

Based on a Study of Common Grammatical Errors in College Students' Final English Compositions

Ziqing Hua, Li Zhang

Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang 712046, Shaanxi, China

Abstract: *As one of the four basic English skills, English writing plays a vital role in the process of English learning and is highly valued by the English education circle. However, in English writing, students will inevitably make multiple grammatical mistakes. Existing literature research shows that the research on students' writing errors mostly focuses on the vocabulary level, while relatively less discusses the grammatical errors. Based on this, this study selected five compositions from the final examination of students in a school as the research objects, and used the text analysis method to classify the grammatical errors and analyze their causes. Through this study, the investigators expect to provide teachers with suggestions to help them improve their teaching methods, reduce grammatical errors in students' compositions, make the teaching process more engaging, and improve students' learning efficiency in writing.*

Keywords: English composition, Grammar error, Error research.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

With the development of economic globalization, the importance of English as an international language is obvious. Listening, speaking, reading and writing constitute the four basic skills that English learners must master. Among them, listening and reading are the process of receiving language information, while speaking and writing are the process of expressing language information. Writing as a key language expression skill, not only promotes their comprehensive quality cultivation, but also is an effective way to evaluate students' comprehensive ability^[1].

At present, the situation of Chinese college students in English writing teaching is not ideal. On one hand, the traditional teaching activities are mainly carried out in Chinese, which leads to the lack of a real language environment for English learners. Students' language input is very limited. On the other hand, the revision and feedback of writing have not received enough attention. Many teachers evaluate students' compositions, and often give a final score without providing clear feedback. As a result, it is difficult for students to find their own problems, which makes writing mistakes repeated and students gradually lose confidence and interest in writing^[2]. In addition, the grammar in English has rich change forms, and the lack of such similar morphological changes in Chinese, which brings challenges to many students. Therefore, solving the grammatical mistakes in writing has a positive significance for improving students' English writing ability.

1.2 Research Meaning

From the theoretical point of view, this paper broadens the research field of writing grammar mistakes and enriches the research content of English grammar mistakes. Analyzing the causes of common grammar errors in writing provides theoretical support for teachers to carry out targeted teaching activities^[3]. At the same time, the proposed strategy to reduce writing grammar errors can provide a reference for the subsequent research on writing grammar in related fields. From the practical point of view, It can help teachers to have a

deeper understanding of students' writing ability and existing problems, identify and correct students' grammatical mistakes in time, and formulate targeted teaching strategies accordingly. Such practices can effectively help students to better understand the grammatical structure and application rules, so that improve their English writing skills.

2. Research Design

2.1 Research Problem

This study uses text analysis to investigate the frequent grammatical errors in the process of English writing, and analyze the roots of errors. The purpose is to put forward effective teaching strategies to reduce the occurrence of such mistakes and improve students' writing ability. Therefore, this study was designed to answer the following questions:

- (1) What grammatical mistakes do college students usually encounter in their English writing process?
- (2) What are the causes of the grammar mistakes of college students in English writing?
- (3) In the teaching practice, what strategies should be adopted to reduce the grammar errors in college students' English writing?

2.2 Research Object and Method

This study plans to use text analysis as the main research method. The composition part of the final English exam of college students is collected as a sample to organize and classify the errors systematically by identifying the errors in the texts. Then the corresponding teaching strategy is put forward accordingly.

2.3 Research Process

After obtaining the teacher's authorization, the author collected five valid samples of college students' final English writing. The examination is officially organized by the school, and the examination questions are closely related to students' daily life. They have certain authenticity and

representativeness. After obtaining the samples, the author have analyzed these writing samples in detail, mainly marked the grammatical errors, classified and sorted out these errors, so as to facilitate the subsequent analysis work. Detailed analysis is presented in the next section.

3. Research Results and Analysis

3.1 Error Type Tag

Passage One:

My Unforgettable Experience in College

College life is wonderful and meaningful. When I came into college, I found many things had become different. Here, I will tell my unforgettable experience in college.

I took part in a volunteer society. One day, our society lead/T-er us to a community/S-mis to do some voluntary activities. All members were divided into three groups. One group was ordered to introduce the meaning of this activity. Others were ordered to finish this activity's task. I was lucky to experience this voluntary activity. In this activity, I learn/T-er about the/M-art Chinese culture and various tips to introduce my college.

From this activity, I expanded my horizon and let/S-dis me learn how to take responsibility or take care of others. I think this unforgettable experience/S-mis is important and interesting. The/M-art last but not least, this experience make/SV-dis me become better and friendly/C-mis.

Passage Two:

My Unforgettable Experience in College

In the past last year, I have/T-er many unforgettable experience/SP-er in college, which brings/T-er me a lot of happiness and delightful memories.

I still clearly/V-mis remember the fortnight/V-mis exercise/S-mis training, which is a big difference/M-pro from the high school exercise/S-mis training. During the training, I made a/M-art plenty of new friends, they were very kind and heart-warming. The training has many interesting activities, most of them were/T-er team activities. I finished with my friends together and won. There is no doubt that team works has/SV-dis huge energy and one person/P-n energy was/T-er weaker than team energy. The training also made my physical and mental/M-pro more healthy.

The exercise/S-mis training is the beautiful beginning/S-mis of my college life and my unforgettable experience.

Passage Three:

My Unforgettable Experience in College

When I arrived/P-us my new university, I'm/T-er so delighted and happy. Because it is available/S-mis by my hard work. In my opinion, my college lives are colorful and meaningful. Here/MC-sen have many unforgettable experience./SP-er

Firstly, I make/T-er many good friends in college. We/C-er often go to play and eat together. What's more, I take/T-er part in many volunteer activities. We went to spread the culture of zhong yi. I improved my communication ability by/P-us these activities. Last but not least, I joined the UJ dance club so that I could cultivate my hobbies in college. We danced together every week. After that, I joined the activity " Bai Hua hui". Finally, we won the second. Everyone was happy and successful.

In a word, I benefit/T-er a lot from these outdoor activities and they left a deep impression on me. I'm looking forward to having more interesting experience/SP-er in college.

Passage Four:

My Unforgettable Experience in College

College is thinked/V-cr+P-us a small society. From/P-us college, we can learn many life skills and knowledge. I believe everyone have/SV-dis many Unforgettable/C-er experience/SP-er in college. I also/MC-sen many experience/SP-er but/M-con Unforgettable/C-er experience is make/T-er good friends and play/T-er with them.

First, They/C-er have/S-phr same hobby with/P-us me. When I have difficulty/SP-er, they often help me, and teach deal/M-er ways. One day, we play/N-v go to Xi an. Due to things, we have/T-er different thoughts. So, we argued. We have many days not conversation/S-am. Another friend/SP-er let me and his/P-er talk about each. In this process, I find we should think about his/P-er idea, When we have different view/SP-er should/MC-sen talk/P-us each other.

From this experience, I know that talk/N-v about is very important.

Passage Five:

My Unforgettable Experience in College

This year, I go to the/M-art college. And/MC-sen have many good and bad experience/SP-er.

First, I have a hot heart come/N-v the/M-art college. To this new film, I don't know how to see it. But my teacher and friend gived/V-cr me a road. So I think college is very good. Second, our school had a cool lesson, I thought this was really tried/A-us. The sun/MC-sen very big, but we sit down/P-us the ground. What's more, our college had a "Bai Hua" seeing/V-mis. I joined in this seeings/SP-er. That really was a/M-art unforgettable experience.

To/P-us College/C-er, I have mang/S-mis things go/N-v to learn. But I will improve my mind. I will hardworking/M-pro to be a winner. in/C-er the/M-art college, we will come on all in.

3.2 Error Type Classification

Based on the analysis, The common mistakes in the five English compositions are mainly reflected in grammar, syntax and vocabulary aspect, as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1

Type of error	Error number	Percentage
Vocabulary error	12	14.63%
Syntax error	29	35.37%
Grammatical error	32	39.02%
Others	9	10.98%

In order to make the data results can intuitively reflect the general rule, the author put the above table change into a chart form, as shown in Figure 1 below:

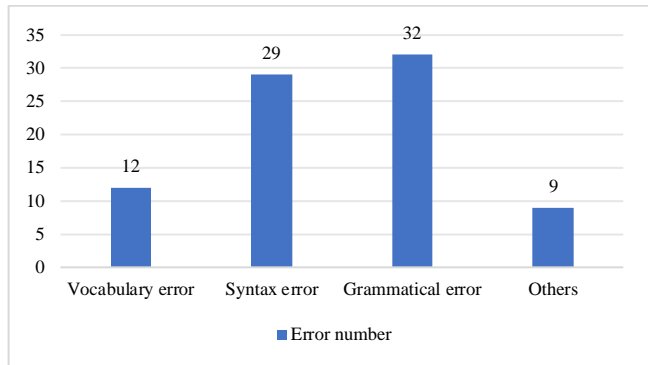


Figure 1

From this chart, we can clearly see that in students' English compositions, grammar errors are higher than vocabulary and syntactic errors, which we need to focus on. But vocabulary and syntactic errors also need attention. According to the mis-classification principle proposed by Dulay, Burt and Krashen in 1982, grammatical errors can be divided into two categories: global error and local error [4].As shown in table 2 below.

Table 2

Grammatical error type	Error number	Total number	Percentage
Local error	50	60	83.33%
Global error	10	60	16.67%

The following is a visual bar chart of table 2,as shown in Figure 2 below:

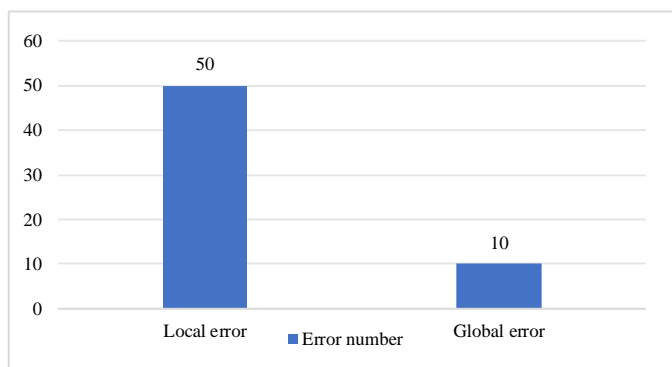


Figure 2

Local errors include: verb error, noun error, article error, preposition error, pronoun error, adjective error, adverb error; Global errors include: improper use of conjunctions, subject-verb inconsistency, incomplete or redundant sentence structure, and unclear sentence meaning [4]. As shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3

Types of grammatical error			Error number	Percentage
Local errors	noun error	singular and plural errors	10	16.67%
		Processive of noun	1	1.67%
	adjective error	modifier error	1	1.67%
		Comparative usage	1	1.67%

verb error	adjective usage	1	1.67%
	tense error	13	21.67%
	verb conjugation rule	2	3.33%
	non-finite verb	4	6.67%
	preposition error	8	13.33%
	article error	7	11.67%
	pronoun error	2	3.33%
	subject-verb disagreement	3	5%
	sentence ambiguity	1	1.67%
	missing component of sentence	5	8.33%
Global errors	misuse of conjunctions	1	1.67%

The following are the visual bar charts adjusted in Table 8, as shown in Figure 3 below:

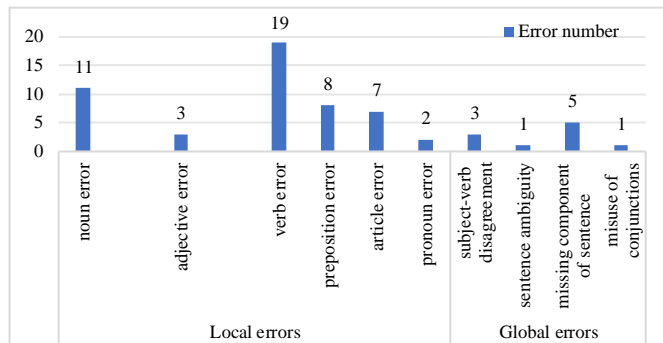


Figure 3

Through the above chart, we can see that among the local errors made in students' English compositions, compared with other word errors, the proportion of verb use errors is the highest[5]. The following are typical examples of verb class errors in English composition, which mainly involve the errors of verb conjugation rule, tense and non-finite verb. for example:

(1) Tense error:

- [1] One day, our society lead us to a community to do some voluntary activities. (According to the full text in the past tense, the lead is changed to led)
- [2] In the past last year, I have many unforgettable experience in college, which brings me a lot of happiness and delightful memories. (Change have to had, Change brings to brought, In the past last year Represents the past time period, The predicate part of the sentence applies the simple past tense)
- [3] The training has many interesting activities, most of them were team activities. (were is changed to are, the anterior and posterior tenses in a sentence should be consistent)
- [4] Firstly, I make many good friends in college. (make is changed to made. The most memorable experience in a university is a description of past experiences)

(2) Verb change rule:

- [1] College is thiked a small society. (Thiked is changed to thought, because the past formula of think is an irregular change)
- [2] But my teacher and friend gived me a road. (Gived is changed to gave, it is an irregular change)

(3) Nonfinite verb:

- [1] One day, we play go to Xi an. (Play go to is changed to are going to. There can be only one predicate verb in a sentence.one day Represents a future tense.)
- [2] From this experience, I know that talk about is very important. (Talk is changed to talking. The subject of the verb should be in gerund form)

Chinese students frequently make mistakes in the tense, mainly because there is no clear change form of the tense in Chinese. In the use of non-predicate verbs, many students often fail to realize that in a simple English sentence, there should be only one predicate verb, while other verbs need to be transformed into non-predicate forms^[5]. In addition, these students also appear powerless in the analysis of the sentence structure, resulting in the coexistence of two verbs in the sentence.

4. Error Cause Analysis

In the previous discussion, we have classified and analyzed the errors in students' English compositions. Now we will explore the causes of these errors. Based on the study of error, this paper divides the cause of error into interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Interlingual errors mainly stems from the negative migration effect of mother tongue, including the explicit migration of language surface and the implicit migration of cultural thinking. intralingual errors covers the over-generalization and of incomplete application rules, as well as errors in conceptual assumptions.

4.1 Interlingual Errors

Interlingual errors are usually caused by the interference of the language rule characteristics of the native language, which reflect the migration effect of the mother language on the learning of the target language, including positive and negative migration. Positive migration contributes to the learning of the target language, while negative migration may disturb the learning process. The two languages and their cultural differences have led students to make many mistakes^[4]. In terms of language learning, students are influenced by Chinese grammar, especially in the use of vocabulary, they tend to simply equate Chinese and English vocabularies; In terms of grammar structure, due to the stability of Chinese characters and the lack of tortuous changes, especially the verbs have no tense changes, students often mistakenly apply English vocabulary to Chinese grammar rules in the case of insufficient English knowledge.

4.2 Intralingual Errors

Richards proposed the concept of developmental error on the basis of Corder's theory of interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Subsequently, Richards performed an analysis of intralingual errors and further classified them^[4], including over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions and incomplete application of rules.

Over-generalization means that the learner makes the wrong structure according to the structure of the destination language. For example, "We saw two mouses." It is a mistake caused by over-generalization of the rule that the plural form of some nouns needs to be composed of -s. Ignorance of rule restrictions means that the learner understands a certain rule, but does not know what the rule limits, thus making errors. For example: the learner learned "He showed me the book." Such a structure would then be created by analogy^[6]. "He explained me the book." Such a wrong sentence. Incomplete application of rules. Incomplete application of rules refers to the generation of certain sentence structures may require more

than one rule or different degrees of application of a rule, and learners sometimes can not fully understand it, resulting in errors. For example, after learning the structure of special interrogative sentences, learners often do not change the structure of special interrogative sentences when learning the rules of compound sentences, but say "I don't know where is he." Such a common mistake.

5. Conclusion and Reflection

5.1 Research Conclusion

This study selected the final exam English compositions of college students as the research object, and the collected composition was systematically analyzed, including the number, proportion and characteristics of errors. The results show that the grammatical mistakes made by students' English compositions are mainly focused on verb errors. After comprehensive analysis, the reasons for students' grammatical errors can be summarized into two levels: interlingual and intralingual errors. In view of the reasons of students' writing mistakes, the author puts forward some teaching suggestions:

(1) Consolidating the basic knowledge of grammar

In the process of English learning, teachers should stimulate students' interest in English, and let them realize that grammar knowledge is the key to improving their English level. Due to the differences between students' cognitive level, teachers should emphasize that the sentences in the writing process should conform to the grammar rules. Also, teachers should have a deep understanding of English curriculum standards, choose appropriate grammar teaching methods, and avoid monotonous teaching of grammar^[7]. They should consolidate the basic grammar rules through rich exercises, actively create teaching situations, and effectively combine English language forms with communicative functions.

(2) Paying attention to language input

Due to the limitations of the English class time, the language input in the class alone is not enough, so students have to do a lot of extracurricular reading. However, influenced by the mode of exam-oriented education, students tend to improve their grades through a large number of practice, while ignoring the importance of extracurricular reading. Moreover, students have little access to other English readings except textbooks, which greatly limits their language input. This requires teachers to subscribe to English books suitable for students to read, and encourage communication among students^[8]. At the same time, teachers should take time to guide students to learn English learning newspaper together, rather than just stay at the level of students' homework.

(3) Cultivating students' cultural awareness

Through the analysis of the mistakes in English compositions, it can be found that many mistakes arise from the differences between Chinese and English languages. In process of English learning, the understanding of the English-speaking national culture is vital. Teachers should gradually increase the depth and breadth of cultural knowledge according to students' age characteristics and cognitive level. The cultural

knowledge of English-speaking countries should be closely related to students' study and life, which can stimulate students' interest, improve their sensitivity and discrimination to the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures. These practices can help students to change the way of thinking and reduce the errors in English writing.

(4) Using a variety of error correction methods

In traditional composition correction, teachers are used to collecting and correcting students' compositions independently. The advantage is that teachers can understand students' mistakes and accurately evaluate students' learning situation, so that adjusting the focus and difficulty of teaching. However, this method requires teachers to spend a lot of energy and time and sometimes the final result is not satisfactory, and even students will make the same mistake repeatedly. In order to prevent this kind of situation, teachers can use a variety of evaluation methods. For example, students are encouraged to self-evaluate, reflect on their compositions; Peer evaluation is also an effective strategy. By correcting their compositions with each other, students can recognize the strengths and weaknesses of others and learn from each other^[7]; Collective evaluation is the whole class to participate in the discussion of a composition, with the help of collective wisdom to find the problems, and improve the correction. In the end, teachers' evaluation is still crucial, teachers should provide more comprehensive and professional feedback based on the results of students' self-evaluation, peer mutual evaluation and collective evaluation.

By adopting diversified evaluation methods, it can not only reduce the work pressure of teachers, but also help them to avoid repeated mistakes in the future writing process, and improve their writing ability.

5.2 Research Reflection

This study classifies the grammar errors in English composition, analyzes the causes and puts forward corresponding teaching strategies. However, this study has some limitations: first, the study sample is limited to the propositions completed by the students in the exam, which may be different from the students' actual writing ability; Second, the classification of error types may be subjective; Finally, the depth of the research is still insufficient and needs to be further deepened in the future practice and research. It is expected that more experienced scholars will thoroughly study English grammatical errors to overcome the limitations of this study.

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