Khwaja Yunus Ali University Journal
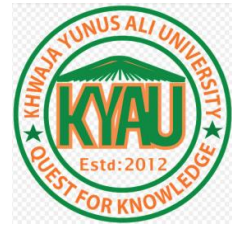
Research Article

An Error Analysis of Written English used for Official Purposes

Md. Sozib Hosen[1], and Mst. Tanna Khatun[1]*

[1]Department of English, School of Human Sciences, Khwaja Yunus Ali University, Sirajganj, Bangladesh.

* Corresponding author:sozib.iu.92@gmail.com (Md.Sozib Hosen, Department of English, School of Human Sciences, Khwaja Yunus Ali University, Sirajganj, Bangladesh)

Abstract

Making errors in daily writing is a common issue, especially in foreign languages like English. In the official environment, these errors may sometimes hurdle to successful communication. This study investigates the fields of error in writing notices, memos, minutes, office orders, applications, and reports in English and officials' perceptions about mistakes in written English for official communication. The samples are collected from hospitals, business centers, banks, and educational institutions, and the sample size is 40. The researcher also interviewed ten (10) officials. The result shows that almost 53% of the samples contain errors in different types of grammatical and lexical errors (verb, number, spelling, pronoun, article, preposition, punctuation, syntax). The major part of the error occurs in a preposition (18%), verb (18%), word function (18%), and number (13%). The study report is significant for motivating officials to correctly write letters, notices, reports, and memos for official communication. Writing perfect English in the professional setting is essential for clarity and seamless communication. However, these misunderstandings occur due to a lack of comprehension and a restricted vocabulary in the target language.

Keywords: Error in English, Official communication, Written English, grammatical error, lexical error.

1. Introduction

This study explores errors in written English that frequently occur in the daily use of official purposes. The study area demands our concentration because of its several aspects of significance. The first aspect is investigating the degree of the mistakes in official documents like notices, memos, minutes, and reports. The second sector (grammar or language)is mainly mistaken for communication. Correcting the vocabulary and grammar to build successful communication among users is crucial.

A grammatical mistake like tense or spelling, as to say, can cause great havoc for the officials of any institution relating to submitting any record or reports. The demand for language usage cannot be denied for entirely sending crystal clear messages to meet the situation. Another one is to figure out the fact of the making errors in written Englishfor official purposes, whether it is unconsciously done or the writers of the English language lack of knowledge of the proper use of vocabulary and grammar by investigating the mode of errors. The topic to be studied has represented, we believe, the reality of the expertise of the usages of official English, more broadly, a part of thetangiblepicture of skilled human resources of Bangladesh.

Moreover, nowadays, the ability to use official English isconsidered an additional criterion for marking the quality of an institution. We believe this study resultsinbringing awareness among the staff while they will write English for professional purposes. The study was conducted based on the following questions:

a) What errors do people generally make in composed English for official communication?

b) What factors are responsible for making mistakes in writing?

2. Literature Review

The said research topic is less discussed with the aims and objectives of this research program as that is the current concern for all staff. Nonetheless, some works have already been completed that contain English errors for official purposes. EndahDewiMuliandari, Deli Nirmala (2018) on course materials for a program called "*English for the Office* of Balai Latihan Kerja" (BLK), a vocational and education training center for developing skills among staff in using official English correctly. They showed that there are so many grammatical errors in materials for office English like verbs, punctuation, word order, and some other fields. So, it is suggested the authority of the center should be more conscious of meeting the quality of the materials used for official purposes.

Myles, J. (2002) identifies second language students' writing mistakes. It is suggested that if learners are given feedback regarding their errors, they will gain expertise in writing their essays efficiently. Sushmita Rani (2015) has also worked on the student level, and she figures out the mistakes of English of the students in the undergraduate class of various private universities. She explores the primary area where mosterrors occur in the Written English of EFL learners.

Moreover, Fadi Maher Al-Khasawneh (2014) researched the errors in writing paragraphs written by students of Ajloun National University in Jordan, who all came from a non-English environment and did not use English frequently outside the university campus. The result shows that students make mistakes in terms of spelling, sub-verb agreement, order of words, and mostly in article use. He also provides some pedagogical recommendations that

help EFL teachers and students with insufficient English knowledge to write correct English.

SaadiyahDarus&Kaladevi Subramaniam shed light on the common errors of Secondary School Students who face hurdles in using different types of rules and grammar of the English language. The focus point of the researchers was to identify the problems of students writing in English so that teachers can resolve the issues for efficient writing.

BilkisFahmida (2010), in her thesis paper for a master's degree, focused on writing errors in the academic field. The finding shows that students fail to use grammar, even the simplest ones like the pronoun, number of nouns, and other grammar forms. Though the learners have been studying the English language since their elementary level, they cannot achieve mastering this language. The researcher says if they are nurtured and monitored by an expert teacher, their language competency will be better.

Dr. Shreeja Sharma & Prof. Shubhra Tripathi (2018), two notable researchers, worked on the errors of teaching English at the primary level, which is considered the root building phase of a student. The research covers all the four basic skills of English; Listening, Writing, Reading, and Speaking. The researcher shows the lack of teaching pedagogy of the language teachers and the significance of being skilled to facilitate ELT and make it a meaningful exercise.

Mohammed Jasim Uddin Khan (2018) analyzes the errors made by the students of Prime University in their writing essays. He points out that students made mistakes in writing, mainly in using several types of grammar. These mistakes are prevalent not only in their writing but also in the level of the English language users.

However, though several pieces of research have been conducted on the errors of English from different levels, there is no specific research on the errors or mistakes of official written English, which is, we think, a crucial subject nowadays. In addition, it is a must to be competent in using English to meet the quality of staff and any institution. Considering the above information, it draws our attention to address the topic.

Research Methodology:

3. Research design and procedure

Data have beencollected from various institutions (educational institutions, hospitals, and commercial institutions) inSirajganjDistrict. Thedifferentdocumentslike notices, memos, minutes, letters,andreportsare considered primary and grouped data accordingtotheirfunctions. After collecting data, we have dissected the collected data to adequately apply grammar (verb, number, spelling, pronoun, article, preposition, punctuation, and syntax) and language (words, the function of words, diction) and recorded the result in tabular format.

3.1 Sampling and Sampling size

In this study, a simple random sampling method and unstructured interview have been used to collect data. The researchers used primary data (application, notices, memos, minutes, reports).Forty(40) samples and ten (10) interviews (with officials) have been used to conduct the research.

3.2 Privacy Policy
Data collection for this project involves different institutions whose names havebeenkeptconfidential and anonymous to maintain their institutional prestige.

4. Data analysis tool
Data have been analyzed manually and prepared results with the help of Microsoft Excel software.

5. Results and discussion
Suppose a notice, letter, minute, or other medium used in offices for communicative purposes is written in incorrect English. In that case, it might contain inaccurate information and cause confusion among offices of various departments and institutions. The researchers discovered specific areas (**Fig.1**) where officials frequently make errors.

SL	Preposition	Numbers	Verb	Spelling	usage of words	Punctuation	Redundancy	Pronoun	Syntax	Article	
1											
2	1						1				
3		1		1	1						
4											
5											
6	1	1			1			1			
7	9	5	8	4	2				4		
8	1		1	1	7				1		
9											
10			1								
11											
12											
13											
14											
15											
16											
17		1									
18						1					
19						1					
20						1					
21						1					
22											
23									1		
24											
25			2								
26			1		2	1					
27											

28											
29			1								
30									1		
31											
32	1										
33											
34		1			1			1			
35					1						
36											
37		1		1				1			
38								1			
39	1					1					
40											
Total:	**14**	**10**	**14**	**6**	**14**	**7**	**2**	**1**	**9**	**1**	= 77

Table 1: the figure of errors in official written English

According to the statics (**Table** 1), the rate of overall errors is 52.5%. The total volume of errors utilized in the 40 samples is 77. It demonstrates that officials commonly used incorrect words, syntactical errors, sub-verb-agreement, numbers, prepositions, spelling, and pronouns in their official communication.
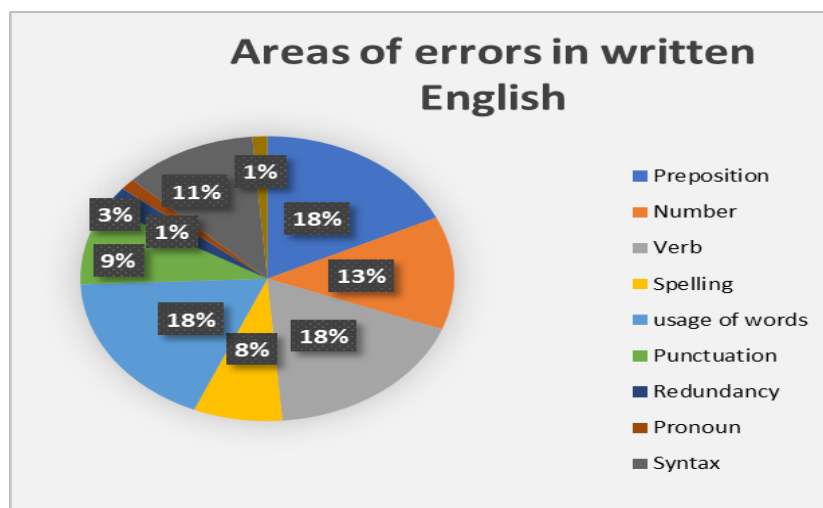
Fig. 1: Areas of errors in written English for official purposes

According to the graphical representation (**Fig. 1**), 54% of errors were caused by using incorrectwords, verbs, and prepositions, which is the most remarkable rate of errors. The errors in terms of spellingare also significant, accounting for 13% of all errors.Syntactical error is 11%, whereas the rest of the errors are 22% altogether.

Due to a lack of expertise in the target language, officials employed **inappropriate word forms**. Incorrect wording is used because they lack adequate knowledge about word formation and function, homonyms, and homophones. For example, 'pear' and 'peer 'have two different meanings and spelling, but the sound is similar (homophone). The former refers to yellowish edible fruit, while the latter means an individual with the same talents as the other group members. In the following example, the official has used 'pear' [fruit] instead of 'peer.'

No practical class arrange, Math class without feedback is unsatisfaction.

)1   Overall satisfactory.

ecture moves from Marketing to mathematical of management)

The above sentences contain grammatical errors in the proper use of words.

4. Accounce office; (Account.)
5. Admission office;

A **spelling error** is frequent among the most common mistakes made in written English for official communications. Spelling mistakes have been classified into numerous sorts based on six categories. The categories include addition, deletion, substitution, transposition, and homonym (Greenberg, 1994). Besides that, syntactical errors are fitted to be mentioned in writing official English. For writing imperative sentences, verbs come in base form, but the investigation finds the line ['**Does not mention the reason**']. According to this sentence, the verb '*Does*' is not correct. The word '*Does*' should be changed to '*Do*.' There another thing is it is not a logically correct sentence considering the previous one. There is no coherence among the sentences.

Class scheduled 19 to 26 October but taken form 27 October to 3rd November. Doses not

mention the reason.

ME 210 Class taken without given reasons.

No feedback in the from class test taken.
HRM 302 which are is correct?
BUS 302 Large no of students
No remedial measures were taken for students missing class but the subject is one of the vital
Important topic is there any scope for the students to know the topic later?

Prepositional inaccuracy has been spotted in 14 of the 6 out of 40 (**Table 1**). It suggests that the errors have occurred for unfamiliarity with the usage of prepositions. Prepositional mistakes happen because officers are unsure of how to utilize prepositions correctly. Using 'at' instead of '*on*' and the omission of the preposition '*with*' are highlighted in the following lines extracted from the official documents.

We are very much delighted to inform you that l   y is going to organize a day long sports day at 15th December, 2021 at   l playground. You are

1. You need to write Flow Chart/Instructional Objectives/Lesson plan etc. in time.
2. You need to comply the instructions of the Director, IQAC. If you need to modify or change

Subject: Class Routine for fall ~~~

Sir,
The midterm exam will be ended on next Wednesday. Accord~
after midterm at December 06, 2020. In the meantime. please
~~~~~~ class routine is given below.

Eighteen (18%) percent of officials committed a **tense, right form of the verb, subject-verb agreement** mistake in which they jumbled up the tense and appropriate verb form. They learned to employ verbs throughout their basic and secondary studies. So, if individuals make this blunder after completing these stages, we may argue that it is due to their ignorance.

Regularly 5 present, 3 absent in all six classes One class are taken at old time 6-

NOTICE

All the respective course teachers are hereby informed that th
2020 is going to start from 08-02-2021.You are requested to s
copy of your Question ~~~~~~ 18-01-2021 ~~~~

~ applicable for the entity are being implemented properly. The ~~ in co-
~ity assurance culture within the entity. The activities of ~ will be look ~

In the above-quoted lines, in most cases, errors occur in the sub-verb agreement and the sentences of passive voice.

Punctuation is a crucial component of language. Peck and Coyle (1999) defined punctuation as a linguistic signaling mechanism. Some officials made a failure of punctuation, which shows the carelessness of officials in writing English for office usage. However, the rate of mistakes made in punctuation is meager.

Notice

It is for the information of all Teachers; Workers/Employees a
Whole period of Fall-2019 Final Exam~~~~ ~~~

Errors in the article, redundancy, and pronouns are minor, and the mistakes are rare. The error of these fields may not create any misconception to communicating with others because these grammatical items usually are not used as keywords in sentences.

6. Officials' perceptions:
When we conducted interviews with officials, we found mixed conceptions among them about the errors in writing official English. Somesay these mistakes occur due to mental pressure or inadequate time to crosscheck. On the other hand, some agreed that some errors(the use of prepositions, verb, spelling, etc.) occurred due to the ignorance of the officials' correct usage of these grammatical and

lexical functions. For a solution, they believe that self-awareness is desperately needed.

7. Conclusion

In writing an official letter, notice, application, memo, minutes, etc., errors are not a deniable issue. Due to the errors, a message may be misinterpreted, and a critical situation may arise among the senders and receivers. For clarity and to make our communication flawless, it is a must to write correct English in the office environment. However, these blunders happen due to a lack of understanding and a limited vocabulary in the target language. Theseinaccuracies are caused by officials' incompetence and lack of knowledge of L2 (second language), resulting in the generation of certain incorrect words, misspellings, syntactical errors, inappropriate use of prepositions, etc. Those associated with maintaining official communication should be more aware of their usual mistakes.

9. Conflict of interest: There is no conflict with my research area. This research area is sociolinguistics, linguistics, Teaching-learning materials, and education.

10. Author's contribution: Md. Sozib Hosen developed the research concept, designed and worked ontheliterature review, wrotethearticle, and preparedthequestionnaireand data collection. And, Mst. Tanna Khatun has analyzed and interpreted data. She also assisted in editing the article with critical review and gave the final approval to publish the article.

11. References

1. Al-Khasawneh, F.M.,2014. Error analysis of written English paragraphs by Jordanian undergraduate students: A case study. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, *2*(8), pp.85-100.

2. Darus, S. and Subramaniam, K., 2009. Error analysis of the written English essays of secondary school students in Malaysia: A case study. *European journal of social sciences*, *8*(3), pp.483-495.

3. Fahmida, B., 2010. *Bangladeshi tertiary level students' common errors in academic writing* (Doctoral dissertation, BRAC University).

4. Greenberg, K.L., 1994. *The Advance Writer. Book 2: Paragraphs and Essays.* US: HarperCollins. College Publishers.

5. Kapu, K., Muliandari, E.D. and Nirmala, D., 2018. Grammatical Errors in English for Office BLK Instructional Materials. *PAROLE: Journal of Linguistics and Education*, *8*(2), pp.46-51.

6. Mohammed, J.U., 2018. Error analysis of written English compositions: The case of learners of Prime University in Bangladesh. *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, *47*, pp.72-75.

7. Myles, J., 2002. Second language writing and research: The writing process and error analysis in student texts. *Tesl-Ej*, *6*(2), pp.1-20.

8. Peck, J. and Coyle, M., 1999. *The student's guide to writing: Grammar, punctuation, and spelling*. Macmillan.

9. Rani, S., 2015. Error Analysis of the Written English Paragraphs of Bangladeshi EFL Learners. NELTA Forum, August 4, 2015. https://neltaeltforum.wordpress.com/2015/08/04/702/

10. Sharma, D. and Tripathi, P., 2018. Error Analysis for English Language Teaching at Primary Level. *IJELLH (International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities)*, *6*(9), p.7.