



Research Paper

A Study on the Common Errors in the Usage of Tense in English Language among Secondary School Students

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Abstract

Language has a significant role in the development of humanity. Effective communications with the help of a common language synchronize the whole world; English does this tough task. As far as the Indian students are concerned, they learn the foreign language- English consciously. Because of the influence of mother tongue, lack of an adequate environment, motivation, etc. our students fail to comprehend the language concerned effectively. In this occasion the study concerned checks and analyzes the common errors in the usage of 'Tense' in English among secondary school students of Kerala. It is clear that there are some problems and it should be cured.

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I. Introduction

Man becomes the doyen of the universe because of his thinking skill and communication skill. Human beings express their feelings and emotions effectively through language. As a result, language becomes the vehicle of communication. It is an instrument through which ideas are transmitted from one mind to another. Jespersen (1966) defines language as, a set of human habits, the purpose of which is to give expression to thought and feelings; and especially to impart them to others. There can be no controversy regarding the honoured place enjoyed by English in the present day world. English is now spoken as the first language or mother tongue by over two hundred millions of people and it is read and it is understood by many millions people. It is spoken and written in all its amazing variety and complexity. Not counting British and American children about 20,000,000 boys and girls begin learning English every year. English is indispensable as a means of acquiring scholarship in different areas of knowledge. The latest and most accurate information about advances and researches in the field of science and technology is immediately available to us through the medium of English.

In our country English enjoys the status of an associate official language. Today it is a significant link language in a multilingual country like ours. Hence it is taught as an important foreign language in a trilingual situation. As far as the English Language is concerned, it follows strict grammar in order to give clarity in expression. Tense, the back bone of English language helps man to express his ideas, emotions, feelings, etc. effectively to others through English language. It helps one to show the relation between the action or state described by the verb and the time, which is reflected in the form of the verb. Thus, communication becomes effective and clearer to others. The present study tries to find out the common errors committed by the secondary school students in the use of tense in English language.

Need and Significance of the Study

As far as Indians are concerned, English is a foreign language. We learn the language consciously and use it consciously. Thus the success of good communication through English language depends on how much one can express himself more clearly to others. Since English is an acquired language, one should know the tense which is the base of language and its proper usage for clear expression. But people, especially students always deviate from standard language norms in grammar, syntax, pronunciation and punctuation because it is not their mother tongue.

It is a common phenomenon that people make mistakes in the usage of a new language which is learned consciously. As far as the secondary school students of Kerala are concerned the same problem is there but we have only a nebulous idea regarding the problem and the errors. At the same time we can't say in which

area of tense, students have made mistakes and its intensity based on the geographical features, gender, institution, medium of instruction and so on. So it is necessary to study on this problem and find its present state. Since the secondary school students have to follow English as the medium of instruction for further studies, they should be corrected at the secondary level. Only through a genuine study we can have apt solutions to wipe out the errors in the usage of tense in English language among the secondary school students of Kerala. In this context the researcher thinks that the present study will be helpful for teachers concerned for English Language Teaching to adopt necessary changes to make the learning effective and thus the study is highly significant.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the common errors made by the secondary school students in the use of tense in the total sample.
2. To compare the common errors made by the secondary school students in the use of tense in the sub samples based on medium of instruction, locale, gender and type of management of schools.

II. Methodology

In the present study normative survey method was employed. The sample was collected from 400 secondary school students of 10 secondary schools from Alappuzha district through stratified random sampling technique, taking the factors of gender, medium of instruction, locality and type of management of schools. The tool used in the study was Tense Proficiency Test prepared by the investigators.

Analysis

To study the common errors made by the secondary school students in the use of tense in English Language in the total sample, the mean and standard deviation of the total sample were calculated. Based on the obtained scores of the in the total sample were categorized into above average, average and below average groups by using the formula $M \pm \sigma$. Data and the results of analysis are given bellow in the following tables.

Table 1

Mean and standard deviation of scores regarding the common errors made by these secondary school students in the use of tense in English language in the total sample

Category	Number	Mean	S.D
Future Tense	400	10.98	1.59
Present Tense	400	14.46	1.92
Past Tense	400	8.67	1.59
Total	400	34.12	2.83

Arithmetic mean of the scores regarding the common errors made by the secondary school students in the total sample in the use of present tense in English Language in the total sample is 14.46 and standard deviation is 1.98, whereas in past tense it is 8.67 and 1.59 and in future tense 10.98 and 1.59 respectively. Arithmetic mean of the scores regarding the common errors made by the secondary school students in the use of tense in English Language in the total sample is 34.12 and standard deviation is 2.83.

Table 2

Different levels of the common errors made by the Secondary school students in the use of tense in the total sample

Category	Above Average		Average		Below Average	
	No.	%.	No	%.	No	%
Present Tense	153	38.25	106	26.5	141	35.25
Past Tense	137	34.25	142	35.5	121	30.25
Future Tense	54	13.5	277	69.75	69	17.25
Total	132	33	147	36.75	121	30.25

Among the 400 secondary school students in the total sample who participated in this study, 33 % belong to above average, 36.75 % belong to average and 30.25 % belong to below average category. Out of 400

secondary school students in the total sample 38.25% students belong to above average in present tense, 34.25% students belong to above average in Past tense and 13.5% students belong to above average category in Future tense as far as the errors in these tense is concerned.

Among the total sample of 400 secondary school students 35.25% students have below average errors in the usage of Present tense in English language. In the case of Past and Future tenses, it is 30.25% and 17.25% respectively. Considering the errors in present tense, 26.5% students belong to the average category. In the case of past tense and future tense, 35.5% and 69.75% students have committed errors and belong to the average category.

Table 3

Data and results of test of significance of difference between the mean scores of the common errors in the usage of tense in English language among secondary school students in the subsamples

Group / Sample		No	Mean	Sd	Critical ratio
Medium of instruction	English	200	35.14	3.22	6.73 (p < .01)
	Malayalam	200	33.12	2.98	
Locale	Urban	200	35.75	2.85	10.7 (p < .01)
	Rural	200	32.52	3.35	
Gender	Male	200	33.33	3.13	3.5 (p < .01)
	Female	200	34.94	3.07	
Type of management of school	Private	200	35.85	2.8	5.75 (p < .01)
	Govt:	200	32.42	3.14	

Arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the total scores regarding the common errors made by the English medium secondary school students in the usage of tense in English language are 35.14 and 3.22, and that of Malayalam medium students are 33.12 and 2.98. The t value is 6.73. English medium students show a little good performance than the Malayalam medium students in the tense proficiency test. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the total scores regarding the common errors made by the secondary school students from urban areas in the usage of tense in English language are 35.75 and 2.85, and that of students from rural areas are 32.52 and 3.35. The t value is 10.7. Students from urban areas show a little good performance than the students from rural areas in the tense proficiency test.

Arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the total scores regarding the common errors made by the female secondary school students in the usage of tense in English language are 34.94 and 3.07, and that of male students are 33.33 and 3.13. The t value is 3.5. Female students show a little good performance than the male students in the tense proficiency test. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the total scores regarding the common errors made by the private school students in the usage of tense in English language are 35.85 and 2.80, and that of students from Govt schools are 32.42 and 3.41. The t value is 5.75. Students from private schools show a little good performance than the students from Govt schools in the tense proficiency test.

III. Conclusions of the Study

- Most of the students have made mistake in past tense whereas the mistakes are considerably low in present tense and in future tense.
- There is significant difference between the secondary school students from Malayalam medium and English medium regarding the common errors in the usage of tense in English language. Malayalam medium students make more errors than English medium students.
- There is significant difference between secondary school students from urban and rural areas regarding the common errors in the usage of tense in English language. Students from rural schools make more errors than urban students.
- There is significant difference between female secondary school students and male secondary school students regarding the common errors in the usage of tense in English language. Male students make more errors than female students.
- There is significant difference between the secondary school students from Govt. and aided schools regarding the common errors in the usage of tense in English language. Govt school students make more errors than aided school students.

Implications of the Study

As a foreign language, English is still difficult to understand for the secondary school students of Kerala. It can be solved by imparting an apt method for teaching English language at the secondary level. Language proficiency will develop only when the student get enough opportunity to use it and understand it. In language class, learner should be motivated to acquire the four skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing.

To improve the language proficiency and the correct usage of tense in English, at first there should be enough good trained-teachers at the schools. The number of students at each class should be 20 to 25. There is hardly any scope for individual guidance which has a vital role in language learning. Lack of supplementary reading is also a problem. Only through reading the learner is familiar with the structure of English language which helps him to use the grammar in the right manner. The student should get a good atmosphere at the classroom to explore him to attain the desired goals of language teaching. Moreover the authority concerned should provide advanced methods to the teachers to improve the quality of teaching.

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