An Analysis of Syntactical Errors in Essay Writing Among ESL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to identify the syntactical errors in essay writing of grade 7 students at C.O. Lesthakir International College. The objectives of the study were to investigate the most common syntactical errors made by Grade seven students and to determine the courses of syntactical errors made by the students. The analyze of underlying causes contributing to the synthetic errors in the mixed method is used to explore potential strategies and interventions aimed at mitigating syntactical errors in the essay writing of great seven students. The research was test related to syntactical errors, especially when writing an essay. The proper guidance had been provided to the particular students. Data collection involved interviews, questionnaires, pre-tests, and post-tests with a focus on 35 samples. The findings revealed a significant improvement from 36% in the pre-test to 69% in the post-test. Effective and creative teaching must be done to the students. This teaching should include, proper materials which help the students to improve their understanding in writing an essay without grammatical mistakes. The collected primary data analysis shows the project efforts had established remarkable progress in the selected student's performance in essay writing. This research is utilitarian for policymakers and government sector professionals.

Keywords: Essay Writing, Syntactical Errors, Errors Analysis, Second Language Learners, Inter Lingual Transfer

INTRODUCTION

The study focuses on analyzing syntactical errors in essay writing among Grade 7 students, highlighting the importance of grammar in constructing clear and contextually appropriate sentences. Drawing on error analysis concepts (Ellis, 1994; Corder, 1967), it examines common grammatical issues, including spelling errors, incorrect verb usage, punctuation mistakes, and wrong word choices, which often hinder learners' writing clarity and accuracy. Scholars like Richards (1974) and Brown (2000) emphasize the role of error analysis in developing teaching strategies and enhancing learners' sentence acceptability. Furthermore, Harmer (2004) and Leki (1992) underline the importance of addressing syntactical errors to support EFL learners in crafting contextually appropriate sentences. By identifying and categorizing these errors, the study aims to offer constructive insights for improving teaching methods and helping students develop stronger writing skills.

The research aims to identify the syntactical errors in essay writing among Grade 7 students at COLIC. Its objectives are to investigate the most common syntactical errors and determine their causes. The study seeks to address two key questions: What types of syntactical errors can be identified in students' essay writing, and what are the underlying causes of these errors?

The research gap in this study highlights the lack of focus on the specific syntactical errors and their causes in essay writing by Grade 7 students at COLIC. While existing studies address syntactical errors in second-language learning, they often overlook younger learners and their unique challenges. Additionally, there is limited emphasis on practical teaching strategies to systematically address these errors. This study aims to fill

the gap by identifying common errors, analyzing their causes, and providing recommendations to enhance students' grammatical skills and writing abilities, offering valuable insights for educators and curriculum developers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature highlights the significance of analyzing syntactical errors to enhance students' writing skills and improve language teaching strategies. Grammar, as a foundational element of language, enables effective communication by shaping and interpreting words, phrases, and sentences (Janah, 2015; Ellis, 1997). Errors, distinguished from mistakes, reflect learners' interlanguage competence and are often caused by interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, learning contexts, and communication strategies (Brown, 2000). Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) categorize errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, each affecting sentence clarity and meaning. Studies by Subhashini and Kokilavani (2013) and Putri and Dewanti (2014) emphasize the importance of grammar for constructing coherent and comprehensible writing. Keshavarz (2012) and Rustipa (2012) argue that error analysis, a development from contrastive analysis, provides deeper insights into students' cognitive processes and common challenges in language learning, offering valuable input for teaching materials and methods. Overall, error analysis is pivotal in addressing students' syntactical challenges and fostering language proficiency.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative research methodology to analyze syntactical errors in essay writing among Grade 7 students at COLIC. A sample of 35 students, selected based on predefined criteria, participated in pre- and post-tests designed to identify and address their challenges with syntax. The pre-test, aligned with the Grade 7 English syllabus, assessed initial difficulties, while the post-test evaluated improvements following feedback and targeted activities. Data collection methods included tests, interviews with the class teacher for qualitative insights, and observation of students' progress. Secondary data were sourced from Grade 7 English textbooks, research papers, and online articles. Data analysis involved processing test scores using Microsoft Excel for clarity and organization. Ethical considerations ensured voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, minimization of harm, and transparent communication of results, adhering to principles of respect, diversity, and scientific integrity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It presents the data analysis and findings from pre-test and post-test assessments conducted with the selected sample of students. The pre-test analysis evaluates students' initial performance in essay writing, focusing on their writing skills and highlighting areas of difficulty. The post-test analysis examines students' progress in addressing syntactical errors after receiving feedback and targeted activities. Both analyses employ quantitative methods to ensure the validity and reliability of the results, providing an accurate measure of students' achievement levels in essay writing and syntax improvement.

Results of Pre-Test

The research provided the pre-test to write an essay on the topic of "Your Favorite StoryBook, yourfavoritesubject, your memorable vacation, a person you admire the most, and visit the park". The marks of these tests are evaluated. The results of the tests are given below.

Students	Marks of the Pre-Test
S1	30
S2	25
S3	40
S4	45

S5	38
S6	48
S7	39
S8	45
S9	38
S10	45
S11	43
S12	35
S13	28
S14	40
S15	34
S16	38
S17	25
S18	33
S19	30
S20	37
S21	46
S22	38
S23	34
S24	25
S25	34
S26	36
S27	47
S28	38
S29	45
S30	36
S31	25
S32	38
S33	36
S34	27
S35	35

Table - 01 Marks of Pre-Test

The above chart compiles with 5 essay topics the marks of those tests evaluated as a whole. The highest mark on this test was 48 and the lowest mark was 25.

28 students have scored less than 45 marks. According to this chart, it can be concluded that most of the students. Obtained less than equal 45 marks.
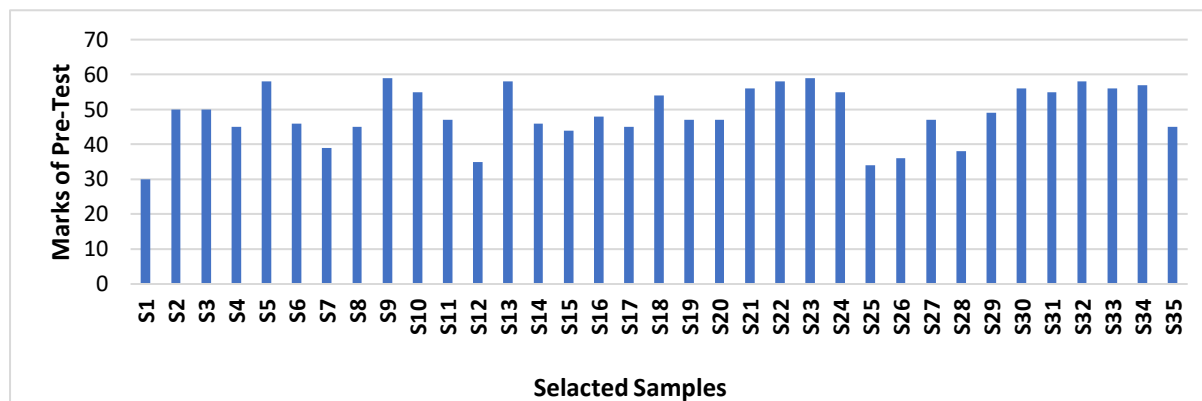
Pre-Test Marks

Figure - 01 Marks of Pre-Test

Analysis of Pre-Test

Pretest analysis conveys the exploration of the research's initial evaluation or Pre-evaluation. The test was conducted for 40 minutes. Altogether 40 students in the study population had attended the test and 35 students got below 50 marks. Those students had been selected as samples regarding the pointed out criteria (Table - 01 and Figure – 01) illustrating the details.

Intervention

In line with the action plan of the dissertation work the researcher, had an intervention activity with the selected sample students After the pre-evaluation test. That intervention predominantly to teach the sessions for an hour concerning of the designed time frame on Syntactical errors in essay writing.

During the session, the Researcher taught the students how to write an essay without making syntactical errors and mistakes in terms and conditions of in English language. Also, they were taught to identify the notable errors that they had made previously. Additionally, they had been persuaded to Inter-lingual errors onward in both languages of English and Tamil.

Moreover, the weak students were guided to practice the simultaneous questions on essay writing due to their enthusiasm for learning English the selected students captured quicker than the expectation, and sound slow learners also improved as a result of the effort.

Result of Post-Test

After the action. The research provided a post-test to ensure the development of the students in the use of essay writing post-test included the same questions and the same duration as a pre-test.

The result of the post-test is given below.

Students	Marks of the Post-Test
S1	65
S2	70
S3	68
S4	63
S5	78
S6	70
S7	63

S8	67
S9	68
S10	65
S11	60
S12	75
S13	65
S14	72
S15	70
S16	78
S17	73
S18	76
S19	79
S20	82
S21	75
S22	68
S23	60
S24	63
S25	67
S26	68
S27	65
S28	60
S29	75
S30	65
S31	72
S32	68
S33	62
S34	67
S35	65

Table - 02 Marks of Post-Test

The above chart compiles 5 essay topics and the marks of those tests evaluated as a whole the highest mark on this test was 82 and the lowest mark was 60.

21 students have cold less than 70 marks according to this chart it can be concluded that most of the students obtained less than equal 70 marks.

Marks of Post-Test

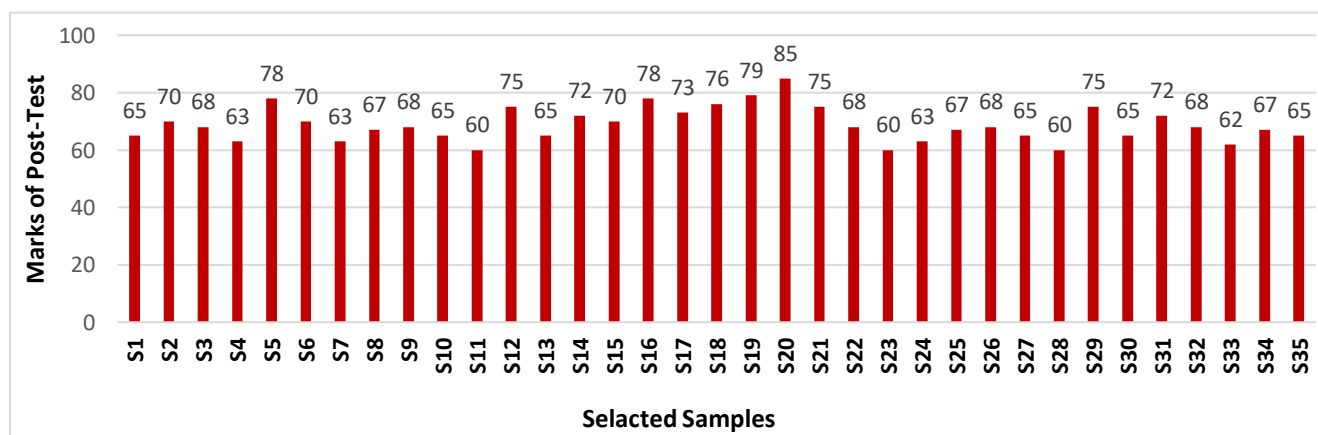

Figure - 02 Marks of Post-Test

Analysis of Post-Test

Afterward, the intervention and the simultaneous practices on essay writing again 40 minutes take a had provided for the selected samples students got better marks than the previous test called the pre-test.

Table 02 and Figure 02 reflect the results of obviously.

Result of comparison of Pre-Test and Post Test

Students	Marks of the Pre-Test	Marks of the Post-Test
S1	30	65
S2	25	70
S3	40	68
S4	45	63
S5	38	78
S6	48	70
S7	39	63
S8	45	67
S9	38	68
S10	45	65
S11	43	60
S12	35	75
S13	28	65
S14	40	72
S15	34	70
S16	38	78
S17	25	73
S18	33	76
S19	30	79
S20	37	82
S21	46	75
S22	38	68
S23	34	60
S24	25	63
S25	34	67
S26	36	68
S27	47	65
S28	38	60
S29	45	75
S30	36	65
S31	25	72
S32	38	68
S33	36	62
S34	27	67
S35	35	65

Table - 03 Marks of Pre-Test & Post-Test

The above bar chart illustrates the marks obtained by the students in the pre-test and post-test. The highest mark obtained in the pre-test was 48. but, in the post-test, the highest mark was 82. In the pre-test, 28 students

obtained less than 45 marks but in the post-test 21 of them obtained more than 48 marks. This shows the improvement in their essay writing.

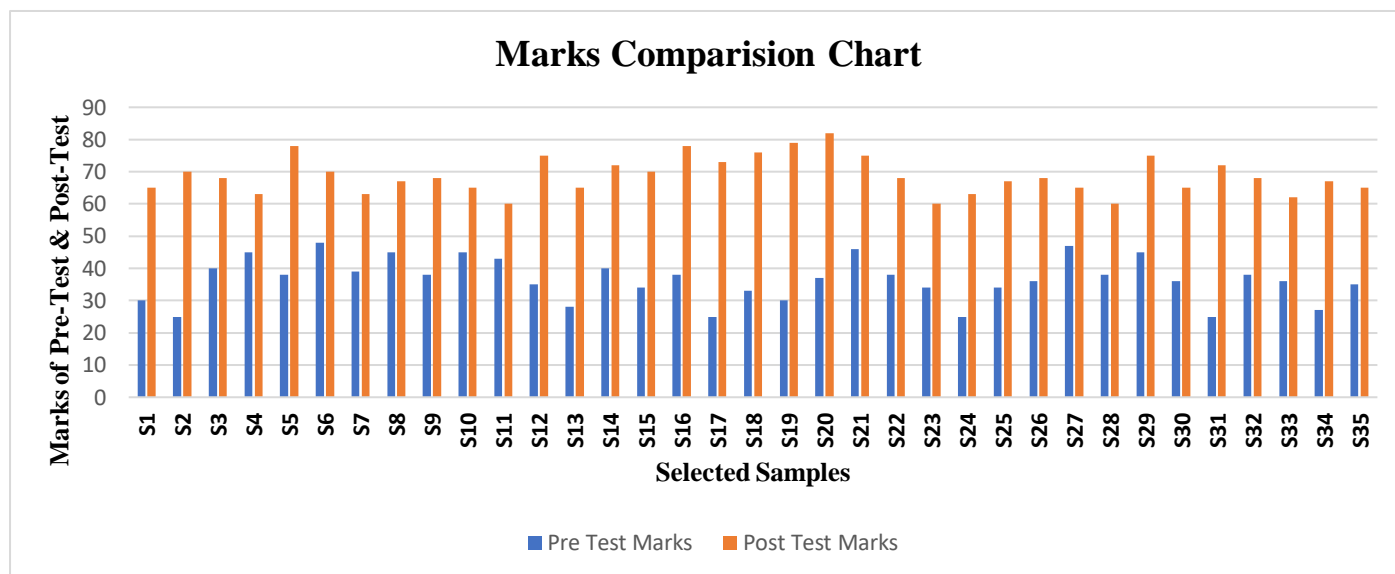**The comparison chart of both primary data of Pre-Test and Post-Test**

Figure - 03 Comparison Table

The section is an elaboration of the entire research project's results. Considering the Pre-Test and Post-test marks tables and charts, they explain the little acute deviation between the previous stage of the students and the state after the researcher's intervention. Further, this clear positive change enables us to report through the support of the Figure-03 comparison chart. It interprets the good improvement of each sample student. Eventually, the researcher moved towards the decision that the effort had stimulated a remarkable achievement.

Result of Interview

Interviews with the English teacher played a major role to identify the levels of the students and the recent behind it. The interview was held before the pre-test. The interview was conducted to know the teacher's responses related to the errors in essay writing from her experience and thoughts. Important questions were asked to the teacher (Appendix).

From the interview, most of the students were confused with the syntactical rules in essay writing they failed to consider the unique syntactical rules and errors the students found it difficult to choose a suitable hence auxiliary and they found it difficult to write a paragraph according to it.

From the interview most of the students had a confusion with the syntactical rules in essay writing they failed to consider the unique syntactical rules and errors of it the students find it difficult to choose the suitable hence auxiliary and they found it difficult to write a segment according to it. They were mostly influenced by they are mother language the environment didn't give enough space to deal with the target language (English Language) if the students want to improve their essay writing without making syntactical errors, they need more care.

Findings of the Questionnaire

The researcher gave some questions to the students of the grade 7 class in order to gain data for a research study. The following are the responses obtained from the students which have been given in percentage after it was calculated on the Whole.

No	Questions	Yes	No
01	Is English difficult?	81	36
02	Is English your favorite subject?	36	73
03	Do you like to learn English?	78	27
04	Do you want to go to tuition classes for English?	81	18
05	Do you like to write an essay?	72	45
06	Is essay writing difficult?	69	55
07	Is your teacher of English friendly?	47	91
08	Do Your parents help you to learn English?	39	91
09	Do your parents Know English?	31	82
10	Do you Like your teacher of English?	25	82

According to the about table, the response to the questionnaire given students of great 81% of the students felt that English is a complicated subject. At the same time, 78% of the students like to learn English. So here from the above statistic it can be understood that the fundamental knowledge of the students is weak also they do not have proper guidance.

Also, the researcher needs to know the ability of students in essay writing thus from the proceeding statistic 69% of the students find that writing an essay is a difficult one. This shows that the majority of students felt that English was difficult.

There is another fact that most of the students' perception of English the teacher is not friendly with them. 82% of students dislike their teacher of English. It will make them uncomfortable to learn English, and also there might be another psychological reason for the dislike that the teacher of English was a senior citizen.

Finally, the researcher wanted to know the environment of the students because the environment is a major part of the acquisition. It was contrary to my thought because 39% of parents only carried an encouraging the students even 31% of parents were literate. On the other hand, other student's parents are not aware of anything.

From the above statistics, we can clearly observe that the students are not interested in learning English and their dislike. However, the researcher assumes that proper guidance and good teaching methodology can minimize the problems in learning English and after that, they will like English very much.

Result And Discussion of Observation

After the pretest the researcher explained how to write an essay without making syntactical errors, the segment of writing an essay, and the rules of writing an essay after explaining the researcher gave them some sample essays to refer it this activity was based on the errors of the students then the researcher encouraged the students for a sensible paragraph to minimize the syntactical errors. This activity helped them to get a clear idea in relation to essay writing.

During this period of time, the researcher used observation as a method to identify the process of progression of the students on essay writing after explaining the chart with the rules of writing an essay they tried to form an essay with confidence many students got released from their confusion in writing essay without making syntactical mistakes.

Pretest they felt uncomfortable even to form a paragraph they too much time for it on the other hand in action. Students were eager to form a paragraph and they completed the essay with perfect timing.

According to the observation, when the students got the proper idea about the essay they learned as active learners. They showed an optimistic attitude to write and to learn to write an essay without hesitation. This observation helped to identify the way to improve the students in regards to writing an essay without making syntactical errors.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the writer would like to improve the student's understanding of the use of Grammar and reduce the errors in the use of it. Also, this chapter is going to express the achievement and the overall view of the research. After finishing the whole steps of this research, the researcher would like to draw some conclusions about the result of this research. At the beginning of the research, the researcher found many students' errors in the use of grammar.

The study analyzed the impact of an intervention on improving students' essay writing skills, focusing on reducing syntactical errors. Pre-test results revealed low performance, with scores ranging from 25 to 48 and 28 out of 35 students scoring below 45, indicating significant challenges in writing accuracy. Following this, a structured intervention was implemented, emphasizing syntactical rules, error correction, and paragraph structuring, alongside targeted practice.

Post-test results showed marked improvement, with scores ranging from 60 to 82, and 21 students scoring above 70, highlighting the effectiveness of the intervention. A comparison of pre-test and post-test results demonstrated substantial progress, with the highest score increasing from 48 to 82. Interviews with the English teacher revealed that students struggled with syntactical rules due to mother tongue interference, lack of exposure to English, and insufficient guidance.

A questionnaire highlighted additional challenges, such as 81% of students finding English difficult and 69% perceiving essay writing as hard, compounded by limited parental support and perceived teacher unfriendliness. Despite this, 78% of students expressed interest in learning English, indicating potential for growth.

Observations post-intervention revealed that students showed improved confidence, structured essays effectively, and became active learners when provided with clear guidance and encouragement.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that targeted interventions focusing on syntactical rules and tailored support significantly improve students' essay writing skills, and addressing environmental and psychological barriers can further enhance learning outcomes.

Students faced some difficulties in writing an essay with grammar such as finding it difficult to identify the tense, finding it difficult to write with the correct form of the verb, and finding it difficult to choose the suitable auxiliary according to the tense.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion emphasizes that students cannot be expected to write essays proficiently without proper guidance and practice. Traditional methods have limited impact, while consistent reading and analysis of diverse materials like essays, articles, and vocabulary resources improve students' writing skills and reduce grammatical errors.

The recommendations suggest encouraging students to adopt a positive attitude toward essay writing and incorporating engaging activities like sentence formation and paragraph writing. Teachers should provide clear explanations of grammatical rules, focusing on areas like tense, auxiliary verbs, and singular/plural usage. Effective teaching strategies using appropriate materials, coupled with motivating and creating an engaging classroom environment, are essential for improving students' essay-writing skills and minimizing errors.

Significance of The Study

It is focused that defining this study will help English language teachers to understand the errors of the students in writing essays it is expected that teachers can get a clear idea about the recent behind the errors and identify the correct ways to solve those issues it is expected to help the student to realize their problems and increase their awareness when writing an essay. The suggestions of this research will help students to use

grammar without errors and lead them to write meaningful essay without any difficulties. It is also home that this research will help the researchers to do more research in this area in different views. Teachers face many difficulties when they are teaching the learning process, especially in the Grammar path but no teachers consider students' problems by themselves. Based on this dissertation the students can identify the mistakes on their own and also this study hopes that every student who is aware of syntactical errors and be confident in their writing.

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