the process of language learning, a learner has to learn through trial and error, first learning a rule and then applying it in context. Errors therefore should be viewed as guidelines that provide feedback to language learners so that they can better understand language rules and apply them appropriately in new situations. In this study, the researcher views verb errors made by the subjects as their attempts to better understand verb forms, making them aware of errors as well as serving as a guide for educators in the teaching process. In this way, learners' language proficiency can be traced. Educators will know the areas where students are weak in and monitor their teaching methods to improve their language skills. This chapter discusses the literature on error analysis which includes the definition of error analysis, types of errors, related research studies on verb errors and the difference between the verb systems of English and Mandarin. Related research studies will reveal the grammatical errors made by target language learners and the causes for these errors.

2.2   Errors and Mistakes

The terms 'error' and 'mistake' are distinguished by researchers. In the field of applied linguistics, a mistake occurs due to a learner's lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspects of performance. On the other hand, an error is the use of linguistic item in a way that a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as demonstrating faulty or incomplete learning. In other words, an error occurs when a learner does not have knowledge, and thus errors cannot be self-corrected; mistakes normally can be self-corrected.

According to Corder (1967), mistakes are made when there are false starts, slips of the tongue or failure to use a known system correctly. Corder explains that a mistake occurs when learners fail to achieve up to their level of competence. In other words, mistakes are a result of processing problems that prevent learners from accessing their knowledge of a target language and cause them to fall back on some alternative, non-standard rule that they find easier to access (Corder in Ellis, 1994). Norrish (1987) labelled a mistake as an inconsistent deviation, meaning sometimes the learner applies language rules correctly but sometimes incorrectly. Learners making mistakes doesn't mean they are ignorant of language rules. When mistakes are pointed out to them, they are able to correct the mistakes themselves. The mistakes made by language learners are wide and sometimes unpredictable. Mistakes are therefore unsystematic.

Unlike mistakes, errors are predictable and systematic. According to Corder, in Ellis (1994), an error occurs when a deviation arises due to a learner's lack of knowledge. Learners make errors because they have formed an inaccurate hypothesis about the target language and show a deficiency of knowledge. This means that learners have not fully understood or have yet to master the language knowledge. When errors are pointed out, they are not able to correct the errors by themselves.

Sometimes distinguishing between mistakes and errors is not easy. Ellis (1997) suggests two methods to differentiate the two terms. The first way is to check the consistency of learner's performance. For instance, if the learner uses both forms, correct and wrong, interchangeably, it is a mistake. If he always uses the incorrect form, it is an error. The second way is to ask the learner to try to correct his own deviant utterance or writing. If he is able to self-correct, the deviations are mistakes. If he fails to self-correct, the deviations are errors.

In conclusion, errors are significant to the process of language learning and should be viewed seriously. To a teacher, errors may demonstrate a learner's progress and

reveal his difficulties in learning the target language. To a researcher, the study of error analysis shows how learners learn a language and the strategies they apply in learning the language. Learners themselves can also learn from errors and try to avoid them in the future.

2.3   Error Analysis

Error analysis is an important activity to reveal learners' knowledge of the target language or their transitional competence. According to Corder (1967), studies of the errors of learners provided the researchers with evidence of how language is learned, and what strategies or procedures learners employ in the discovery of language.

Error analysis is carried out to determine a learner's language proficiency level, to find out how learners learn a language and to disclose the difficulties faced by language learners. His explanation is the same as the theory proposed by Sercombe (2000) who claimed that error analysis has three purposes: First, it is used to find out the level of language proficiency of learners. Second, it is used to obtain information about common difficulties in language learning. Third, it is used to find out how learners learn a language. By knowing learners' difficulties and learning strategies, teaching methods and materials can be improved to assist the teaching process.

Learning an L2 is different from learning an L1. Learners tend to make errors continuously during the learning process, and through the feedback on those errors that they will improve their L2. Lim (1997) stated that learners make errors unintentionally - but that these errors are a forming part of the language learning process. According to Lim, learners could not keep themselves from making errors because they had to use their effort to get their messages across. Olasehinde (2002) also stated that errors are unavoidable for learners because making errors is viewed as a necessary part of the learning curve.

Researchers use error analysis to analyze and classify the possible types of errors made by learners and to see what hypotheses they are applying in the learning process. This phenomenon was further explained by Brown (1980, p. 166) who described error analysis as the process of observing, analyzing and classifying deviations of the rules of the L2 and then revealing the systems operated by learners. Brown's theory is supported by Crystal (1987, p. 112) who explained that error analysis is a technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms of language produced by a foreign language learner with the use of principles and procedures provided by linguistics.

Besides identifying possible errors made by learners, error analysis is conducted in order to apply what is learned from error analysis to improve learners' language competence. Studies by Kroll and Schafer's (1978, p. 242-248) and Kwok (1998, p. 11-22) explain how error analysis is able to improve writing skills. They conducted a study to analyze the possible sources of errors in the English language work of non-native writers. Using their error analysis, they tried to provide a process approach to writing to help learners achieve better writing skills.

In conclusion, error analysis plays a significant role in facilitating L2 or target language learning. It helps teachers to identify and classify learners' errors and to construct correction techniques in order to improve the L2 learning.

2.4   Interlanguage

The term 'interlanguage,' proposed by Selinker (1972), was adopted from the term 'interlingual' by Weinreich (1953). According to Selinker, errors made by L2 learners somehow cannot be explained by looking at the structures of their L1 and L2 alone. L2 learners seemed to create a unique language system or target language norm to help get their meaning across in L2 speaking or writing (Ellis, 1997, p. 33). A number of

researchers have used this phenomenon to describe perspectives which stress the legitimacy of a learners' second language system. Corder (1971) called it 'idiosyncratic dialect' or 'transitional competence,' whereas Nemser (1971) used the term 'approximate system.' Though the terms above emphasize a particular perception, they have in common that L2 learners form their own self-contained independent linguistic systems which falls between the native language and target language.

According to Selinker (1972), there are five principal cognitive processes responsible in the learning of an L2. The five processes comprise how L2 learners attempt to internalize the L2 system, reducing their linguistic burdens in the learning process. The five processes are as follows:

(1) Language transfer - the effect of interference from the native language or mother tongue to the target language.

(2) Transfer of training - the effect of the teaching processes in the learning of the target language.

(3) Strategies of second language learning - the effect of the approaches taken by the learner to the material to be learned.

(4) Strategies of second language communication - the effect of the approaches taken by the learner to communicate with a speaker of the target language.

(5) Overgeneralization of target language linguistic material - the effect of the learner's overextension of a semantic feature of the target language.

In sum, interlanguage provides L2 learners a more active role of rule-creator and is useful in helping learners achieve L2 linguistic competence.

2.5   The Influence of the Mother Tongue

Interlanguage has the characteristics of both the mother tongue and the target language of an L2 learner which means the mother tongue affects the learning of the target language. L2 learners applying elements of their mother tongue in their target language is a phenomenon called language transfer. Selinker (1972) stated that language transfer is one of the central processes which produce fossilized competencies which are essential for the process of L2 learning. These processes cause fossilization and when they are combined, 'entirely fossilized interlanguage competence' is formed (Selinker, in Richards, 1974, p. 37). Therefore, language transfer causes the fossilization of the structures of the interlanguage.

There are two kinds of language transfer, which are positive and negative transfer. Positive transfer occurs when structure of both languages is the same, resulting in correct language production which is similar to most L1 speakers' ideas of acceptability. Opposite this, negative transfer is a phenomenon where learners transfer structures that are different in both languages.

Some examples of negative transfer are the omission of grammatical morphemes such as verb endings, noun inflections, articles, and auxiliaries, overgeneralization, and the use of double markings (Dulay & Burt, 1975). L2 learners usually integrate the grammar rules and forms of their L1 into their L2 writing. This is similar to Beardsmore's (1982) study, which suggests that learner difficulty with the phonology, vocabulary and grammar of an L2 are caused by the interference of habits from the L1. Elements of the L1 may be used within the context of the L2, causing errors in the L2. More errors are bound to be made when the structures of the L1 are very different from the structures of the L2.

However, some researchers have proven that the L1 of the learners facilitates the L2 when positive transfer occurs in the learning process. As stated by Cumming (1989),

"the first language is used by the second language learners as an important resource in their continual processes while composing a second language task" (Cumming 1989, p.128). In Uzawa's (1996) study of L1 and L2 writings, data reveal that translation from L1 to L2 in writing may be useful for L2 learners. This happens when learners are forced to use words and expressions slightly ahead of their own levels of English when they translate their first language writings that usually employ language of a higher difficulty level. Positive transfer normally occurs when the mother tongue and the target language have similar linguistic structures.

2.6 Types of Errors

The study of learner error is essential for learning an L2 or target language. A number of research studies have provided descriptions for different kinds of errors. According to Selinker (1972) and Ngara (1983), there are two major categories of errors, which are interlingual errors and intralingual and developmental errors. Interlingual errors refer to errors resulting from the interference of mother tongue, whereas intralingual and developmental errors refer to errors resulting from interference within the target language itself.

2.6.1 Interlingual errors

'Interlingual errors' are caused by the interference of the learner's L1 in their L2. It characterizes the beginning stages of learning an L2 to a great extent. In early stages of language learning, learners tend to draw upon their previous linguistic system, which are the structures of the L1. To get their meaning across, learners will sometimes refer to L1 structures to assist them in constructing linguistic structures in L2. Nonetheless, this habit may interfere the learning of an L2, causing interlingual errors. According to

Corder (1971), a learner's L1 habits in terms of patterns, systems, or rules may hinder him from acquiring the structures and rules of the L2.

2.6.2 Intralingual and developmental errors

According to Richards (1974), intralingual and developmental errors reflect a learners' language competence at a particular stage and show some general characteristics of language acquisition. These errors are caused by the faulty or partial understanding of the target language, rather than from language transfer or interference by the mother tongue. These errors may be caused by the influence of one target language item on another. Ellis (1997) stated that some errors are universal. Learners tend to form language rules themselves as an attempt to reduce their language burden. As a result, they For instance, learners use the past tense suffix *-ed* for all verbs in past tense, ruling out some irregular forms of past tense verbs. This is an example of simplification and overgeneralization, a strategy used by learners to reduce their linguistic burden.

In short, intralingual errors happen as a result of learners' attempts to build up hypotheses and concepts about the target language from their limited experience in the classroom or textbook. Richards (1971) classified causes of errors into four categories which are as follows:

(1) Overgeneralization

(2) Ignorance of rule restriction

(3) Incomplete application of rules

(4) False concepts hypothesized

(1) Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization occurs when learners overextend their rule to cover instances to which that rule does not apply. According to Jakobvits (1970, p. 111),

overgeneralization is defined as 'the use of previously available strategies in new situation.' In the process of language learning, learners create a deviant structure on the basis of their experience with other structures in the target language. Richards (1974) stated that this phenomenon is associated with redundancy reduction. It may occur with items which are contrasted in the grammar of the language but which do not carry significant and obvious contrast for the learner. Some of the examples of overgeneralization errors are as follows:

(1) a. The use of past tense suffix *-ed* for all verbs in past tense

- He <u>singed</u> a song. (sang)

- They <u>eated</u> the cake. (ate)

- I <u>goed</u> to the library this morning. (went)

b. The use of singular verb suffix *-s* for third person singular in all tense and aspect

- She can <u>draws</u>. (draw)

- She will <u>draws</u>. (draw)

The above examples of overgeneralization errors indicate that learners create deviant structures on account of other structures in the target language. They over-generalize the use of suffix *-ed* for all verbs to indicate past tense. The phenomenon is similar in the use of suffix *-s* third person singular in all tense. Learners try to find an easy way out to reduce their linguistic burden.

(2) Ignorance of rule restriction

Ignorance of rule restriction refers to the failure to observe the restrictions of existing structures, resulting in the incorrect application of rules in the target language. Learners generally create a set of their own linguistic rules when they receive input in the target

language. They make use of previously-acquired rules in new situations. However, they are uncertain about applying correct rules according to the correct English usage. They therefore tend to ignore the rules, trying to apply what seem 'correct' to them in a particular context. Some of the examples of this type of error are as follows:

(2) a. The boy who I saw <u>him</u>.

  b. She made me <u>to</u> do it.

In sentence (2a), *The boy who I saw him*, is wrongly constructed based on the learner's knowledge that there must be an object following the verb *saw*. The learner seems to be ignoring the rule that the relative pronoun, *who*, acts as the object, *him*, in the sentence. This phenomenon applies in sentence (2b) as well where the learner ignores the restrictions on the distribution of the verb *made* (Richards, 1971). This type of error appears to be another major cause of interlingual errors that hinders learners.

(3)   Incomplete application of rules

Incomplete application of rules refers to errors made by the learner when he applies the rule of the target language in an inappropriate situation. Sometimes, the learner may mix up the rules of the target language and use them incorrectly. This type of errors is further explained with the examples as follows.

(3) a. Which book <u>I should</u> buy?

  b. Tell me which book <u>should I</u> buy.

The examples above show that the learner mixed up the questions form and the statement form. In sentence (3a), the correct question form should be *Which book should I buy?* as the auxiliary verb *should* comes before the subject. Whereas in

sentence (3b), the correct statement form should be *Tell me which book I should buy*, where the auxiliary verb *should* comes after the subject (Richards, 1971).

(4)   False concepts hypothesized

Errors resulting from false concepts hypothesized derive from "the faulty comprehension of distinction in the target language" (Richards, 1970, p. 19). These errors occur due to poor gradation of teaching items. When learners acquire a certain rule of the target language, this rule may be used in other contexts in which it is not applicable. Hence, learners form false hypotheses and make language errors. The following examples further explain this type of errors.

(4) a.   One day it <u>was</u> happened.

     b.   He <u>is</u> washed his car.

In sentence (4a), the past tense of the *be* verb *was* should be omitted. The verb may be interpreted as a marker of the past tense; hence, the learner tends to apply this verb in every context of past tense he encounters. The same situation applies to the verb *is* in sentence (4b), where the learner interprets the verb as the marker of the present tense.

2.7   Corder's Taxonomy of Errors

To analyze verb errors made by Chinese ESL students, the researcher has chosen Corder's Taxonomy of errors as a research framework to classify errors. According to Corder (1981), language errors are classified into three main categories, namely 'selection errors,' 'addition errors' and 'omission errors.' Selection errors occur when learners apply an incorrect linguistic item in place of correct ones. Addition errors refer

to the errors made with some additional linguistic items which are unnecessary, whereas omission errors refer to errors where an item has been left out in a particular context.

2.8   Related Studies on English Verbs

Research studies done on errors in written English committed by Chinese ESL or EFL learners have shown that the most common type of errors are grammatical errors and verb form errors. Kao's (1999) study of 169 compositions written by 53 Taiwanese college students found that grammatical errors occurred with the highest frequency (66%), followed by semantic errors (18%) and lexical errors (16%). Lin (2002), who studied the 26 essays written by Taiwanese EFL college students, found that the errors with highest frequencies were sentence structures (30.43%), followed by incorrect verb forms (21.01%), sentence fragments (15.94%) and the incorrect use of words (15.94%).

Krairussamee (1982) who did a study of the errors made in English compositions by 153 Thai undergraduates, also found that errors from the verb category formed the highest frequency of the total number of errors (34.25%). Within verb errors, errors from the tense category posed the highest frequency of occurrence (55.24%) followed by errors from the subject-verb agreement (20.42%). Krairussamee attributed the cause of the verb form errors to the complexity of the English verb system. In Thai language, there isn't a tense system. That is why learning the English verb system is a challenge to these L2 learners.

Meziani (1984) studied the errors in 50 English essays written by final year students of three different high schools in Rabat, Morocco. The results showed that the tense category has the highest frequency of errors, constituting 71.8% of the total number of errors determined in the corpus. Of the tense errors detected, the highest occurrence of errors was identified in the use of simple present for simple past (36%), followed by the use of the past perfect instead of the simple past (28.5%) and the use of

the present perfect instead of the simple past (7.3%). Meziani believed that the tense errors may have resulted from the interference of the L1 and learners' overgeneralization of linguistic items.

A number of local studies have been carried out to study the English verb errors made by Malaysian ESL learners. These studies include studies of errors made by local L2 learners by Wee (1995), Sheena Kaur (1996), Koh (2000), Kam (2001) and Thirugnanam (2004). These studies examined the types of verb errors made and the possible causes of these errors. The findings of these studies revealed that verb errors made by learners were caused by the interference of the L1. A review of these related studies on verb errors will reveal the difficulties faced by Malaysian language learners in the use of English verbs. The studies will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

Wee (1995) studied the errors made by 50 Malay ESL students of MARA Institute of Technology in Sarawak. The instrument used in the study was three writing tasks which involved the students' usage of past tense, present tense and future tense. The results indicated that the errors with the highest percentage was misformation (63.4%), followed by omission (29%), addition (7.6%) and ordering (0.1%). Within these errors, the highest percentage of errors was found in the past tense (37.6%), followed by the present tense (33.7%), future tense (21.5%) and verb forms (7.3%). This study showed that the areas that posed the greatest difficulty in the English language were the tense-aspect system and subject-verb agreement. Wee (1995) stated that the causes of the errors were due to the influence of the learners' mother tongue and the complexities of the English verb system.

Wee's (1995) findings were supported by Sheena Kaur's (1996) study of verb phrase errors by 42 Malay undergraduate students at the University of Malaya. In her study, errors found were classified into the categories of misselections, omissions and

additions. Her findings showed that verb phrase errors made up 32.8% of the total errors. Within the verb phrase errors, 59.9% of the errors were misselections, followed by omission errors (33.6%) and addition errors (6.5%). Sheena Kaur shared the same view with Wee (1995) that students faced difficulty in selecting the correct verbs in verb phrases due to the complexity of the English verb systems with choices of verb tense, subject-verb concord and verb forms.

In another study of learners' errors, Koh (2000) investigated subject-verb agreement errors in the interlanguage of ESL learners of a secondary school. The test instrument was a self-designed cloze test. The findings revealed that the subject + auxiliary *does/do* category accounted for the highest percentage of errors (24.7%), followed by subject + auxiliary *has/have* category (23.1%) and subject + *full verb* category (21.2%). For the countable nouns/uncountable nouns + *verb* + subject and subject + auxiliary verb *is/are/am* categories have the same percentage (15.5%). According to Koh, the cause of the errors was negative transfer from the L1 (Malay and Mandarin), teaching methods, materials used, and learner strategies.

Another similar local study of verb errors was by Kam (2001) who investigated the types of errors in the simple past and past progressive tense in 40 written compositions and structured tests from 40 form four Chinese ESL students. The errors were examined based on Corder's (1981) taxonomy of errors, which classifies errors into selection, omission, and addition errors. The results of the study revealed that selection errors accounted for the highest percentage of simple past tense errors (74%), followed by addition errors (18.1%) and omission errors (7.9%). For the past progressive tense, omission errors have the highest percentage of occurrence (71%) followed by selection errors (29%). There were no errors recorded in the addition category. On the other hand, the results of the structured test revealed that all errors of simple past tense were selection errors. In the past progressive tense, most of the errors

were selection errors, followed by omission errors with no addition errors recorded. Kam (2001) claimed that selection and omission errors were the results of the interference of students' L1, overgeneralization and simplification of the rules of the English language, and avoidance in using the difficult verb forms.

Another local study learners' errors was by Thirugnanam (2004), who studied the verb form errors made in written compositions of 50 ESL students of a secondary school. Questionnaires and interviews were used as test instruments to discover students' perceptions about learning English. The findings showed that errors of the subject-verb agreement have the highest rate of occurrence (49.8%), followed by errors in verb tense (24.8%), errors in past participles (9.0%), errors in the infinitive (8.7%) and errors in the progressive (7.7%). For errors recorded under the categories of selection, omission and addition, selection errors constituted the highest percentage of total errors (54.9%), followed by omission errors (38.6%) and addition errors (6.5%). Based on the findings of the interview, students claimed that they faced difficulties in using grammar, constructing sentences and reported having a limited vocabulary. The findings also revealed that 58% of the Malay and Chinese resorted to their native languages (Malay and Mandarin respectively) when constructing sentences. Therefore, this study again provides evidence that interference of the mother tongue is inevitable in the construction of L2 writing.

2.9   Verb System in English and Mandarin

Belonging to two different language families, English and Mandarin are two distinct languages with many significant differences. Mandarin belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family and is a monosyllabic language. Words in Mandarin do not inflect and are made up of single syllables with different tones. In contrast, the English language belongs to the Indo-European family. The languages that belong to this family tend to be inflected

and verbs and nouns change their form depending on their part in a sentence. The two languages differ in terms of sound, written form and grammatical structures and rules; hence, learning the English language is a great challenge for Chinese ESL learners.

In English, verbs are central to sentence structures. Verbs determine the other component in sentences and define the relationships among those components. For instance, verbs tell us that certain noun phrases function as subjects and that others functions as objects or as complements. English verbs forms are largely periphrastic, which means that most verbs are formed by a combination of words. There are two tense (present and past), four aspects (simple, progressive, perfect, and perfect-progressive), three moods (indicative, subjunctive and imperative) and two voice (active and passive) in English. Verbs in the simple present and simple past are inflected. For instance, the use of *-ed* suffix for simple past and *-s* form for simple present. Most sentences in English require auxiliary verbs to add functional and grammatical meaning. They are used to express tense, aspect, modality voice and emphasis of clauses.

Unlike English, words in Mandarin are not inflected and meanings are conveyed through word order, adverbials or shared understanding of the context. There are various differences between Mandarin and English in terms of word order. For example, English conveys question form by inverting the subject and the verb whereas in Mandarin questions are conveyed by the addition of a question particle to the end of the question without inversion of words. Such examples are shown as follows.

	Statement	Question
English	They are from Thailand.	Are they from Thailand?
Mandarin	*Tā mén lái zī tài guó*	*Tā mén lái zī tài guó ma?*

In English, the order of the subject and verb in the statement, *They are from Thailand*, are inverted when it converts into question form where the copula verb, *are*,

precedes the subject. In Mandarin, inversion of word order does not occur when a statement changes to question form. A question is normally indicated by the addition of a question particle to the end of the question and with a high rising intonation at the end of the question.

Unlike English, nouns in Mandarin cannot be post-modified and adverbials usually come before verbs. There is no grammatical inflection because Mandarin possesses no tense and voice. In Mandarin, time is expressed using adverbs of time and aspect markers. Some examples of the use of Mandarin adverbs and aspect markers are as follows.

(1) Adverbs of time

    a. *Wō*   **míng tiān**   *qù*   *xīn jīa pō*
        Subject   adverb of time   verb   adverb of place
        'I will go to Singapore tomorrow.'

    b. **Qù nián**   *wō*   *bān lái*   *zhè biān*
        Adverb of time   subject   verb   adverb of place
        'I moved here last year.'

(2) Aspect markers

    a. *Tā*   *chī*   **le**   *wǎn fàn*
        Subject   verb   aspect marker   object
        'He ate his dinner.'

    b. *Tā*   *bèi*   **zhe**   *yī ge shū bāo*
        Subject   verb   aspect marker   object
        'She is/was carrying a school bag.'

    c. *Wā*   *jiān*   **guò**   *tā*
        Subject   verb   aspect marker   object
        'I've met him before.'

In (1), adverbials *míng tiān* and *qù nián* are used to express future and past respectively. The verbs *qù* and *bān* remain the same without changing forms or inflections. In (2), the aspect markers *le* and *guò* are used to express past tense where they are placed immediately after the verb to indicate the completion of an action. The aspect marker *zhè* is used to express progressive where it is placed directly after the verb to indicate a range of meanings related to a continuing state or action.

Taking into account the great difference between the verbs of the English language and those of Mandarin, it is not surprising that Chinese ESL learners face difficulty in the complexities of the English verb system. They should give more attention to verb forms and tense in English to better understand the usage of each verb form in the English language.

2.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of error analysis has provided useful pedagogical implications in the field of second language learning. Errors produced by learners are viewed as an essential element to determine the strategies used in the learning process and to understand in which aspect the learners are facing with difficulties. Related studies have shown that verb errors generally pose the highest frequency of the total number of errors (Kao, 1999; Krairussamee, 1982; Meziani, 1984). Therefore, verb errors have to be viewed seriously and the teaching of English verb forms need to be emphasized. The researcher believes that by analyzing the verb errors of Chinese ESL learners, the difficulties faced in learning the English verb system can be highlighted and hence more effective teaching methods can be developed to help the learners. To master the English language, it is vital that the learners understand the various usages of verb forms.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains how research was carried out and the procedures involved in collecting data and analyzing written errors. The study aims to identify and analyze verb-form errors produced by Chinese ESL students of a secondary school, *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Idris Shah Gopeng*, in Perak. The instruments employed were writing tasks and questionnaires. Writing tasks were used to obtain students' written errors related to verbs while the use of questionnaires was to obtain biographical details and perceptions about the learning of English. Students' learning background and their point of view in learning English are two important factors that must to be taken into consideration so that remedial steps may be taken to help them to master the language.

3.2 The Sample

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2003), a sample is a subset of the population that could be representative of the entire population. A sample which cannot represent the population is insufficient for testing purposes because results could then not be generalized. There are two types of sampling, which are probability and non-probability sampling. The latter is also known as non-random sampling. To select a suitable type of sampling for a study, four issues must be taken into consideration. They are the purpose of study, time constraints, cost versus value, and the level of acceptable errors. (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003, p.85)

In this study, non-random sampling was used. A specific group of 30 bilingual Chinese students of *Sekolah Menengah Idris Shah Gopeng* (SIS Gopeng) in Perak were chosen as subjects. The secondary school is located in a small town named 'Gopeng' in

Perak. People in Gopeng generally use Mandarin, Cantonese or Hakka in their daily life. The study's focus is on students whose mother tongue is Mandarin. They consist of 14 males and 16 females who have all acquired Mandarin as their mother tongue and learn English and Malay as their L2. The education system in Malaysia has made it compulsory for all Malaysians to learn English and Malay from primary level one up to the form five level.

In this study, students of the fourth form were chosen because they have already learned the verb forms of English at school and have a high level of exposure to the English language. The subjects were chosen from Form Four Art Stream as their overall English proficiency level was considered below satisfactory. With a lower proficiency level in English, it was believed that more errors could be obtained from the writings. Despite this, they were able to construct English sentences. It was believed that the fourth formers are the most suitable subjects for the study because they do not have to sit for any government test. In other words, they are not burdened by the writing tasks assigned to them. It is important that the writing tasks are carried out when students are at a comfortable, stress-free state. This may help them generate ideas and write more easily.

3.3   The Pilot Study

A pilot study was carried out on five fourth former Chinese ESL students on January 17, 2012. It consisted of a writing task and a questionnaire. The students were required to write three essays on three different days. The required word length of the three essays was approximately 200 words each. The time limit was 30 minutes. After completing the essays, the students were given a questionnaire to answer. Before they started the test, they were briefed on how to write their answers for each section.

The purpose of conducting the pilot study was to test whether the essays were appropriate to the students' language level and whether they could review the type of errors needed in the research. Questionnaires were also given to the selected students to make sure that the questions were appropriate and comprehensible.

After conducting the pilot study, the researcher found that the instruments used in the study needed to be improved. The initial time given to write an essay, 30 minutes, was insufficient for those students whose English proficiency level was low. They might need a longer time to convert their thoughts into English writing; therefore, the duration was extended to 45 minutes. The initial questionnaire, which consisted of 50% open-ended questions, could not provide sufficient data needed for the study due to the reluctance of the subjects to write sentences. Therefore, some questions were put into an easier form to guide the students in providing their answers.

3.4   Research Instruments

This research adopted the case study method because the researcher wanted an in-depth study of the written errors by the subjects. A case study is one of several ways of doing social science research. There are other ways to conduct a case study, such as experiments, surveys, multiple histories, and analysis of archival information (Yin, 2003). The case study was able to focus on a specific group of Chinese ESL students chosen for the study. In the study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used.

The quantitative method was used to collect statistical data of verb errors collected from the written works. It was important to obtain the frequency of occurrence of verb-form errors so that the most common errors or errors with high frequency could be determined. The research also employed the qualitative method to collect empirical data in the form of subjects' written task for an analysis of verb-form errors.

Two sets of research instruments were used to collect data in the study. The first set of instruments was composed of three writing tasks in three sessions. The second set of instruments was a questionnaire consisting of two sections. The questionnaire was aimed at obtaining information on the background of the subjects, their language exposure, and perceptions about learning English.

3.4.1 The writing task

A writing task was used as the first instrument in the study to determine the types of verb errors produced by the subjects. The writing task was divided into three sessions and subjects were required to write an essay during each session. The sessions were conducted after class in a classroom in SIS Gopeng. During each session, the subjects were required to write an essay of 200 words. The time given to write each essay was 45 minutes.

The specifications of the three sessions of writing task are as follows:

Session	Date	Essay Title	Data determined
1	10.02.12	Write a short story ending with "…regretted for not telling anyone where Samuel had gone."	Mostly verb errors in past tense
2	17.02.12	Private Tuition	Mostly verb errors in present tense
3	24.02.12	My New Year Resolutions	Mostly verb errors expressing futurity

During the writing task, discussions with other subjects were prohibited. However, subjects were allowed to raise questions about words they wanted to use in their writing but did not know in English. The teacher would only provide the root words for the students but not in the inflectional forms. Students were informed of the rules of the writing task before they started writing. By providing vocabularies in English to the

subjects, they were able to express what they wanted to write and be not bounded by their limited vocabularies.

Before the writing task took place, the researcher obtained the permission of the management of SIS Gopeng to carry out the writing task on three different days in February. The first writing session was conducted on 10th February, 2012 after school in a classroom in SIS Gopeng, with the help of an English teacher of the school. The researcher briefed the subjects on the instructions of writing the essays while the teacher assisted the writing process. In the first session, the subjects were required to write an essay entitled 'Write a short story ending with *...regretted for not telling anyone where Samuel had gone*.' This essay required the subjects' knowledge of past tense verbs to express an incident that happened in the past. The essays collected were able to present the types of errors mostly of the past tense.

The second session was conducted on 17th February, 2012, after school in the same classroom where the first session was conducted. During the second session, the subjects were required to write an essay entitled 'Private Tuition.' This non-fictional essay title required the subjects to write mostly using the present tense because this is a current issue in society. The subjects were expected to write about their opinions regarding attending private tuition and how they feel about private tuition. The data collected from this essay shows errors mostly in the present tense.

The third session was conducted on 24th February 2012. During the third session, the subjects were required to write an essay entitled 'My New Year Resolutions.' This essay title required the subjects to use mostly in future tense to express the plans that will be carried out to accomplish their New Year resolutions. The essays collected indicate mostly errors of futurity.

3.4.2   The questionnaire

A questionnaire was the second instrument used in this study to obtain further information of the subjects in order to collect more relevant and supportive data for analysis purpose.

After completing the third essay, the subjects were given a questionnaire to fill in. The time allocated for the subjects to complete the questionnaire was 20 minutes. Time was extended for those who needed more time to complete the questionnaire. This was to ensure they had sufficient time to complete the questionnaire and provide sufficient data. The questionnaire was divided into two sections as follows:

(1)   Section A

The purpose of this section is to obtain the subjects' biographical details and language background. This section will also review the students' English test results.

(2)   Section B

This section consists of questions concerning how often English is used in their daily life and their perception about learning English. From the answers provided in this section, the researcher was able to connect the factors that contributed to their verb errors to the findings.

3.5   Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was carried out following the steps of collection of data, identification and classification of errors, quantification of errors, as well as description and explanation of errors. The errors collected from the writing tasks were analyzed following the grammatical rules of contemporary Standard British English.

3.5.1 Collection of data

The duration of data collection for this study was in three weeks' time, from 10th February, 2012, to 24th February, 2012. During this period, four sets of data were collected. The first set of data consists of 30 essays entitled 'Write a short story ending with …*regretted for not telling anyone where Samuel had gone*.' The second set of data consists of 30 essays entitled 'Private Tuition' and the third set of data consists of 30 essays entitled 'My New Year Resolutions.' The fourth set of data consists of 30 questionnaires completed by subjects after completion of the three essays.

3.5.2 Identification and classification of errors

All the 90 essays were read and analyzed by the researcher to identify errors related to verb. After identifying the errors, the researcher classified the errors using Corder's taxonomy of errors as a guideline. The errors were classified into three main types: selection, omission, and addition errors. According to Corder (1981), these are the three main types of language error. 'Selection error' refers to the use of wrong words, 'omission error' refers to missing words and 'addition error' refers to unnecessary words. Explanations on each type of error are shown in the following part along with examples. The researcher also determined and analyzed verb errors that affected the syntactic function of the sentences.

3.5.2.1 Selection error

Selection error occurs when the wrong form of verb is used in a sentence. The examples of selection error are as follows.

(1) The incorrect selection of copular verbs for subject-verb agreement

- I <u>were</u> at the cinema yesterday. (was)

- Nina <u>have</u> just eaten her dinner. (has)

(2) The incorrect selection of plural verbs for subject-verb agreement

- She <u>like</u> to eat mangoes. (likes)

(3) The incorrect selection of verb tense to express an event happened in the past

- I <u>go</u> to the cinema yesterday. (went)

(4) The incorrect selection of verb tense to express a verb in past participle form

- The students have <u>leave</u> the classroom. (left)

3.5.2.2 Omission error

Omission errors take place when a word or a linguistic element is omitted in a sentence. Below are examples of omission error.

(1) Omission of auxiliary verbs in tenses

- The cat Ø sleeping under the bed. (is)

- They Ø just finished their homework. (have)

- My aunt Ø taking care of my brother this morning. (was)

- The children Ø playing at the playground yesterday. (were)

(2) Omission of the *-ing* form to express the present continuous tense

- They are <u>sing</u> happily. (singing)

- Ted was <u>cry</u> sadly. (crying)

3.5.2.3 Addition error

Addition errors occur when there is an unnecessary word or linguistic element added to the verb phrase. The examples of addition errors are as follows.

(1) Addition of unnecessary auxiliary verbs in verb phrases

- Mr. Lim <u>is</u> arrived at the airport.

- After he <u>was</u> came back from work, he immediately made a phone call.

- They <u>were</u> sat at the corner of the classroom.

- It <u>has</u> rained in the morning.

(2) Addition of the unnecessary *-ing* verb form in a verb phrase

- Jamal likes to <u>playing</u> board games.

3.5.3   Quantification of errors

After identifying and classifying verb errors, the frequencies of each type of error were tabulated and the rates of occurrence were put into percentage for analysis purposes. The most common errors or errors with high frequency were identified and highlighted in the study.

3.5.4   Description and explanation of errors

The errors were then discussed in terms of selection error, omission error and addition error. The errors with the highest frequencies were emphasized and explained in detail with the data collected from the questionnaire serving as supporting data. The data were also analyzed based on the similarities and differences in errors recorded.

3.6   Conclusion

In the case study of verb errors, error analysis was used as a technique to identify, classify and systematically interpret unacceptable forms of language produced by Chinese ESL students. The study employed writing task as the test instrument to record errors clearly and accurately. To add supportive data to the analysis, questionnaires were used in the study. The verb errors were analyzed based on Corder's Taxonomy of errors which includes selection error, omission error and addition error. The findings of the study are further discussed and explained in details in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. Verb form errors were categorized into subject-verb agreement, simple past, simple present, past perfect, present perfect, progressive, infinitive, futurity, passive and modality. The errors of each category are analyzed according to Corder's (1981) taxonomy of errors which classifies errors into three main categories namely 'selection error,' 'omission error,' and 'addition error.' Statistical data was tabulated and examples of each type of error are also provided. The findings of the questionnaire are examined and the data therein used to support the findings of the written data of the subjects. This study also determines and discusses the possible causes of the errors made by the subjects.

4.2   Presentation of the Findings of Questionnaire

4.2.1   Students' language background

The subjects were chosen based on non-random sampling for the specific study of Malaysian Chinese ESL students. This was an in-depth study of the writings produced by 30 Chinese ESL students of a secondary school, *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Idris Shah Gopeng* (*SIS Gopeng*), situated in a rural area in the state of Perak. The subjects of the study were 14 males and 16 females, fourth formers of the school aged between 15 and 16. They all have the same language background with Mandarin as their mother tongue. The language they use at home is Mandarin. In other words, Mandarin is the students' only linguistic repertoire in spoken form.

According to the findings derived from section A of the questionnaire, 21 out of the 30 students attend English private tuition class after school. This may indicate that English is viewed as an important subject that needs to be given more priority for improvements. However, taking tuition class does not guarantee a good grade in English as these students' writings reflect the lack of proficiency in the language. This is shown through their grades for their previous year end English exams. Their results are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Students' Year End English Examination Results

Grades	Marks	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
A+	90 – 100	0	0
A	80 – 89	0	0
A-	75 – 79	0	0
B+	70 – 74	0	0
B	65 – 69	3	10
C+	60 – 64	5	16.7
C	50 – 59	8	26.7
D	45 – 49	10	33.3
E	40 – 44	3	10
G	0 – 39	1	3.3

These English examination results show that none of the students scored above grade B, suggesting they have a fairly low English standard. Only 10% of them scored grade B with marks ranging from 65 – 69. 16.7% of the students scored grade C+ with marks ranging from 60 – 64. 26.7% of them scored grade C with marks ranging from 50 – 59. The majority of the students scored grade D with marks ranging from 45 – 49, constituting 33.3% of them. 10% of the students scored grade E with marks ranging from 40 – 44. One of the students (or 3.3%) failed the exam with a grade G, scoring below 40 marks. The results demonstrate that the majority of the students scored a grade C or a grade D, which is below satisfactory. They generally have a poor command of the English language and might face great difficulties in learning the language. The

issues that may contribute to their poor language proficiency will be further discussed in the following topic.

4.2.2 Students' exposure to the English language

According to the findings derived from No. 1 of section B, the results show a lack of exposure to the English language. Table 4.2 shows the percentage of students' response in No.1, section B.

Table 4.2: Percentage of Students' response to No.1, Section B

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Total (%)
a. Do you speak English at home?	0	0	20	80	100
b. Do you speak to your classmates in English?	0	3.3	10	86.7	100
c. Do you speak to your teachers in English?	0	13.3	16.7	70	100
d. Does your English teacher use English to conduct lessons?	23.3	76.7	10	0	100
e. Do you write in English? (Except writing English essays at school)	0	16.7	53.3	30	100
f. Do you listen to English news?	0	16.7	30	53.3	100
g. Do you listen to English radio stations?	6.7	23.3	30	40	100
h. Do you listen to English songs?	16.7	36.7	30	16.7	100
i. Do you read English newspapers?	0	10	23.3	66.7	100
j. Do you read English magazines?	0	13.3	46.7	40	100
k. Do you read English books?	0	23.3	36.7	40	100
l. Do you watch English movies?	23.3	53.3	16.7	6.7	100

The results of Table 4.2 show that the students generally have little exposure to the English language. Results of No. a, No. b and No. c show that none of the students communicate often using English. A small number 'Sometimes' and 'Seldom' use English to communicate. The majority of the students never communicate in English where 80% of them never speak English at home, 86.7% of them never speak to their

classmates in English, and 70% of them never speak to their teachers in English. In No. d, 23.3% of the students think that their English teacher 'often' used English to conduct lessons while a majority of the students (76.7%) state that their teacher 'sometimes' use English to conduct lesson. All the 30 students are taught by the same teacher. However, it is interesting that they don't share the same idea regarding the amount of English used by their teacher in class. Results in No. e show that none of the students 'often' write in English, 'sometimes' (16.7%), 'seldom' (53.3%) and 'never' (30%). The researcher proposes that the factors that contribute to the small amount of students 'sometimes' and 'seldom' writing in English is that these students may write in English for Internet sites such as Facebook, Youtube and Twitter. Young people today spend more time on social networks for entertainment and communication purposes. No. f to No. l show the students' exposure to English media and materials. The results indicate that the items rated with the highest percentage were from categories 'seldom' and 'never.' This suggests that the students hardly read any materials related to English. It is noted that majority of the students (53.3%) 'Sometimes' watch English movies and 23.3% of them 'often' watch English movies. 36.7% of the students 'Sometimes' listen to English song. It is noticed that there is a higher percentage that students exposed themselves to English songs and movies. This may indicate that the English media plays a significant role in majority of the students' lives.

4.2.3 Students' perception about learning English

Table 4.3 shows the findings about students' perception about learning English derived from No.2 of section B.

Table 4.3 Students' Perception about Learning English

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (%)
a. Learning English is more difficult than learning Mandarin.	20	46.7	20	13.3	0	100
b. I have difficulties in writing English.	23.3	70	6.7	0	0	100
c. I have difficulties in understanding English verbs.	26.7	60	10	3.3	0	100
d. My English teacher explained clearly on how to use different verbs in different situations.	0	13.3	36.7	50	0	100
e. My parents know that English is important.	13.3	50	26.7	10	0	100
f. My parents encourage me to learn English.	6.7	40	46.7	6.7	0	100
g. Knowing how to write well in English is very useful.	33.3	60	6.7	0	0	100
h. English is useful in job requirement.	33.3	60	6.7	0	0	100
i. I need to improve my English.	36.7	63.3	0	0	0	100

According to the results shown in Table 4.3, the majority of students claimed that learning English is more difficult than learning Mandarin (20% 'Strongly agree' and 46.7% 'Agree'). The majority of students also agree that they face difficulties in writing in English and understanding English verbs. This may be caused by the fact that English verb forms were not properly taught in English class. This is showed in No. d where the results indicate that 50% of the students 'Disagree' that their English teacher explained clearly how to use different verbs in different situations. Results shown in No. e show that most parents understand the importance of English and almost half of them encourage their children to learn the language. Almost all of the students agree that being able to write well in English is vital and that English is useful for job requirements. All of them think they need to improve their English for a better future.

Results from No.3 in section B show that 76.7% of the students construct their ideas in Mandarin before translating them into English writings.

The results of No.4 in section B are shown in Table 4.4. Out of 30 students, 24 of them provided their opinion whereas 6 of them did not write a word. There were some similar opinions among them. The problematic sentences written by the students were refined to make them free of grammatical errors. The senses of the sentences were not changed. The students' opinions about how they could improve their English standards are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Students' Opinion Related to Question No.4, Section B

No.	Student's personal opinion	Number of students with the same opinion
1	I need to do more English exercises.	5
2	Read more English materials.	3
3	I should attend more English private tuition lessons.	3
4	More English lessons should be conducted in schools.	1
5	I need to find a private tutor who knows how to teach effectively.	1
6	Remedial classes should be conducted to assist students that are weak in English.	1
7	I should do more revision on English.	1
8	I need to do more English exercises on the aspects that I am weak in.	0
9	I need to buy more English workbook and reference book.	0
10	English lessons should be made more interesting.	0

4.3   Presentation of Verb Errors in the Essays

The student's written tasks, which consisted of 90 essays, were analyzed and verb errors were determined. The errors were categorized into 10 categories consisting of the following: subject-verb agreement, simple past, simple present, past perfect, present perfect, progressive, infinitive, futurity, passive and modality. The errors in each

category were further analyzed to determine selection errors, omission errors and addition errors. The frequency and percentage of occurrence for each type of error were shown and in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Distribution of Verb Errors According to Categories

Category	Selection	%	Omission	%	Addition	%	Total	%
Subject-verb Agreement	82	70.7	34	29.3	0	0	116	27.8
Simple Past	58	65.9	0	0	30	34.1	88	21.1
Simple Present	39	60.9	0	0	25	39.1	64	15.4
Past Perfect	17	38.6	27	61.4	0	0	44	10.6
Infinitive	25	100	0	0	0	0	25	6
Present Perfect	5	23.8	16	76.2	0	0	21	5
Modality	11	44	9	36	5	20	25	6
Progressive	2	10.5	17	89.5	0	0	19	4.6
Futurity	9	81.8	0	0	2	18.2	11	2.6
Passive	4	100	0	0	0	0	4	1
Total	252	60.4	103	24.7	62	14.9	417	100

Based on the findings, a total of 417 errors related to verb were determined. Out of the three categories of Corder's Taxonomy of errors, selection errors constituted the highest frequency (252 errors or 60.4%), followed by omission errors (103 errors or 24.7%) and addition errors (62 errors or 14.9%). In the subject-verb agreement, selection errors constituted the highest frequency (82 errors or 70.7%), followed by omission errors (34 errors or 29.3%) and there were no addition errors in this category. In the simple past, selection errors made up the most errors (58 errors or 65.9%) followed by addition errors (30 errors or 34.1%) and there were no errors recorded in the omission category. For the simple present, selection category has the highest frequency (39 errors or 60%), followed by addition errors (25 errors or 38.5%) and there were no errors found in the omission category. For past perfect, omission errors constituted the highest frequency (27 errors or 61.4%), followed by selection errors (17 errors or 38.6%). There were no addition errors found the past perfect. In infinitive, only

selection errors were determined (25 errors or 100%). In the present perfect, omission errors constituted the highest frequency (16 errors or 76.2%), followed by selection errors (5 errors or 23.8%) and there were no addition errors found. In the category of modality, the highest frequency of errors was found in the selection category (11 errors or 44%), followed by omission (9 errors or 36%) and addition (5 errors or 20%). For progressive, the highest frequency of errors yielded from the omission category (17 errors or 89.5%), followed by selection (2 errors or 10.5%) and there were no errors found in the addition category. For futurity, selection errors constituted the highest frequency (9 errors or 81.8%) followed by addition errors (2 errors or 18.2%). No errors were determined from the omission category in the simple future. As for the passive, only selection errors were determined (4 errors or 100%). From the overall findings of the essays, it is obvious that the students made the most errors in the selection category, followed by omission and addition.

4.4   Presentation of Errors Using Corder's Taxonomy of Errors

The errors in the 10 categories of verb forms, namely subject-verb agreement, simple past, simple present, past perfect, present perfect, modality, infinitive, progressive, futurity, and passive, were analyzed to determine the errors related to selection, omission, and addition errors. The types of errors found in each category are presented with examples taken from the students' essays.

4.5   Selection Errors

Errors found in the selection category constitute the highest frequency of errors. These make up a total number of 252 errors or 60.4% of the total errors found in the student's essays. The distribution of selection errors according to verb categories is shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Distribution of Selection Errors in the Verb Form Categories

Category	Selection Errors	Percentage (%)
Subject-verb Agreement	82	32.5
Simple Past	58	23
Simple Present	39	15.5
Infinitive	25	9.9
Past Perfect	17	6.8
Modality	11	4.4
Futurity	9	3.6
Present Perfect	5	2
Passive	4	1.6
Progressive	2	0.8
Total	252	100

Based on the findings, subject-verb agreement constitute the highest frequency of the total number of selection errors (82 errors or 32.5%), followed by simple past (58 errors or 23%), simple present (39 errors or 15.5%), infinitive (25 errors or 9.9%), past perfect (17 errors or 6.8%), modality (11 errors or 4.4%), futurity (9 errors or 3.6%), present perfect (5 errors or 2%), passive (4 errors or 1.6%) and progressive (2 errors or 0.8%).

4.5.1 Selection errors in subject-verb agreement

Subject-verb agreement has the highest frequency of selection errors among the verb form categories, constituting 82 errors or 32.5% of total selection errors. The distribution of selection errors found in the subject-verb agreement is shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Distribution of Selection Errors in Subject-verb Agreement

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) The use of a singular *be* verb for a plural subject	29	35.4
b) The use of a plural verb for a singular subject in present tense	21	25.6
c) The use of a singular verb for a plural subject in present tense	16	19.5
d) The use of a plural *be* verb for a singular subject	11	13.4
e) The use of an improper *be* verb for a subject	5	6.1
Total	82	100

From the data shown in Table 4.7, the most common errors in subject-verb agreement are 'the use of a singular *be* verb for a plural subject' which constitute 29 errors or 35.4% of total selection errors, followed by 'the use of a plural verb for a singular subject in present tense' (21 errors or 25.6%), 'the use of a singular verb for a plural subject in present tense' (16 errors or 19.5%), 'the use of a plural *be* verb for a singular subject' (11 errors or 13.4%). The least common error in the category is 'the use of an improper *be* verb for a subject' which constituted only 5 errors or 6.1%. Examples of selection errors of subject-verb agreement are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Examples of Selection Errors in Subject-verb Agreement

Errors	Correction
a) The use of a singular *be* verb for plural subject • If children <u>is</u> not willing to take tuition, it is…	are
b) The use of a plural verb for a singular subject in present tense • Furthermore, pressure get from private tuition teacher also <u>add</u> load on their shoulder and <u>make</u> them always live under high expectation.	adds, makes
c) The use of a singular verb for a plural subject in present tense • I believe almost all students, no matter students from primary school or from secondary school <u>gets</u> at least a private tuition after school.	get
d) The use of a plural *be* verb for a singular subject • She <u>have</u> a grand piano at home and she plays it everyday.	has
e) The use of an improper *be* verb for a subject • They always yawn and fall asleep instead of study in the tuition class as they <u>have</u> already exhausted and no energy to concentrate to their lesson	are

4.5.2 Selection errors in the simple past

The simple past has the second highest frequency in the selection category, constituting 58 errors or 23% of total selection errors. The distribution of selection errors found in the simple past is shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Distribution of Selection Errors in the Simple Past

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) The use of simple present instead of simple past	27	46.6
b) The use of past perfect instead of simple past	15	25.9
c) The use of present perfect instead of simple past	7	12.1
d) The use of an improper form for simple past	6	10.3
e) The use of progressive instead of simple past	3	5.2
Total	58	100

From the data shown in Table 4.9, the most common errors made in the simple past are 'the use of simple present instead of simple past' which make up a total of 27 errors or 46.6% of all the errors. This is followed by 'the use of past perfect instead of simple past' (15 errors or 25.9%), 'the use of present perfect instead of simple past' (7 errors or 12.1%), 'the use of improper form for simple past' (6 errors or 10.3%) and 'the use of progressive instead of simple past' (3 errors or 5.2%). Examples of selection errors in simple past are shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Examples of Selection Errors in Simple Past

Errors	Correction
a) The use of simple present instead of simple past • His parent was so sad but never <u>give</u> up finding him.	gave
b) The use of past perfect instead of simple past • Before he <u>had left</u>, he begged me not to let anyone knows where he was.	left
c) The use of present perfect instead of simple past • I <u>have</u> finally <u>regretted</u> and realized of having a good future and…	regretted
d) The use of an improper form for simple past • They just <u>could found</u> his corpse.	found
e) The use of progressive instead of simple past • Mei See <u>was realizing</u> that she did wrong this time and prepared to apologize.	realized

4.5.3 Selection errors in the simple present

The simple present has the third highest frequency of selection errors among the verb form categories, constituting 39 errors or 15.5% of total selection errors. The distribution of selection errors found in the simple present is shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Distribution of Selection Errors in the Simple Present

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) The use of progressive instead of simple present	15	38.5
b) The use of simple past instead of simple present	14	35.9
c) The use of present perfect instead of simple present	10	25.6
Total	39	100

From the data shown in Table 4.11, the three types of simple present errors are almost equally common among students with 'the use of progressive instead of simple present' having the highest frequency (15 errors or 38.5%), followed closely by 'the use of simple past instead of simple present' (14 errors or 35.9%) and 'the use of present perfect instead of simple present' (10 errors or 25.6%). The examples of selection errors in the simple present tense are shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Examples of Selection Errors in the Simple Present

Errors	Correction
a) The use of progressive instead of simple present • Besides that, I need to pay my attention when I <u>going</u> for tuition without chatting with other friends.	go
b) The use of simple past instead of simple present • I <u>wished</u> I will be all the better in the new year.	wish
c) The use of present perfect instead of simple present • He <u>has come</u> from a rural village.	comes

4.5.4 Selection errors in infinitive

The errors in the infinitive constituted 25 errors or 9.9% of total selection errors. The distribution of selection errors found in the infinitive is shown in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13: Distribution of Selection Errors in the Infinitive

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) The use of simple past instead of non-finite verb	13	52
b) The use of present tense instead of infinitive	6	24
c) The use of past tense instead of infinitive	4	16
d) The use of progressive instead of infinitive	2	8
Total	25	100

From the data shown in Table 4.13, errors from the category 'the use of simple past instead of non-finite' make up most of the errors (13 errors or 52%), followed by 'the use of present tense instead of infinitive' (6 errors or 24%), 'the use of past tense instead of infinitive' (4 errors or 16%) and 'the use of progressive instead of infinitive' (2 errors or 8%). Examples of selection errors in the infinitive are shown in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Examples of Selection Errors in Infinitive

Errors	Correction
a) The use of simple past instead of non-finite • I was surprised <u>to heard</u> that his parents divorced. • I felt sorry for his death because this was my duty <u>to stopped</u> him.	to hear to stop
b) The use of present tense instead of infinitive • Before he had left, he begged me not to let anyone <u>knows</u> where he was.	know
c) The use of past tense instead of infinitive • Parents often let their children <u>received</u> tuition after school day.	receive
d) The use of progressive instead of infinitive • I <u>don't wasting</u> time in computer games.	do not waste

4.5.5 Selection errors in past perfect

The past perfect constituted 17 errors or 6.8% of total selection errors. The distribution of selection errors found in past perfect is shown in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Distribution of Selection Errors in Past Perfect

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) The use of present perfect instead of past perfect	8	47.1
b) The use of infinitive after the auxiliary verb	5	29.4
c) The use of simple past instead of past perfect	3	17.7
d) The use of the wrong *be* verb in past perfect	1	5.9
Total	17	100

The data shown in Table 4.15 demonstrate that 'the use of present perfect instead of past perfect' constitutes the highest frequency in the past perfect category with 8 errors detected or 47.1% of the total errors. This is followed by 'the use of infinitive after the auxiliary verb' (5 errors or 29.4%), 'the use of simple past instead of past perfect' (3 errors or 17.7%). There is only 1 error found in the category of 'the use of the wrong *be* verb in past perfect', constituting only 5.9% of the total errors. Examples of past perfect errors are shown in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16: Examples of Selection Errors in Past Perfect

Errors	Correction
a) The use of present perfect instead of past perfect • Samuel <u>have left</u> us for nine months but yet his parent did not get any news from him.	had left
b) The use of infinitive after the auxiliary verb • I realized the reason why Samuel <u>had change</u> to another person all in a sudden recently.	had changed
c) The use of simple past instead of past perfect • The negligence from his parents <u>caused</u> Samuel to go astray.	had caused
d) The use of the wrong *be* verb in past perfect • One day, I knew that Samuel <u>was decided</u> to leave here so I dashed to the alley he used to be.	had decided

4.5.6 Selection errors in modality

Modality errors constitute 11 errors or 4.4% of total selection errors. The distribution of selection errors found in modality is shown in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17: Distribution of Selection Errors in Modality

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) The use of simple past instead of infinitive after the modal verb	6	54.6
b) The use of infinitive instead of past participle after the modal verb in passive form	5	45.5
Total	11	100

From Table 4.15, there were only two types of errors found in modality; namely, 'the use of simple past instead of infinitive after the modal verb' and 'the use of infinitive instead of past participle after the modal verb in passive form'. The former constituted 6 errors out of 11 errors (54.6%) and the latter one constituted 5 errors or 45.5%. Examples of errors in modality are shown in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18: Examples of Selection Errors in Modality

Errors	Correction
a) The use of simple past instead of infinitive after the modal verb • So, parents <u>may worried</u> that their children may lag behind if they do not send them to tuition.	may worry
b) The use of infinitive instead of past participle after the modal verb in passive form • Besides, additional knowledge <u>can be learn</u> in the private tuition.	can be learnt

4.5.7 Selection errors in the futurity

The verb errors found in the futurity constitute 9 errors or 3.6% of total selection errors.

The distribution of selection errors found in the simple future is shown in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19: Distribution of Selection Errors in Futurity

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) The use of progressive form instead of infinitive after the auxiliary verb	5	55.6
b) The use of simple past form instead of infinitive after the auxiliary verb	4	44.4
Total	9	100

Based on the data in Table 4.19, it was determined that 'the use of progressive form instead of infinitive after the auxiliary verb' constituted the highest frequency (5 errors or 55.6%) and 'the use of simple past form instead of infinitive after the auxiliary verb' made up 44.4% of the total errors (or 4 errors). Examples of errors in futurity are shown in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20: Examples of Selection Errors in Futurity

Errors	Correction
a) The use of progressive form instead of infinitive after the auxiliary verb • When have leisure time, I <u>will playing</u> basketball for my interesting.	will play
b) The use of simple past form instead of infinitive after the auxiliary verb • I <u>will spent</u> more time to stay with my family who are very important to me.	will spend

4.5.8 Selection errors in the present perfect

The present perfect only constitutes 5 errors or 2% of total selection errors. The distribution of selection errors found in the present perfect is shown in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21: Distribution of Selection Errors in the Present Perfect

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) The use of infinitive after the auxiliary verb	4	80
b) The use of simple present instead of present perfect	1	20
Total	5	100

Based on the data shown in Table 4.21, 'the use of infinitive after the auxiliary verb' constituted most of the errors in the present perfect with 4 errors or 80% of errors whereas there was only 1 error determined from the category of 'the use of simple present instead of present perfect' (20% of total errors). Examples of errors in the present perfect are shown in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22: Examples of Selection Errors in the Present Perfect

Errors	Correction
a) The use of infinitive after the auxiliary verb • This year, I <u>have plan</u> my new year resolutions better than last year.	have planned
b) The use of simple present instead of present perfect • I just <u>finish</u> my exam and now I want to plan the activity for the whole year.	have just finished

4.5.9   Selection errors in the passive verb

Selection errors in the passive verb only constituted 4 errors or 1.6% of total selection errors. The distribution of selection errors found in the passive is shown in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23: Distribution of Selection Errors in the Passive

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) The use of simple present instead of passive	2	50
b) The use of progressive instead of past participle for passive	2	50
Total	4	100

The data shown in Table 4.23 indicate that there were only 4 errors determined in the passive verb. The two categories, namely 'the use of simple present instead of passive' and 'the use of progressive instead of past participle for passive,' both constituted the equal percentage of errors in the passive verb, which was 50% (or 2 errors). Examples of errors in the passive are shown in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24: Examples of Selection Errors in the Passive

Errors	Correction
a) The use of simple present instead of passive • Good results <u>obtain</u> by those who work hard.	will be obtained
b) The use of progressive instead of past participle for passive • The student could change a way to obtain their knowledge in the tuition class where they don't understand what <u>was teaching</u> by the teacher.	was being taught

4.5.10   Selection errors in progressive

There were only 2 errors determined in progressive, constituting just 0.8% of the selection errors. The 2 errors are shown in table 4.25.

Table 4.25: Examples of Selection Errors in Progressive

Errors	Correction
a) The use of simple present instead of progressive • When my mother phoned me, I <u>sleep</u> in my room.	was sleeping
b) The use of simple past instead of progressive • We <u>played</u> happily when the fire broke out all in a sudden.	were playing

4.6   Omission Errors

Errors found in the omission category constituted the second highest frequency of errors. These made up a total number of 103 errors or 24.7% of the total errors found in the student's essays. The distribution of omission errors according to verb categories is shown in Table 4.26.

Table 4.26: Distribution of Omission Errors in the Verb Form Categories

Category	Omission Errors	Percentage (%)
Subject-verb Agreement	34	33
Past Perfect	27	26.2
Progressive	17	16.5
Present Perfect	16	15.5
Modality	9	8.7
Simple Present	0	0
Simple Past	0	0
Infinitive	0	0
Futurity	0	0
Passive	0	0
Total	103	100

Based on data shown in Table 4.26, the omission errors were mostly found in subject-verb agreement, constituting 34 errors or 33% of the total number of omission errors, followed by past perfect (27 errors 26.2%), progressive (17 errors or 16.5%), present perfect (16 errors or 15.5%) and modality (9 errors or 8.7%). There were not

any omission errors determined in the category of simple present, simple past, infinitive, futurity and passive.

4.6.1 Omission errors in subject-verb agreement

Subject-verb agreement made up the largest portion of omission errors, constituting 33% of the total number of omission errors. The distribution of omission errors found in the subject-verb agreement category is shown in Table 4.27.

Table 4.27: Distribution of Omission Errors in Subject-verb Agreement

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) Omission of the copula *be* verb *was*	15	44.1
b) Omission of the copula *be* verb *is*	9	26.5
f) Omission of the copula *be* verb *were*	8	23.5
g) Omission of the copula *be* verb *am*	2	5.9
Total	34	100

From the data shown in Table 4.27, it is clear that students tended to omit the copula *be* verb in verb forms as all errors were a result of the omission of copula *be* verbs. Out of the copula *be* verbs, the omission of *was* had the highest frequency (15 errors or 44.1%), followed by the omission of *is* (9 errors or 26.5%), the omission of *were* (8 errors or 23.5%). The omission of 'am' has the least errors, constituting 2 errors or 5.9%. Examples of omission errors in subject-verb agreement are shown in Table 4.28.

Table 4.28: Examples of Omission Errors in Subject-verb Agreement

Errors
a) Omission of the copula *be* verb *was*
• I rushed to in front of him in a record time and asked about what Ø his next step.
b) Omission of the copula *be* verb *is*
• I need to follow her advice that Ø good for me.
c) Omission of the copula *be* verb *were*
• My year end results Ø not good so I need to improve.
d) Omission of the copula *be* verb *am*
• Therefore, I Ø determined that I must study hard so that I can get the good results.

4.6.2   Omission errors in past perfect

The second category of verbs that have the highest frequency in omission error is the past perfect, constituting 27 errors or 26.2% of the total number of omission errors. All errors in the past perfect resulted from the omission of the auxiliary verb *had*. An example of an error in the past perfect is shown in Table 4.29.

Table 4.29: An Example of Omission Errors in Past Perfect

Errors
a) Omission of the auxiliary *be* verb *had*
• I Ø taken away all the important evidence before Samuel came.

4.6.3   Omission errors in progressive

The progressive has the third highest frequency in omission errors, constituting 17 errors or 16.5% of the total number of omission errors. The distribution of omission errors found in the progressive category is shown in Table 4.30.

Table 4.30: Distribution of Omission Errors in the Progressive

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) Omission of the auxiliary *be* verb in progressive	12	70.6
b) Omission of *ing* form in progressive	5	29.4
Total	17	100

Table 4.30 shows that 70.6% of omission errors in progressive yielded from the category 'omission of the auxiliary *be* verb in progressive and 29.4% of the omission errors resulted from the omission of the *ing* form. The examples of omission errors in progressive are shown in Table 4.31.

Table 4.31: Examples of Omission Errors in Progressive

Errors	Correction
a) Omission of the auxiliary *be* verb in progressive • They Ø trying their best to chased the bad guys away.	were
b) Omission of *ing* form in progressive • He told me he was go Ø to Vietnam to hide himself.	was going

4.6.4 Omission errors in present perfect

Omission errors in present perfect constituted 16 errors or 15.5% of total omission errors. All errors in the present perfect resulted either from the omission of the auxiliary verb *has* or *have*. Table 4.32 shows examples for this type of error.

Table 4.32: Examples of Omission Errors in Present Perfect

Errors	Correction
a) Omission of the auxiliary verb *has* • Private tuition Ø already become a trend by time to time.	has
b) Omission of the auxiliary verb have • I am thankful to my father who Ø given me money to join the program.	have

4.6.5   Omission errors in modality

Omission errors in modality only constituted 9 errors or 8.7% of total omission errors.
Table 4.33 shows examples of errors in modality.

Table 4.33: Examples of Omission Errors in Modality

Errors	Correction
a) Omission of the *be* verb • I should Ø polite towards them, not shouting at my parents neither my siblings.	be
b) Omission of the modal verb • I believed there Ø be a way for me to improve my mathematics.	should/must

4.7   Addition Errors

Errors found in the addition category constituted the least frequency of verb form errors.
This yielded only 62 errors or 14.9% of the total errors found in student essays. The
distribution of addition errors according to verb categories is shown in Table 4.34.

Table 4.34: Distribution of Addition Errors in the Verb Form Categories

Category	Addition Errors	Percentage (%)
Simple Past	30	48.4
Simple Present	25	40.3
Modality	5	8.1
Futurity	2	3.2
Subject-verb Agreement	0	0
Present Perfect	0	0
Past Perfect	0	0
Infinitive	0	0
Progressive	0	0
Passive	0	0
Total	62	100

Based on Table 4.34, addition errors in the simple past tense category made up the most addition errors in the students' essays, constituting 30 errors or 48.4% of the total number of addition errors. This is followed by addition errors in the simple present category (25 errors or 40.3%), modality (5 errors or 8.1%) and futurity (2 errors or 3.2%). There were no addition errors determined in the category of subject-verb agreement, present perfect, past perfect, infinitive, progressive or the passive.

4.7.1 Addition errors in the simple past

The simple past has the highest frequency of addition errors, constituting 30 errors or 48.4% of the total number of addition errors. The distribution of addition errors found in the simple past is shown in Table 4.35.

Table 4.35: Distribution of Addition Errors in the Simple Past

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) Addition of the *be* verb *was*	14	46.7
b) Addition of the *be* verb *were*	8	26.7
c) Addition of a main verb	7	23.3
d) Addition of the *be* verb *am*	1	3.3
Total	30	100

Based on Table 4.35, addition of the *be* verb *was* was the most common error in the simple past, constituting 14 errors or 46.7%, followed by the addition of the *be* verb *were* (8 errors or 26.7%), addition of a main verb (7 errors or 23.3%) and the addition of the *be* verb *am* (1 error or 3.3%). Examples of addition errors in the simple past are shown in Table 4.36.

Table 4.36: Examples of Addition Errors in the Simple Past

Errors
a) Addition of the *be* verb *was*   • I <u>was regretted</u> not telling anyone where Samuel had gone.
b) Addition of the *be* verb *were*   • They <u>were agreed</u> with my plan.
c) Addition of a main verb   • I <u>felt</u> regretted not telling anyone where Samuel had gone.
d) Addition of the *be* verb *am*   • …and I <u>am regretted</u> not telling anyone Samuel had gone.

4.7.2 Addition errors in the simple present

The simple present has the second highest frequency of addition errors, constituting 5 errors or 8.1% of the total number of addition errors. The distribution of addition errors found in the simple present is shown in Table 4.37.

Table 4.37: Distribution of Addition Errors in the Simple Present

Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) Addition of the *be* verb *is*	10	40
b) Addition of the *be* verb *am*	6	24
c) Addition of the *be* verb *are*	5	20
c) Addition of a main verb	4	16
Total	25	100

Based on Table 4.37, the addition of the *be* verb *is* was the most common error, constituting 10 errors or 40%, followed by the addition of the *be* verb *am* (6 errors or 24%), the addition of the *be* verb *are* (5 errors or 20%) and the addition of a main verb (4 errors or 16%). Examples of addition errors in the simple present are shown in Table 4.38.

Table 4.38: Examples of Addition Errors in the Simple Present

Errors
a) Addition of the *be* verb *is*   • The tutor <u>is</u> teaches us how to excel in our English by giving us more exercises.
a) Addition of the *be* verb *am*   • I <u>am</u> help my grandparents in their orchard every week.
b) Addition of the *be* verb *are*   • It is very useful to those who <u>are</u> really want to study.
c) Addition of a main verb   • I <u>felt</u> regretted not telling anyone where Samuel had gone.

4.7.3   Addition errors in modality

Addition errors in modality only consisted of 5 errors or 8.1% of the total number of

addition errors. Examples of addition errors in modality are shown in Table 4.39.

Table 4.39: Examples of Addition Errors in Modality

Errors
a) Addition of the *be* verb   • I should <u>be</u> control my bad temper so that the argument between my friends can be reduce or even not happening again.   • I need to improve English so that I can <u>be</u> work in a foreign country next time.

4.7.4   Addition errors in futurity

There were only 2 errors determined in futurity, constituting only 3.2% of the total

number of omission errors. Examples of addition errors in futurity are shown in Table

4.40.

Table 4.40: Examples of Addition Errors in Futurity

Errors
a) Addition of the *be* verb *am*
• Then, I'<u>m</u> also will spend some time having outdoor activities because it can increase my height.
b) Addition of the *be* verb *have*
• Every morning, I will <u>have</u> jog or cycle so I can keep my health in pink.

4.8   Syntactic Errors

There were only 4 syntactic errors found in the writings of the students. These problematic sentences show that syntactic errors happen when the interrogative sentence appears with the *wh*-words either in a main or subordinate clause. Table 4.41 shows the syntactic errors found in the essays of students.

Table 4.41: Examples of Syntactic Errors

Errors	Correction
a) *How effective the lesson is?	How effective is the lesson?
b) *He would not tell me where was he going to after he left his family.	He would not tell me where he was going to after he left his family.

4.9   Possible Causes of Selection Errors

Among the three types of errors in Corder's (1981) taxonomy of errors, selection errors were the most common and frequent type, constituting 252 errors or 60.4% of the total number of verb errors. Selection errors were determined in all the 10 verb form categories. Among verb form categories, subject-verb agreement yielded the highest frequency of selection errors. Selection errors were also common in verb form categories of simple past, simple present, and infinitive.

It is noted that the subjects for whom L1 is Mandarin faced great difficulty in selecting the right verb type for a particular context in their English writing. The

selection errors are termed interlingual errors and intralingual errors because they are caused by the interference of the L1 and the faulty or partial learning of the English language.

In the subject-verb agreement, selection errors made were due to the wrong selection of the copula *be* verb for a particular subject.

(1) a. If children <u>is</u> not willing to take tuition, it is a waste of time and money to sent them tuition because… (are)

b. She <u>have</u> a grand piano at home and she plays it everyday. (has)

In Example (1a), the copula *be* verb *is* does not match with the subject *children*. The correct copula *be* verb should be *are,* as the subject, which is a plural noun, should agree with a plural copula *be* verb instead of *is*. In Example (1b), the student used the plural copula *be* verb *have* instead of *has* for the singular subject *she*. Very often, the students used singular copula *be* verbs for plural subjects and plural copula *be* verbs for singular subjects. They were confused about the use of the English copula *be* verbs and did not know how to match them to the right subjects. This implies that the students still do not fully understand the rules of subject-verb agreement. Responses in the questionnaire show that over 85% of students claim that they have difficulties in understanding the agreement system in English verbs.

(2) a. Furthermore, pressure get from private tuition teacher also <u>add</u> load on their shoulder and <u>make</u> them always live under high expectation. (adds, makes)

b. I believe almost all students, no matter students from primary school or from secondary school, <u>gets</u> at least a private tuition after school. (get)

In (2a), the student used the plural verbs, *add* and *make*, for the singular subject *pressure*. The reason why the students tended to omit third person singular subject verb

markings (*-s, -es, -ies*) is due to the way they store English linguistic items for later retrieval. They focus on the singular verb or the stem verb which holds the core meaning instead of the plural verb to lessen their learning load. When writing, they are more inclined to retrieve the stem form, hence making errors in agreements. In (2b), the singular verb *get* was used for the plural subject *students*. This phenomenon is similar to the incorrect application of the copula *be* verb.

Another cause of the above errors is interference of the students' L1 (Mandarin) in the English language. Mandarin and English are two very distinct languages that have a very different verb system; the English verb system is far more complicated than that of Mandarin. Most English verbs are periphrastic and change their forms in different tenses and aspects. On the other hand, the verbs in Mandarin are not inflected and the form of verbs remains the same in different tenses and aspects. In Mandarin, there are no singular and plural forms of copula *be* verbs and therefore there isn't a correlation between the subject and number. As a result, the students were ignorant of the inflectional rules in English such as *-s*, *-es* and *-ies* for singular verbs, causing them to make errors in verb.

Selection errors in the simple past tense constituted the second highest frequency of the total number of selection errors while the simple present tense constituted the third highest frequency. It was found that the students mixed up the verb forms, applying the wrong form of verb in a particular tense. The results show that students tended to use simple present instead of simple past tense to describe an event which happened in the past. This type of error is shown in the following examples.

(3) a. His parent was so sad but never <u>give</u> up finding him. (gave)

b. He risked his future and <u>mix</u> with peers… (mixed)

In (3a), the student used the simple present form for the verb, *gives*, in an event happened in the past instead of using the past tense form *gave*. The first writing task

required the students to apply past tense form of verbs. It seemed that students somehow knew that they needed to write using past tense form but could not avoid switching back and forth between the past tense and present tense. This phenomenon is explained in (3a) and (3b), wherein (3a), the students applied the past tense copula *be* verb, *was*, correctly but failed to use the past tense form for the verb, *give*. The situation is the same in (3b), in which the student used the simple past correctly for the first clause but failed to use it in the second clause. In this case, the student over-generalized the use of present tense to verbs for the past tense.

(4) a. I <u>wished</u> I will be all the better in the new year. (wish)

b. He <u>has come</u> from a rural village. (comes)

c. Besides that, I need to pay my attention when I <u>going</u> for tuition without chatting with other friends. (go)

In the simple present, several students used the simple past tense for simple present tense. In (4a), the students were required to write what they wish to achieve in the coming year. The verb *wished* should be in the present form *wish*. In (4b), the student wanted to show the place where the subject *he* originated from and hence in this case, simple present should be used instead of present perfect. Besides this, the findings also show that some students used perfect tense and progressive tense for simple tense. This is shown in (4b) and (4c). By making such errors, it is obvious that students were facing difficulties in differentiating the various verb forms in English to use in a particular tense. The cause for the confusion is the interference of the students' L1 (Mandarin). Verbs in Mandarin do not experience any change or inflection in different forms. The following table shows the difference of verb forms between English and Mandarin.

Verb	English				Mandarin			
	past	present	progressive	Past participle	past	present	progressive	Past participle
eat	ate	eat/eats	eating	eaten	*chī*	*chī*	*chī*	*chī*
sing	sang	sing/sings	singing	sung	*chāng*	*chāng*	*chāng*	*chāng*
lie	lie	lie/lies	lying	lied	*tăng*	*tăng*	*tăng*	*tăng*

Based on the table, verbs, *eat*, *sing* and *lie*, take four forms where they change their forms in the past, present, progressive and past participle in English. On the other hand, these verbs remain the same in Mandarin which shows that verbs do not change their forms in Mandarin. Unlike English, time in Mandarin is expressed through aspect markers instead of changing verb forms. Due to significant differences in the verb system, Chinese ESL students who have yet to master the English verb system face difficulty in using the verb forms correctly.

In the infinitive, some of the students used a verb in the simple past instead of an infinitive verb in the 'to + infinitive' verb structure. The example of this kind of error is shown in Example (5).

(5) I was surprised <u>to heard</u> that his parents divorced. (to hear)

Again, the error shown in Example (5) indicates that students were confused about the rules of the verb system, mismatching an item in a verb form to other verb forms inappropriately. According to Hughes & Heah (1993), the majority of Chinese learners are not aware that the basic form of a verb is the infinitive, or the verb stem. It is a burden to them to remember and apply the complicated English linguistic structures as they are already accustomed to the simple structure of Chinese verb tense. This has caused them to often forget to apply the rules as required.

The selection errors in the other verb categories, namely past perfect, modality, simple future, present perfect, passive voice and progressive, constituted only a small

amount of selection errors. The errors in these categories were similar to the errors found in the subject-verb agreement and simple tenses, where verb forms were mixed up and used inappropriately.

4.10   Possible Causes of Omission Errors

Omission errors constituted 103 errors or 24.7% of the total errors found in the student's essays. This type of errors was found in subject-verb agreement, past perfect, progressive, present perfect and modality. There were no omission errors determined in the simple present, simple past, infinitive, simple future and passive voice categories. Among the verb form categories, subject-verb agreement yielded about three thirds of the total number of omission errors.

In the subject-verb agreement category, omission errors resulted from the omission of the copula *be* verb. The examples are as follows:

(6)   a. I rushed to in front of him in a record time and asked about what Ø his next step.

b. Therefore, I Ø determined that I must study hard so that I can get the good results. (am)

In (6a), the copula *be* verb *is* was omitted and whereas in (6b), the copula *be* verb *am* was omitted. These errors were caused due to the interference of the students' L1 (Mandarin) in English where students were seemed often applying rules of Mandarin in the English language. In Mandarin, a copula *be* verb is not needed after the subject. For example:

Mandarin	English
Wǒ nán guò 'I' 'sad'	I am sad.
Wǒ hài pà 'I' 'afraid'	I am afraid.

In the progressive category, omission errors resulted from the omission of the auxiliary verb in the verb phrase and the *ing* form. The examples were as follows:

(7) a. They Ø trying their best to chased the bad guys way. (were)

b. He told me he was go Ø to Vietnam to hide himself. (ing)

In (7a), the auxiliary verb *were* was omitted. This was term as an interlingual error where the L1 of the students interfere in their L2 writings. In (7b), only 2 of the students omitted the *ing* form in the progressive. This indicated that the students did not even understand what constitutes to the structure of the progressive form, let alone using it in the correct context. This phenomenon was caused by the incomplete learning and application of the progressive rules among the students.

In the present perfect and past perfect categories, all omission errors resulted from the omission of the auxiliary *has*, *have* and *had*. Examples are as follows:

(8) a. Private tuition Ø already become a trend by time to time. (has)

b. I already Ø taken away all the important evidence before Samuel came.
(had)

c. I am thankful to my father who Ø given me money to join the program.
(had)

In (8a) and (8b), the omission of the auxiliary verb was very common among Chinese ESL students as the verb *already* contains the connotation of the perfect tense in Mandarin. In this case, intralingual errors had taken place where the students over generalized the use of 'already' to indicate perfect tense.

In modality, the findings indicated that some students omitted the auxiliary *be* and some omitted the modal verbs. Examples are as follows:

(9) a. I should Ø polite towards them, not shouting at my parents neither my

siblings. (be)

b. I believed there Ø be a way for me to improve my mathematics.

The error made in (9a) was an interlingual error where Mandarin interferes in English. The students tended to omit auxiliary verbs which were not familiar to them as in Mandarin; there are no auxiliary verbs. In (9b), the possible modal verb omitted in the sentence could be *would*, *might*, *could* or *must*. The omission of a modal verb was termed an intralingual error. It is believed that the students might have experienced incomplete learning of the rules and hence did not know what was the correct modal verb to use in the context in (9b). By omitting the modal verb, the student is said to be reducing his linguistic burden.

In general, most omission errors resulted from the omission of the copula *be* verbs or auxiliary verbs. The possible causes of omission error were the interference of Mandarin in English, incomplete learning and application of rules, overgeneralization of language rules. This type of concord errors is common among Chinese learners; by omitting verbs, they are inclined to generalize and simplify in order to reduce the linguistic burden. Some may think that it is better to omit than to write something they are unsure about.

4.11   Possible Causes of Addition Errors

Addition errors were the least common type of errors, constituting only 62 errors or 14.9% of the total errors found in the students' essays. They were only determined in the simple past, simple present, modality and simple future category.

In the simple past and simple present category, addition errors mostly resulted from the addition of unnecessary verbs, followed by the addition of unnecessary main verbs. Examples are as follows:

(10) a. They <u>were</u> agreed with my plan.

    b. It is very useful to those who <u>are</u> really want to study.

In (10a), the auxiliary verb *were* was added although not needed in the past tense, whereas in (10b), the auxiliary verb *are* was added in the simple present tense. These are intralingual errors where students over-generalized verbs expressing the simple past and simple present tenses. Another possible cause for these errors was false concepts hypothesized by students. When the students learn a certain grammatical rule, they may not understand the use of the rule and may use it in another context in which it is not applicable. They seem to be forming false hypotheses and creating their own language rules, which results in such errors.

In modality, addition errors resulted from the addition of the *be* verb which was not needed. Examples are as follows:

(11) I need to improve English so that I can <u>be</u> work in a foreign country next time.

In example (11), the *be* verb was not appropriate and the correct verb phrase should be *can work*. This may be caused by the students' overgeneralization of the verb *be* to be used after a modal verb. In the example above, the verb following *be* should be followed by a subject complement instead of a to-do verb. If the modal verb is followed by a to-do verb, the verb *be* is not required. In this case, the students did not know when to apply the *be* verb appropriately; therefore, they over-generalized the *be* verb. They were also forming false hypotheses about the rules of modality.

There were a few omission errors determined in the simple future. An example is shown below.

(12) Then, <u>I'm</u> also will spend some time having outdoor activities because it can increase my height.

In Example (12), there are double verbs where the copula *be* verb *am* is not required. The above sentence expresses an activity that will soon be carried out in the future therefore *am* is not appropriate to be used. This implied that the student was confused about the use of copula verbs and the rules of simple future. Therefore, he formed his own false hypotheses when he could not figure out the correct rules of modality.

4.12 Possible Causes of Syntactic Errors

The findings in student essays indicate that there were some verb phrases that were formed inappropriately, affecting the syntactic function of the sentences. These problematic sentences resulted from the false order of words within the verb phrase. Examples of this type of errors are as follows:

(13) a. *How effective the lesson is?

    b. *He would not tell me where was he going to after he left his family.

In Example (13a), the correct sentence should be *How effective is the lesson?* In English, the copula *be* verb *is* should come before the subject *the lesson* in the interrogative form. In Example (13b), the correct sentence should be *He would not tell me where he was going to after he left his family*. The auxiliary *was* should come after the subject *he* in statement form. These examples of errors have affected the syntactic function of the sentence due to the disarrangement of words within the verb phrase, where the sentence in (13a) may be mistaken as a statement and the sentence in (13b) may be mistaken as a question.

Based on the error in Example (13b), it is obvious that the student did not understand the rules in forming interrogatives. He was familiar with the SVC (subject + verb + complement) structure of English statement and hence when he came to

constructing interrogatives which was unfamiliar to him, he over-generalized the use of SVC structure in interrogative form. This type of error is termed intralingual errors caused by faulty learning of the English language. Example (13b) also indicates that overgeneralization has taken place. The student has mistaken that the auxiliary verb *was* should come before the subject and after the *wh* -question *where*. However, the *where* in the sentence does not function as the *wh*-question. The whole phrase 'where was he going to after he left his family' is instead an object complement. The student did not understand other uses of *where,* except for its function as a *wh*-question. Therefore, he over-generalized the use of rules of interrogative form in statement form.

These errors are also known as interlingual errors, as the word structures of the students' L1 (Mandarin) interfered with the way they construct English sentences. In Mandarin, interrogatives are formed by simply adding a marker for interrogatives, without changing the word order or the new positioning of the verb. Therefore, the student more familiar with his L1 referred to the rules of forming questions and statements in his English writing.

Moreover, errors mentioned were due to the students' incomplete application of rules. The students mixed up the rules of forming questions and statements and misarranged the words within the verb phrase. Although they have internalized some features of the rules in question formation, they have not fully mastered the rules, as they used the rules in contexts which were inappropriate.

4.13   Conclusion

Findings from both the questionnaire and writing tasks have helped the researcher to determine possible verb form errors in the essays of the Chinese ESL students, as well as revealing the possible causes of these errors. It was found that Chinese ESL students are facing great difficulties in mastering the English verb system, which is far more

complicated than that of Mandarin. English verbs change forms in different tense and aspect and are periphrastic while Mandarin verbs do not change form and inflect.

The findings also revealed that selection errors are the most common errors followed by omission and addition. The possible causes that resulted in the selection errors and omission errors were due to the interference of the L1 where students referred to the structures of their L1 when constructing English sentences. For instance, selecting a wrong verb to agree with a subject, omitting copula *be* verbs and auxiliary verbs, were caused by L1 interference. In addition, other possible causes of selection errors include overgeneralization of language rules and the incomplete application of rules.

The possible causes of omission errors are the overgeneralization of rules and the false concepts hypothesized by the students. For example, the omission of auxiliary verbs is a common norm resulted from faulty learning and overgeneralization. The low frequency in addition errors indicates that it is not likely for the students to add more verbs to the verb phrases as they are affected by the verb structure of Mandarin which is short and simple. The syntactic errors have a low frequency in this study, constituting only 4 of the total number of errors. These errors were caused by the incomplete application of rules where the students applied certain rules inappropriately, resulting in a change of the intended meaning.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and conclusions are drawn based on the analysis of the verb errors made by the subjects. Common errors and their possible causes are highlighted. Implications for pedagogical purposes and suggestions for future research are also made in this chapter.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

A summary of the results drawn from both the questionnaire and written tasks are shown in the following session.

5.2.1 Summary of the findings of the questionnaire

The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain the Chinese ESL students' language background and their exposure to the English language, as well as to find out their perceptions of learning English. The findings have shown that all students came from a Mandarin-speaking family, with 80% 'never' speaking English at home and only a small percentage of 20% who 'seldom' speak English at home. The students do not tend to read or write using English. In other words, most of them do not expose themselves to English materials such as books, magazines and newspapers. However, a majority of the students watch English movies and some listen to English songs regularly. This suggests that students are more exposed to entertainment in English.

Results have shown that more than 85% of the students claimed that they face difficulties in writing in English, as they have problems understanding English verb

forms. 63.3% parents of the students realize the importance of the English language and 46.7% of the parents encourage their children to learn English. This results show that the majority of the students' parents perceive that learning English is important and they motivate their children to learn the language. More than 90% of the students agree that being able to write in English is very essential and with good English proficiency, they will have the privilege in search of a job.

All of the students agreed that they need to improve their English proficiency, which means they actually realize their weakness in English and are willing to improve it. Some of the students suggest doing more English exercises to improve their English proficiency, while some suggest reading more English materials. Some students suggest attending more English private tuition lessons and conducting more English lessons in schools. Some of the students think that a private tutor who knows how to teach effectively would be able to improve the language proficiency.

5.2.2   Summary of the findings of the written tasks

In this study, the verb form errors made by the 30 Chinese ESL students of *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Idris Shah Gopeng* were identified. They were categorized into subject-verb agreement, simple past, simple present, past perfect, present perfect, progressive, infinitive, futurity, passive and modality. The errors were then classified according to Corder's (1981) taxonomy of errors namely selection errors, omission errors and addition errors.

The findings of the study indicate that the highest frequency of errors occurs in subject-verb agreement, constituting 27.8% of the total number of errors, followed by simple past (21.1%), simple present (15.4%), past perfect (10.6%), infinitive (6%), modality (6%), present perfect (5%), progressive (4.6%), futurity (2.6%) and passive

(1%). The results show that the weakest area of the students is the subject-verb agreement.

The findings show that selection errors constituted the highest frequency of verb errors. It made up a total of 252 errors or 60.4% of the total errors. This is followed by omission errors, which made up a total of 103 errors or 24.7% of the total errors while addition errors only constituted 62 errors or 14.9%. The high frequency in selection errors indicates that the students were confused about the various verb forms in English and do not know when to apply the correct verb forms in different contexts. Lastly, there are only a few syntactic errors found in the writings of the students. These errors occurred due to a false order of words within a verb phrase.

5.3   Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions may be drawn. A large number of errors were determined in the selection category, constituting 60.4% of the total number of errors. The highest frequency of selection errors were found in the subject-verb agreement, followed by simple past, simple present and infinitive. This indicates that students faced difficulty in selecting the correct verb forms in their writing. The most common selection error is the use of the wrong copula *be* verb for a subject. The students either used a singular verb with a plural subject or a plural verb with a singular subject. This shows that they do not understand the rules of subject-verb agreement.

Omission errors constituted 24.7% of total errors. The highest frequency of omission errors occurred in subject-verb agreement, past perfect and progressive. Students tend to omit the copula *be* verb as there isn't copula *be* verbs in Mandarin. This shows that they do not understand the use of copula *be* verbs in verb phrases. In progressive form, besides omitting the *be* verb, some students also omit the *-ing* form.

Addition errors constituted the fewest number of errors, constituting only 14.9% of total errors. Most addition errors resulted from the addition of the *be* verb inappropriately. This shows that the students mixed up the rules of to-be verbs and to-do verbs. They do not know that the *be* verb should not be added before the to-do verb in an active sentence. Hence, students have not mastered the verb forms of English.

There are only a few syntactic errors found in the writings of the students. These errors resulted from the false order of words within the verb phrases. This type of error affected the meaning intended to convey by the students. For example, the interrogative form of a sentence was mistaken as a statement with the false order of the subject and auxiliary verb.

The possible causes of selection errors, omission errors, addition errors and syntactic errors made by the Chinese ESL students were identified. These causes were divided into interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Interlingual errors occurred due to the interference of L1 (Mandarin) into L2 (English), Whereas intralingual errors resulted from overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, ignorance of rule restriction and false hypothesized concepts. Examples of interlingual errors found in the study are listed below.

(1) Incorrect selection of the copula *be* verb for a subject. In Mandarin, there are no singular and plural forms of copula *be* verbs and therefore there isn't a correlation between the subject and number.

(2) Incorrect selection of verbs in past tense for present tense and vice versa. In Mandarin, verbs always remain unchanged and tense forms are indicated by adverbs of time or aspect markers. Hence, students who referred to the structure of the L1 were not able to use the verb forms of English correctly.

(3) The omission of copula *be* verbs in subject-verb agreement as the students referred to the grammatical structures of Mandarin to write English sentences.

(4) The omission of auxiliary verbs in present perfect, past perfect, progressive and modality. Students omitted the auxiliary verbs as there are no such verbs in Mandarin.

Apart from the interference of the L1, many errors could be attributed to intralingual errors, or in other words interference within the L2. Intralingual errors occur due to faulty or partial learning of the L2, where students attempted to build their own hypotheses about the L2 and over generalized linguistic rules. They made use of previously acquired rules in new situations inappropriately, ignoring rule restrictions. The examples of intralingual errors found in the study are listed below.

(1) The use of an incorrect verb form in a particular situation such as the use of progressive for simple present, the use of progressive for infinitive, the use of present perfect for simple present and the use of present perfect for past perfect. These errors were made due to overgeneralization and false concept hypothesized.

(2) A false order of words within the verb phrase, causing syntactic errors that diverted the meaning of the sentence. These errors were attributed to overgeneralization and the incomplete application of rules.

(3) The omission of the *-ing* form in progressive due to incomplete application of rules.

(4) Addition of an auxiliary verb in simple past, simple present and modality. These errors were due to overgeneralization and false concept hypothesized.

Apart from interlingual and intralingual factors, exposure to the English language has an effect on the students' English proficiency. From the findings of the questionnaire, most students never use English to communicate and they do not read any English material. This results in their poor command of English. In general, verb errors could be attributed to the interference of the L1 to the L2, the interference of linguistic items within the L2, the exposure to the language and the learning environment.

In conclusion, the findings from the questionnaire and writing tasks have answered all the 4 research questions of the study. The answers are written briefly under each research question.

1. What are the types of verb errors made by Chinese ESL students in written English?

   subject-verb agreement, simple past, simple present, past perfect, present perfect, progressive, infinitive, futurity, passive and modality.

2. What are the frequencies of occurrence of each type of verb error?

   The frequencies of occurrence for each verb category are shown in Table 4.5.

3. To what extent do the verb errors affect the syntactic functions of sentences?

   There are only a few syntactic errors determined. It is only to a small extent that syntactic errors affected the meaning of the sentence intended to convey by the students.

4. What are the factors that caused verb errors found in written English of Chinese ESL students?

   The factors include interlingual and intralingual errors. Interlingual errors resulted from the interference of Mandarin in English writing whereas intralingual errors resulted from overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules and false concept hypothesized.

5.4   Implications of the Study

Error analysis was carried out to determine the learner's language proficiency level, how learners learn a language and to disclose the difficulties faced by learners in learning a language. It acts as an important aid in the development of teaching materials and methods (Richards et al, 1992). This study has revealed the difficulties faced by Chinese ESL students in the learning of the English language. The study was focused on verb errors, which made up most of the language errors in English as the verb system is complicated, with various verb forms and rules. It is not easy for many Chinese learners whose L1 is Mandarin to learn English without being affected by the structures of the L1. This study draws the attention of those in the education field, language syllabus planners and teachers to tackle the problems faced by these students and to improve their English proficiency.

Errors made by the students need to be viewed seriously to better understand the areas in which students are weak and try to make them aware of the errors they make. Teachers should highlight the common errors and focus on the teaching of the areas that needed extra attention. More explanations and exercises can be given to students on these areas in order to improve their language skills. For instance, teachers could explain the rules of subject-verb agreement in details by listing out the use of each copula *be* verb to their respective subjects. The functions of each verb form should be

explained in details with substantial examples. The use of auxiliary verbs should be highlighted and made clear to the students as the common errors involve the wrong application of auxiliary verbs. In addition, teachers should emphasize the concept of time and verb forms structure in Mandarin and English. By making comparisons between the two languages, students will become aware of the difference between the verb forms in Mandarin and English. With this knowledge, verb form errors could be reduced.

Another way to make students aware of their language errors is to make them do self-corrections. According to Edge (1989), correction is a part of teaching and will support learners by providing information and feedback. Teachers should not view errors negatively but instead make correcting errors part of the lesson that may draw students' attention. Self-correction should be encouraged as it gives students the chance to analyze and correct their own errors. Peer correction is another effective way for learners to learn from their errors by cooperating with others to discover the correct use of linguistic items.

By identifying the common errors made by Chinese ESL learners, educators or syllabus designers can develop error-based syllabi and teaching materials for composition class to focus on weaker learners. In the researcher's opinion, the syllabus of the existing secondary English syllabi focuses on comprehension, composition and literature. The teaching of verb forms is only superficial hence students may not understand the whole English verb system and could not use the language confidently. It is hoped that research study of error analysis could raise the awareness of education ministry to tackle the poor English standards of specific groups such as Chinese ESL learners. Besides, remedial classes can be conducted at school for students who face the same difficulties in learning English.

This study enables the teachers and linguists to describe Mandarin and English by knowing their differences, and helps the learners to overcome the differences between the two languages. Knowing how to write correctly does not mean good writing. Hence, it is important for learners to build a strong grammar foundation since young and familiarize themselves with the English verb system. With that, they will excel in their writing and use English confidently in any situation.

5.5   Suggestion for Further Research

Based on this study, some suggestions for further research of the same area are listed as follows:

(1)   It is suggested that a study be conducted on a larger number of Chinese ESL learners (For instance, involving learners from every states in Malaysia) as there may be more types of verb errors determined and the results will be more accurate. For larger amount of students, a corpus-based study is recommended.

(2)   It is suggested that the study of verb forms be narrowed to the study of more specific verb forms such as present tense, past tense, passive voice or subject-verb agreement.

(3)   It is suggested that studies be carried out on various levels of ESL learners such as primary school students, pre-university students and undergraduates. With this, more syllabi can be designed to cater the needs of learners from different levels.

(4)   An error analysis that focuses on phrasal verbs (multi-word verbs) could be carried out as many ESL learners are confused by the various verb forms as well as multi-words verb phrases.

(5)   Social networks have become a significant role in most young people's life. Studies on how young people use English in Facebook, Twitter or WordPress could be carried out to determine common patterns in their errors.

REFERENCES

Bartholomae, D. (1980). Study of error. *College Composition and Communication*, *31*, 253-269.

Beardsmore, H. B. (1982). *Bilingualism: Basic Principles*. Avon: Tieto.

Bloor, T., & Bloor, M. (2004). *The Functional Analysis of English: A Hallidayan Approach*. (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Brown, H. D. (1980). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Brown, C. (2000). The interrelation between speech perception and phonological acquisition from infant to adult. Great Britain: Blackwell Publishers Limited.

Collins Cobuild English Grammar. (1990). Great Britain: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd.

Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of learners' errors. Reprinted in J. C. Richards (ed.). (1974, 1984), Error Analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition. (pp. 19 – 27). London: Longman. (Originally in *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, *5*, 161-169.)

Corder, S. P. (1971). Idiosyncratic dialects and error analysis. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, *9*, 147-159.

Corder, S. P. (1981). *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*. London: Oxford University Press.

Crystal, D. (1987). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. (2nd ed.). New York: Basil Blackwell Inc.

Cumming, A. (1989). Writing expertise and second-language proficiency. *Language Learning*, *39*, 81-141.

Dulay, H. C., & Burt, M. (1975). Creative construction in second language learning and teaching. In M. Burt & H. C. Dulay (Eds.), *New Directions in Second Language Learning*, *Teaching*, *and Bilingual Education*, (pp. 21-32).

Edge, J. (1989). *Mistakes and Correction*. Harlow: Longman.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (1997). *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hughes, R., & Heah, C. (1993). *Common errors in English: Grammar exercises for Malaysians*. Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd.

Jakobovits. (1970). *Foreign Language Learning: A Physiolinguistic Analysis of the Issues*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Kam, Yong Meng. (2001). *An analysis of verb form errors of Chinese ESL students*. M. A. Thesis. University of Malaya.

Kao, C. C. (1999). An investigation into lexical, grammatical, and semantic errors in English compositions of college students in Taiwan. *Fu Hsing Kang Journal*, *67*, pp 1-32.

Koh, Kok Tin. (2000). *An investigation of subject-verb agreement errors in the interlanguage of ESL learners*. M. A. Thesis. University of Malaya.

Krairussamee, P. (1982). *Teaching English as a foreign language in Thailand: A survey of the relation between students' grammatical problems and their teachers' methodology*. Ph. D. Dissertation. University of Kansas.

Kroll B. M., & Schafer, J. C. (1978). Error-analysis and the teaching of composition. *College Composition and Communication*, *29*(3), pp 242-248.

Kwok, H. L. (1998). Why and when do we correct learner errors? *An error correction project for an English composition class*. Retrieved March 14, 2013, from http://sunzi1.lib.hku.hk/hkjo/view/45/4500101.pdf.

Lim Ho Peng. (1997). Papers on ELT, for Asean Countries. *ESL and the Chinese-speaking Students*, 1-8.

Lin, S. (2002). A case study of English writing competence of students at the Mei Ho Institute of Technology. *Journal of Mei Ho Institute of Technology*, *20*, pp 180-206.

Matthews, P. (1997). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Meziani, A. (1984). Moroccan learners' English errors: A pilot study. *IRAL*, *22*(4), 297-309.

Morenberg, M. (1997). *Doing Grammar*. (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Nemser, W. (1971). Approximative systems of foreign language learners. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, *9*, 115-123.

Ngara, E. A. (1983). Non-Contrastive Errors in African English: Types and Significance. *IRAL* XX1, *1*, 35-45.

Norrish, J. (1987). *Language Learning and Their Errors*. London: Macmillan Publisher Ltd.

Odlin, T. (1989). *Language Transfer*. As cited in Odlin, T. (2005). Cross-linguistic Influence, in Doughty, C. J. and Long, M. H. (eds.). *The Handbook of Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Olasehinde, M. O. (2002). Error analysis and remedial pedagogy, in Babatunde S. T. and D. S. Adeyanju (eds.). *Language*, *Meaning and Society*. Ilorin: Itaytee Press and Publishing Co.

Richards, J. C. (1970). A non-contrastive approach to error analysis. *ELT Journal.*

Richards, J. C. (1971). A non-contrastive approach to error analysis. *ELT Journal*, *25*(3), 204-219.

Richards, J. C. (ed.). (1973). *Error Analysis.* London: Longman.

Richards, J. C. (ed.). (1974). *Error Analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition.* London: Longman.

Richards, J. C. (1974). Social factors, interlanguage and language learning, in Richards, J. C. (Ed.). *Error analysis. Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition*. London: Longman.

Richards, J. C., et al. (1992). *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Essex: Longman.

Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, *10*, 201-231.

Sercombe, P. G. (2000). Learner language and the consideration of idiosyncracies by students of English as a second or foreign language in the context of Brunei Darulsalam. In A. M. Noor et al. (eds.). (2009). Strategising teaching and learning in the 21st century. *Proceedings of the European Journal of Social Sciences*, *8*(3).

Sheena Kaur. (1996). *Verb phrase errors in the written English of undergraduates*. M. A. Thesis. University of Malaya.

Solomon, J. (1988). *Bilingual Education*. Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk.

The Star, June 7, 2011. Article '*English proficiency: Malaysia ranks 3rd in Southeast Asia, says survey*' Retrieved February 16, 2013, from http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=%2F2011%2F6%2F7%2Fnation%2F20110607160637&sec=nation

Thirugnanam, U. M. (2004). *An analysis of verb errors in written compositions of upper secondary school students*. M. A. Thesis. University of Malaya.

Uzawa, K. (1996). Second language learners' processes of LI writing, L2 writing and translation from L1 to L2. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *5*, 271-294.

Wee, Roselind. (1995). *Types of written verb-form errors made by Sarawakian Malay ESL students*. M. A. Thesis. University of Malaya.

Weinreich, U. (1953). *Languages in Contact.* The Hague: Mouton.

Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2003). *An Introduction: Mass Media Research*. (7th ed.). Canada: Thomson Wadsworth.

Yin, R. K. (2003). Case study research, design and methods. (3rd ed.). *Applied Social Research Method Series*, *5*. California: Sage Publications.

Yip, Po-Ching., & Rimmington, D. (1998). *Intermediate Chinese: A Grammar and Workbook*. London: Routledge.

Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to find out your English language background, exposure to the English language and your point of view about the learning of English. The findings of the questionnaire will be used as supportive data in analyzing a research report of second language learning. Please take your time to complete the questions. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Section A

1. Class   : _____

2. Age   : _____

3. Gender   : _____

4. What is the language you use at home? _____

5. Do you attend any English private tuition? _____

6. What is your English test score in the previous year-end examination? _____

Section B

1. Please tick (/) in the appropriate column.

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
a. Do you speak English at home?				
b. Do you speak to your classmates in English?				
c. Do you speak to your teachers in English?				
d. Does your English teacher use English to conduct lessons?				
e. Do you write in English? (Except writing English essays at school)				
f. Do you listen to English news?				
g. Do you listen to English radio stations?				
h. Do you listen to English songs?				
i. Do you read English newspapers?				
j. Do you read English magazines?				
k. Do you read English books?				
l. Do you watch English movies?				

2. Please tick (/) in the appropriate column.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Learning English is more difficult than learning Mandarin.					
b. I have difficulties in writing English.					
c. I have difficulties in understanding English verbs.					
d. My English teacher explained clearly on how to use different verbs in different situations.					
e. Knowing how to write well in English is very useful.					
f. My parents know that English is important.					
g. My parents encourage me to learn English.					
h. English is useful in job requirement.					
i. I need to improve my English.					

3. Do you think in Mandarin before you write the English essays?

_____

4. In your opinion, how do you think your English can be improved?

_____

_____

An Example of a Student's Written Task (Session 1)

Write a short story ending "..... regretted for not telling anyone where Samuel had gone".

As for me, a true friend is not only the one who help us when we are in trouble in life but also is the one who show much concern for us when we feel sad. Having a true friend named Samuel, I feel very pleasant and am thankful to god. We had known each other since we were in standard one and became very close together as we had many same topic to discuss and chat.

Samuel, the only child in the family, was the apple of his parent's eye still the teachers as he was a

discipline student who always passed his exam with flying

colours. No matter their parents went out, Samuel would

always be with them. He was pampered by his parents as

his parents would buy anything he wanted when the need

arised. It was to be said that there was no gap between

Samuel and his parents.

However, all the things were changed one day. I

was supised to heard that his parents divorced because

of his father falling in love with a women. I realised the

reason why Samuel had change to anoter person all in a

sudden recently. The relationship between Samuel and his

parents turned pale from day to day. A big gap could be found among them.

The negligance from his parents caused Samuel to go astray. For the sake of fun, he risked his future and mix with peers, some of whom were actually drug addict. No matter how I adviced him, he still turned to deaf ear and refused to hear my advice.

One day, he just told me that he wanted to leave the home and went to other country. After telling me this news, he never returned again. His parents, who concerned for Samuel wanted me to tell them where actually Samuel had gone. However, I refused their need, and told them that I had promised Samuel not to tell to anyone especially his parents.

I heard something about Samuel that he now turns to a drug additor and I am regretted not telling anyone where Samuel had gone.

An Example of a Student's Written Task (Session 2)

Nowadays, private tuition is so totally common in students.

Beside the school times, students spent most of their time in private

tuition. From In parent's place, tuition is essential to their children.

They believe that can is the way to ensure their children to get

flying colour in examination. Private tuition, already become an trend by time

to time.

Actually, is private tuition really necessary to students? For

the students who lag behind, would private tuition ensure them

to get excellent result in all their examination? From Private tuition

is not totally helpful useful to all of the students, but the attitude of them

in study!

~~For example, a~~ s

Edison even said that no ~~one~~ one is genius in the world.

Only the people who hard-working and keep going with this attitude

in what they are focus in, they ~~are the~~ will success.

Private tuition just ~~a~~ on and off for students. Students

who really appreciate the opportunity to earn knowledge in

private tuition will score what they are want in the end. On the

other hand, for the students who ~~just~~ are lazy and waste their time

on unmeaningful thing, success just as the flying pig ! to them.

As a conclusion, if a student focus in their study full ~~will~~ of

hard-working, ~~that will be a win win to~~ private tuition doesn't matter anymore to them.

An Example of a Student's Written Task (Session 3)

My New Year Resolutions
Time passes very fast. ~~It is~~ A new year is coming again now. ~~Th~~ In this new year, I have planned a lot of new year resolutions for my study, my family and friends, and my life, and it is important. This year is a meaningful 1. ~~to~~ me because I have to take the SPM examination in ~~is this~~ the November in this year. Because of my target ~~in~~ for my SPM result is to get straight As in the examination, ~~I~~ so I know that I should study hard and do more exercises to achieve it. Then, when I face problems in my study, I should ask

my teachers ~~sew~~ and friends or classmates bravely.
I will tell me ^in heart that not to be ~~a shame girl again~~
~~like~~ shy when I want to ask them ~~about~~ my
study. Besides, I have to get rid of my lazy and
playful ~~traits~~ to get an excellent SPM result.
In ~~these~~ previous years, ~~After that~~ I ~~feel~~ that ~~I do not~~ find the
communication between my family and I ~~is~~ becomes
less because I do not have enough time to
spent with them. So, I decide ~~to~~ to let every
Sunday is my ~~Family~~ Day in this year. I hope
this can strengthen the bonds between ~~my~~
family members.
   ~~This~~ These are my new year resolutions.