

Error Analysis on English Written Discourse of 4th Year Mass Communication Students at Isabela State University – Echague Campus

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to present facts in Error Analysis on English Written Discourse of 4th year Mass Communication students at Isabela State University – Echague Campus, the method most appropriate was the Descriptive Method of Research. There were 16 student-respondents enrolled during the conduct of the study.

From the data gathered, it shows that respondents' strength in Word Level was the use of conjunction while it shows that their common error was on the proper use of connectives or transitional words/phrases. On Sentence Level, respondents' strength was in constructing a sentence following the modification rule and it appears that their common error was in constructing a sentence in Inter Sentence Connected Discourse. On Paragraph Level, the respondents' strength was on using rhetorical moves and function while their common error falls in Grammar. Finally, in Discourse Level, the respondents' strength was in applying Emphasis in writing a discourse and needs improvement in incorporating Unity and Coherence.

For the future researchers, it is recommended that after the assessment period, relevant lectures to address the errors committed and later on post-assessment must be conducted to monitor and validate if the conduct of enhancement lectures are enough and effective for the students to improve their written discourse.

Keywords: Error Analysis, English Written Discourse, Word Level, Sentence Level, Paragraph Level, Discourse Level.

INTRODUCTION:

The major tool for understanding is communication because without communication everything will turn into misunderstanding of information. According to (Perrin & Smith, 1965), in the global situation today, communication is very important to forge peace and unity among nations. To achieve this goal, one should consider different components of communication. One of the most commonly used forms of communication is the written communication especially in the classroom.

Communication was defined by (Anderson, 1961) as a key to any endeavour involving one to another person. Further, written communication is a type of interaction using written word. He also added that in the information age we are living in today, communication through writing is of importance. In fact, (Best, 1998) considers written communication as the most common form of business communication. He added that small business owners and managers need to have the skill of writing an effective written communication for it is the usual form of communication being used in the business. At the same time, the knowledge of the business owners and managers must be inculcated to their employees to make them even more competent.

There are advantages of written communication as mentioned by (Anderson, 1961), one of which is that the written communication doesn't have to be delivered abruptly, instead it can undergo revision for how many times to come up with a more effective communication. Since it has an element of permanence, Dacanay, F. (1963) emphasized that it gives the recipient of the message to have enough time to review the message and

decide on the appropriate feedback to give. With these, written communication has been by (Best, 1998) considered as the most effective form of communication in the world of business which commonly involves facts and figures.

In classroom-based situation, the skill of a student in writing is enhanced and guided through the writing composition tasks. Writing a composition involves writing of essays, analysis, reaction to a certain subject, or simply expressing what one feels. At some point, the teacher allows a student's free writing to completely express his thoughts.

However, (Sharma, 1981) cited that in a day-to-day communication, there are also difficulties encountered by an individual. And these difficulties must be given attention so as to correct the errors committed. Error is a learner language setback that deviates from, or violates, a target language rule. These are the rules that are violated or forgotten by the speaker or the writer.

To pay attention to the errors committed by an individual, Error Analysis was then formulated. (Webber, 1981) defined error analysis as a method used to document the systematic errors that appear in a learner's language. Language teachers who listen to the speech of their students probably notice the errors first. But the truth is that everyone makes errors in speaking, even native speakers and language teachers. For example, (Corder, 1975) cited that most native speakers do not always follow the rules in the grammar books we use to teach learners. These book rules may be used only in formal contexts but not in informal discourse, or they may not fit speakers from all geographic regions where the language is spoken.

When we read casually a writer's composition, we tend to notice some errors more than others. Some errors are salient to native speakers, while others, even though they're systematic, may go unnoticed. For this reason, it is valuable for a teacher to periodically do a detailed error analysis, to identify systematic errors that should be targeted for corrective feedback (Sharma, 1981).

In the international scene, a study conducted by Saadiyah Darus in 1991 noticed that the errors the participants committed were basically grammatical. The participants also had a relatively weak vocabulary and their sentences were sometimes incomprehensible. They committed errors in applying sentence structure rules in the English language. Hence, it is concluded that the participants have problems in acquiring normal grammatical rules in English.

However, a study conducted in the Philippines by Apolinario Cagayan in 1987 entitled Error Analysis of Compositions of Selected Probationary Faculty Members of Father Saturnino Urios University founds out that global errors found in the corpora of texts as mostly serious. The teachers needed major revision because they hindered communication of the intended meaning.

With this, the researcher is determined to conduct a study that would measure the capacity of 4th year Mass Communication Students in Isabela State University Echague Campus with regards to their English Written Discourse. It is in this study where analysis on errors committed in English Written Discourse was performed.

The researcher aimed to provide knowledge information regarding Error Analysis in English Written Discourse of 4th Year Mass Communication Students at Isabela State University – Echague Campus. The researcher is currently working as an instructor at the said university and handling some of the subjects enrolled by the respondents of the study. This is to monitor and assess the areas where the respondents are needing improvement and to gauge their skill in writing a discourse.

Specifically, this study tried to answer the following questions:

1. What is the students profile according to:
 1. Age;
 2. Gender;
 3. Native Language/First Language;
 4. Second Language?
2. What are the common difficulties that the respondents usually commit in English written discourse from the following levels:
 - a. Word Level
 - i. Lexical
 - ii. Connectives and Preposition
 - b. Sentence Level
 - i. Modification
 - ii. Inter Sentence Connected Discourse
 - c. Paragraph Level

- i. Grammar
- ii. Rhetorical Moves
- iii. Rhetorical Functions
- d. Discourse Level
 - i. Unity
 - ii. Emphasis
 - iii. Coherence

3. What are the activities that the respondents usually do to overcome the difficulties in written discourse?

Assumption

The study is conducted on the assumption that there are errors committed by students as to their use of these lingua franca and foreign language as English.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Foreign Literature:

Communication is an important element for the growth of country's development. There are a lot of happenings that communication is involved. In fact, everyday life is impossible without communication. To build up this communication skill, there are ways to express it. One of those is through oral communication and written communication; composition writing.

Perrin and Smith (1965) stated that a composition course is a practice course which is basically for individual development of students, not for the development of professional writers and certainly not for people with strict command of the usage as secretaries, editors, and proof-readers. It is geared towards progressive extension of students' active vocabulary and expressive sentences appropriate for themselves and at the same time encouraging them towards a reasonable command of editorial standards found in specific type of writing.

They suggested that teaching a second language can improve discourse writing. When writing is controlled, pupils are required to write correctly. They develop accuracy and correctness which contribute to fluency as they acquire automatic control of the language enabling them to concentrate on ideas rather than on how to say what they have in their minds. In other words, the child must be helped to learn how to talk before he is asked to write. The controlled discourse writing provides varied situations from rigid to very little and finally to nothing as the child progresses in his mastery of the language.

The authors further suggested that since controlled discourse is by nature preventive, students should be given all the help they need without limitations to reduce the number of errors they commit to minimum. This calls for a careful planning ahead, considering the student's needs, an answer to a letter, an incident, a short story, a biography, a dialog, or one or more descriptive or expository paragraph.

When we listen casually to learner speech, we tend to notice some errors more than others. Some errors are salient to native speakers, while others, even though they're systematic, may go unnoticed. For this reason, it is valuable for a teacher to periodically do a detailed error analysis, to identify systematic errors that should be targeted for corrective feedback. Researchers have worked out a procedure for doing this. Following (Corder, 1975), here is a simple procedure that teachers can use:

Identify all the errors in a sample of learner language: For each error, what do you think the speaker intended to say, and how should the speaker have said it? Offering such a 'correction' is always tricky. While teachers have to do this constantly, they can easily make mistakes because there is usually more than one possible reconstruction of a learner error. Any given learner utterance may contain errors at many levels at once: phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical. When you have time to do it, it is always a good idea to think of several different possible reconstructions of any given error, if only to remind yourself that you're never entirely sure of what the learner's intended message is. Keep an open mind, and ask the learner to help you decide which of your reconstructions fits best.

Explain the errors: Decide if the error you've identified is systematic, or just a performance slip (a mistake). Do this by looking at the entire piece of learner language you are working with, and see if the 'error' occurs more than once. If it does occur several times, then see if you can identify possible causes for the error. The error could be due to native language transfer (using a rule or pattern from the native language). If there doesn't seem to be any source in the native language, consider the possibility that the error is developmental -- an 'intralingual' error that's made by all learners of a given language regardless of their native language. Other errors may be induced errors caused by the way a teacher or textbook presented or explained a given form, or communication strategies used by the learner to get meaning across even though he or she knows the form used is not correct.

Through the on-going changes in society's scenario, there are also some things that need to be noticed and paid attention with. Especially in communication forms, that sometimes people tend to commit errors and these errors must be checked and corrected.

With this, the student, as well as the teacher, must pay attention with the difficulties encountered while writing. In fact, Webber stated that errors identification and classification is of special importance in remedial teaching and that it helps teachers to realize exactly what they are up against.

Local Literature:

In order to show the relevance of the study, the researcher consulted several thesis and books. A brief study and literature reviewed is presented in this chapter.

(Dacanay, 1963) emphasized that in the matter of self-correction there is a need for evaluating students' discourse and giving those suggestions on how to lessen teacher's time and effort doing it. She said that the teacher should make the student realize that a good composition is one that is free from errors and is well organized. It is students' responsibility to note down his progress from one discourse to the next and to bear in mind that the content is just as important in any form of language learning.

The teacher should go around the room while the students are writing their discourse to look for the errors done by the students. However, students must also check for themselves the errors that they are committing as early as the writing of discourse is starting. The teacher gives the same errors to the class for cooperative correction. With this, the weaknesses of the students will be shown and would further improve their skills in an effective communication.

METHODOLOGY:

Research Design:

Since this study sought to present facts in Error Analysis in English Written Discourse of 4th Year Mass Communication Students at Isabela State University – Echague Campus, the method most appropriate was the Descriptive Method of Research.

This is attested by Best (1998), an authority in Education Research, who says and to wit:

The descriptive method of research best reveal the current and existing condition of a subject under study from a large body of data, through accurate recording, analysis and interpretation.

This method unfolded the process information concerning the existing conditions of the study at hand.

Locale of the Study:

Effective communication must be seen through the youth since they are the future leaders of the society. The researcher chose to conduct this study at Isabela State University Echague Campus, EchagueIsabela, Philippines.

The Isabela State University was established through the Presidential Decree (P.D.) 1434 by the then President Ferdinand Marcos on June 10, 1978 merging two state colleges – Isabela State College of Agriculture (ISCA) in Echague and Cagayan Valley Institute of Technology in Cabagan. The Isabela State University System is strategically located in the middle of the Cagayan Valley region, which is composed of the island province of Batanes, the valley provinces of Cagayan and Isabela and the generally mountainous provinces of Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino.

Thirty-five years after its establishment, the University has become a credible Higher Education Institute (HEI), having been awarded by the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines (AACUP) as the SUC with the most number of accredited programs in 2012 as well as one of the few Level IV SUCs in the country. Also, ISU has been named one among 21 leading SUCs in the Philippines.

Respondents of the Study:

All the 4th year Mass Communication students of Isabela State University Echague Campus were chosen as respondents of this study. There were 16 student-respondents enrolled for the second semester of school year 2014-2015.

Sampling Procedures:

The number of students enrolled in Mass Communication Department of Isabela State University Echague Campus is too small for treatment. So, all the 4th year Mass Communication students from Isabela State University Echague Campus were taken as purposive samples.

Research Instruments:

The research instruments used in this study were survey questionnaire and examination papers for all the Mass Communication students of Isabela State University Echague Campus.

Survey Questionnaire: The first part includes the personal profile of the respondents. Second part includes the list of activities to cope up with difficulties in written discourse. From there, respondents are required to rate, through a Likert scale, their most common activities done to improve their writing skill.

Examination Paper: The examination paper is an activity-like sheet composed of a composition with missing selected parts of speech words. The respondents were required to select from the given choices of words to fill all the missing words to complete the composition. After which, the answers were checked accordingly to assess the mistakes committed. Another part of the examination was on the Sentence Level. Respondents rewrote the selected incorrect sentences to make it correct. Moreover, for the Paragraph Level and Discourse Level, respondents were asked to write their own composition by answering the question “What are the reasons why you took up Mass Communication as your college course?”.

Data Gathering Procedures:

First, the researcher prepared and sent the letter to the University President of Isabela State University Echague Campus for permission to conduct the study and to administer her questionnaire to the target students. Second, the researcher formally distributed the questionnaire to the respondents where they were instructed on how to accomplish the form.

Statistical Treatment of Data:

From the data gathered, tabulation and frequency count were done. Since this study only compares and analyzes the errors committed by the respondents, the latter is the only way to treat the data. The errors committed were counted and listed as to compare it to other answers of the respondents to distinguish what error came out common.

Moreover, after tabulating all the result of the data, errors with the highest number in count were presented and considered the representation on the dominant errors committed.

Simple Frequency Count and Percentage Distribution: It was used to treat the profile of the respondents as to their Age, Gender, Native or First Language, and Second Language.

Formula:

$$P = f/n \times 100$$

Where:

f= frequency

n= total no. of respondents

p= percentage

Weighted Mean: This was utilized to treat the respondents’ responses on the several parts under information proper merely to find out means and ranks of responses.

Formula:

$$WM = \frac{\sum fw}{N}$$

Where:

WM= weighted mean

F= frequency

W= weight given to response

N= total number of respondents

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

Demographic Profile:

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents as to Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-20	14	87.5
21-23	0	0
24-25	2	12.5
Total	16	100

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents as to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	13	81.25
Male	3	18.75
Total	16	100

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents as to Native Language/ First Language Spoken

First Language / Native Language	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Iloko	8	50.00
Ybanag	3	18.75
Yogad	2	12.5
Tagalog	3	18.75
Total	16	100

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents as to Second Language

Second Language	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Iloko	2	12.5
Tagalog	11	68.75
English	3	18.75
Total	16	100

Information Proper:

Activities to cope up with Difficulties in Writing English Discourse: The item that got the highest weighted mean of 4.56 with a qualitative description of “Always” is the statement “I just bear in my mind the errors I committed and makes sure that next time I will not repeat it again.” Wherein the respondents believe that the most effective activity or task to do to cope up with written discourse difficulty is to remember the error they committed, that was eventually checked by the immediate person responsible, and not to repeat it. This also means that this is the activity that suggests the respondents to cope up with their English Written Discourse’s difficulties. However, there are two items that got the last rank or the eighth rank on the activities cited to cope up with difficulties in writing an English Discourse. The statements were “I list down my difficulties in writing English Discourse. This serves as my reference for future possible writing activities” and “I usually concentrate to study my difficulties at school rather than at home” both with a computed weighted mean of 3.44 with a qualitative description of “Sometimes”. This means that the respondents sometimes list down their difficulties that will serve later on as their reference in correcting their further errors. Another implication is that the respondents are sometimes comfortable in studying their difficulties at school than at home.

Examination Proper:

On Word Level, the Item that got the highest incorrect answer was “Everyone (know, knows, knew) that newspapers are very important;” where 13 respondents got it incorrectly. It acquired a percentage of 81.25 denoting that most of the respondents are not competent enough to use connectives or transitional words/phrases properly. However, the least in rank of the common mistake committed is the item “(and, to, for) yet utilizes the utmost economy” where out of 16 respondents there was only one respondent who got it incorrectly. It got a percentage of 6. 25, this means that only one of the respondents is confused in the use of conjunctions. Similarly, if the latter got the lowest number of incorrect respondents then it is considered now as the strength of the respondents in the Word Level. The same item got the highest percentage in the correct items having a percentage of 93.75. This means that majority of the respondents are competent enough in using conjunctions properly.

Sentence Level. The item that got the most incorrect mark was “Among the newcomers were two young men, one of handsome presence with a bold, frank countenance and manner, the other a ruffled, glum-faced person, heavily built and roughly dressed; the two were handcuffed together” that acquired a frequency of 11 and a percentage of 68.75. This item is considered as an Inter Sentence Connected Discourse error, where clauses in the sentence were not connected properly. This means that the respondents’ weakness in constructing a sentence

is in Inter Sentence Connected Discourse where they are not fully aware of properly connecting clauses and how a sentence is constructed by achieving an Inter Sentence Connected Discourse. Moreover, since this item got the highest number of incorrect mark it is also considered now as the item having the least number of respondents who got it correctly. The implication of which needs further strengthening on this aspect.

Now, the item that got the highest correct mark was “At Denver into the coaches on the eastbound B. & M. express there was an influx of passengers” that got a frequency of 12 and a percentage of 75. This sentence is having a Modification error. This means that most of the respondents are good in constructing a sentence following the modification rule since almost all of them were able to get the item correctly. The result shows a progressed and gainful result of instructions.

Paragraph Level. On the corrected examination paper of the respondents, the researcher observed and noticed that the common error that the respondents committed in Paragraph Level was in Grammar.

Grammar is the common error that the respondents committed while writing their composition. There are instances where they do not know the proper tense of the verb to use in the sentence. Also, on the other parts of a speech (Preposition, Noun, Pronoun, and Adverb) in the sentence were not properly used.

Discourse Level. Based on the corrected examination paper of the respondents, the researcher observed and noticed that the common error that the respondents committed in Discourse Level is Unity and Coherence.

There was no unity in the paragraphs of the respondents’ composition. The respondents did not use transitional words/phrases in between paragraphs to connect inter-related sentences. Further, there were no signs of unity among the information provided in the paragraphs since every paragraph seems to be free-flowing from its form.

Another determined weakness of the respondents in terms of writing a composition in Discourse Level is Coherence. As observed, majority of the respondents’ composition have no logical arrangement of ideas in between paragraphs. Like a certain paragraph when talks about two to four different information but were not given the right sequence and order such that presentation is all numbered down.

CONCLUSION:

Development in the use of the English language either on the written or oral discourse necessitates a review and attention. This denotes that whatever error is committed should be given immediate remediation so as to get across them. As surfaced at in these strong errors are dispersed on different aspects: from number usage, tense, conjunctions and prepositions, and other parts of speech were glaring errors surfaced at in the examinations conducted. Added to these are the determined weaknesses in terms of unity, coherence, and word usage. All those are expressive and needed measures if only to develop student’s communication competence and fluency.

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FIGURES



Figure 1. Façade of Isabela State University Echague Campus

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Table 5: Distribution of Respondents as to the Result of Examination in Word Level

Word Level Problem	Incorrect	Percentage (%)	Rank	Correct	Percentage (%)	Rank	No Answer	Percentage (%)	Total Percentage (%)
Everyone (know, knows, knew) that newspapers are very important;	3	18.75	12	13	81.25	2	-	-	100
(moreover, hence, in fact), the business	13	81.25	1	3	18.75	15	-	-	100
(of, in, on) putting up a newspaper has become a very important affair.	9	56.25	4	7	43.75	12	-	-	100
(A, The, In) daily newspaper	6	37.5	5	10	62.5	9	-	-	100
(has, have, is of) several important functions;	4	25	10	12	75	4	-	-	100
(besides, eventually, therefore), great care is taken to ensure these functions.	3	18.75	12	12	75	4	1	6.25	100
It has to gather a lot of news; (in addition, meanwhile, yet), it has to utilize a wide selection of news	11	68.75	2	5	31.25	13	-	-	100
to be (publish, publishes,	3	18.75	12	13	81.25	2	-	-	100

published).									
It has to determine (which, what, that) news is important.	4	25	10	10	62.5	9	2	12.5	100
(Naturally, In fact, Finally), it gives this important news more space	5	31.25	6	10	62.5	9	1	6.25	100
(and, to, for) yet utilizes the utmost economy	1	6.25	15	15	93.75	1	-	-	100
(in, on, to) using this space.	5	31.25	6	11	68.75	6	-	-	100
The editor must comment (in, on, to) editorially important news;	11	68.75	2	5	31.25	13	-	-	100
(for this reason, ultimately, nevertheless) he does not speak out in his name	5	31.25	6	11	68.75	6	-	-	100
but(reflect, reflects, reflected) the opinion of the majority.	5	31.25	6	11	68.75	6	-	-	100

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents as to the Result of Examination on Sentence Level

Sentence Level Problem	Incorrect	Percentage (%)	Rank	Correct	Percentage (%)	Rank	No Answer	Percentage (%)	Total Percentage (%)
1. At Denver into the coaches on the eastbound B. & M. express there was an influx of passengers.	1	6.25	5	12	75	1	3	18.75	100
2. In one coach there sat a very pretty young woman who is dressed in elegant taste, all the luxurious comforts of an experienced traveller surrounds her.	5	31.25	3	8	50	3	3	18.75	100
3. Among the newcomers were two young men, one of handsome presence with a bold, frank countenance and manner, the other a ruffled, glum-faced person, heavily built and roughly dressed; the two were handcuffed together.	11	68.75	1	2	12.5	5	3	18.75	100
4. The only vacant seat offered was a reversed one facing the attractive young woman as they passed down the aisle of the coach.	4	25	4	9	56.25	2	3	18.75	100
5. Proclaimed that its owner was accustomed to speak and be heard, when she spoke her voice, full, sweet, and deliberate.	6	37.5	2	7	43.75	4	3	18.75	100

Table 7: Weighted Mean, Qualitative Description, and Ranking Distribution on the Activities to cope up with Difficulties in Writing English Discourse

Activities to Cope up with Difficulties in Writing English Discourse	Weighted Mean	Q.D	R.D
1. I list down my difficulties in writing English Discourse. This serves as my reference for future possible writing activities.	3.44	Sometimes	8
2. After knowing my difficulties, I render time to study it.	4.13	Often	3
3. I just bear in my mind the errors I committed and makes sure that next time I will not repeat it again.	4.56	Always	1
4. I am asking the appropriate teacher that could help me to improve my difficulties than my closest friends, classmates, or parents.	3.56	Often	6
5. I am asking my closest friends, classmates, or parents to help me with my difficulties rather than my teacher.	3.63	Often	5
6. I usually concentrate to study my difficulties at school rather than at home.	3.44	Sometimes	8
7. I usually concentrate to study my difficulties at home rather than at school.	3.81	Often	4
8. I read books that could help me to improve my skill in writing English discourse.	4.19	Often	2
9. I practice my writing skill every day through diary, daily journal, etc.	3.5	Sometimes	7
AVERAGE WEIGHTED MEAN	3.81	Often	
