



## Transfer of Grammatical Knowledge into ESL Writing

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### Abstract

Writing is a challenging productive skill that necessitates the input of grammar knowledge in the construction of intelligible and appropriate sentences. In the context of second language writing, ESL learners have to be aware of using the target language structures in their writing. The learners' ability to transfer the metalinguistic knowledge, rhetorical devices, mechanics of writing and logic reasoning into L2 writing is called language transfer. Mikulecky et al. (1998) and Ormrod (1998) have stated the concept of language transfer as the extent to which the learned knowledge of grammatical structure, a subset of literacy skill can be transferred from the classroom to learners' writing. According to their view form-focused pedagogical intervention assists the learners' in developing metalinguistic knowledge to comprehend and produce the language in a better way. In this regard, this paper examines to what extent the learners are able to transfer the knowledge of grammar into their writing. Further, it has analysed the grammatical features that can/not be transferred into students' writing. It has also explored the pedagogical factors that foster transfer of learning. The participants of this study are 58 second year B.A English Literature students of a rural Arts & Science College in Tamilnadu. The results of the study reveal that grammar instruction has enabled the transfer of learned grammar knowledge in their writing task.

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### 1. Introduction

Traditionally, formal teaching of grammar has been the foundation of second language learning process. The advent of Communicative Approach to ESL teaching has shifted the focus from form to meaning. However, there is a strong belief among ESL practitioners in India that grammar is an essential tool or resource for acquiring proficiency in oral and written discourse. They say that knowledge of grammar helps the learners to construct linguistically appropriate sentences and without an alternate grasp of the basics of grammar, students may find it difficult to communicate effectively. Ellis (2006) opines that grammar teaching draws learners' attention to internalize the specific grammatical forms that develop metalinguistic knowledge. Metalinguistic knowledge is the learners' explicit knowledge about

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language (Alderson et al., 1997; Bialystok, 1979; Elder et al., 1999; Ellis, 2004). Explicit knowledge is declarative or conscious knowledge that assists the learners to comprehend and produce the language in a better way (Hulstijn, 2005). Nevertheless, Krashen (1982) argues that it is impossible for formal, consciously-held, rule-oriented knowledge to become accessible and available for spontaneous use. On the other hand, proponents of grammar teaching (Celce-Murcia, 1991, 1992; Larsen-Freeman, 1991) suggest that formal instruction helps learners to access the language competently through practice. Though form-focused instruction attempts to increase the learners' level of accuracy in language use, the debate has not been resolved empirically so far. This paper examines the impact of form-focused instruction with reference to the writing skill. In addition, it analyses to what extent the learners are able to transfer the grammatical forms in their writing.

## **2. Transfer of learning in second language acquisition**

The ability to use the declarative knowledge in writing beyond the classroom is an essential skill for ESL learners; such potential to transfer the grammatical knowledge to their writing is known as language transfer. In the psychological perspective, the term transfer refers to the use of previously learned knowledge in all contexts (Odlin, 1989). The grammatical knowledge obtained through formal instruction normally should lead to an ability to use such knowledge in communicative contexts. According to Ellis (1993), consciously-held knowledge of second language can become automatically accessed language. His weak interface position reveals that learners' explicit/declarative knowledge of L2 can become implicit knowledge through grammar instruction. Then, this implicit knowledge can become procedural knowledge through communicative practice; i.e., the learners attain an intuitive ability to use the language in all contexts. Long (1983) and Pica (1983) have suggested that grammar instruction could yield fast learning and increase accuracy among L2 learners. Doughty (1991) opined that form-focused instruction has lasting effect on the learners' output and it enables the learners to use the metalinguistic knowledge proficiently in new contexts. In this regard, it is believed that transfer in language learning may facilitate the learners to build a bridge between their knowledge of grammar and use of it in real life contexts.

## **3. Theoretical perspectives on language transfer**

Transfer is a way to connect learning and performance in educational context. When the learners fail to link their learned knowledge in their writing, then there exists a gap. The transfer of learning can occur in different ways. The most common way of transfer is positive and negative transfer. When the learners' previous learning facilitates to improve their performance in new learning context, then it is said to be positive transfer. It implies that there is no significant difference in the learning context. On the other hand, when the learners' previous learning impedes their performance in the new learning context, then negative transfer occurs. It implies

that learners have generalized their previously learned knowledge in their current learning process. The process of positive and negative transfer can be differentiated using near and far transfer (Marton, 2006; Barnett and Ceci, 2002; Perkins and Salomon, 1996; & Detterman, 1993). Near transfer occurs when the learners' new learning situation is similar to the previous learning situation. Far transfer is a reverse process of near transfer. It occurs when the new learning situation totally contradicts with the previous learning situation. Further, Perkins and Salomon (1996) have used the term low road transfer and high road transfer instead of positive and negative transfer. In addition to this, Detterman (1993) has distinguished the specific and non-specific/general transfer on the basis of transferring the content and skills from previous learning to the new learning context. Apart from these ways of transfer, Haskell (2001) has developed a typology of transfer levels on the basis of similarity and dissimilarity in learning situations.

Table 1. Typology of transfer levels (adapted from Haskell, 2001)

| Level | Name                  | Transfer Description   |
|-------|-----------------------|--|
| 1     | Non-specific transfer | This refers to all learning- all learning has been connected to past learning  |
| 2     | Application transfer  | Applying what one has learned to a specific situation  |
| 3     | Context transfer      | Applying what one has learned to a slightly different situation (e.g., recognising something in one context and then in another)               |
| 4     | Near transfer         | Transferring to new situations that are closely similar (e.g., learning a skill and then using part of that learning to develop another skill) |
| 5     | Far transfer          | Applying learning to situations that are quite dissimilar  |
| 6     | Creative transfer     | In the interaction between the new and old situation something new is created  |

Haskell (2001) defined transfer of learning as 'our use of past learning when learning something new and the application of that learning to both similar and new situations'. According to him, learning and transfer are inextricably intertwined in the educational settings and transfer is crucial in learning. Knowles (1970) stated that one of the key principles of adult learning was the application of that learning to the real world. It is believed that all learning is transferable to new situations but the way and the level of transfer may vary from person to person and situation to situation.

#### 4. Factors influencing transfer

Educational psychologists like Detterman and Sternberg (1993) suggest that certain conditions are necessary to transfer the knowledge from one context to another context. Ormrod (1998) conducted a research to improve the efficiency in transfer of learning and found a number of factors influencing the language transfer. They are:

- (i) Instruction time
- (ii) Extent to which learning is meaningful rather than rote

- (iii) Extent to which principles rather than facts are learned
- (iv) Variety of examples and opportunities for practice
- (v) Degree of similarity between two situations
- (vi) Duration between two topics
- (vii) Extent to which information is seen as context

Further, while considering the transfer of grammar knowledge in writing, it is indicated that the following factors may foster the transfer of language:

- (i) The level of exposure to grammar
- (ii) The need of worksheets
- (iii) The ability to transfer the grammatical structures
- (iv) The learners' social background

## **5. Need for the present study**

In the globalized scenario, English language has taken the lead to establish itself as medium of communication in every field. It has become a necessary pre-requisite to use English efficiently in academic and occupational zone. Especially, at the tertiary level the learners of English major are expected to be proficient in English and are supposed to express their thoughts and subject content in error free sentence structures. But in the context of rural Arts & Science Colleges in Tamilnadu, most of the students are incompetent in using their target language. To be more specific of their educational background, students who study through the regional medium of instruction begin to learn English from III standard. They learn English as second language till their higher secondary level of education. In most of the schools, English is taught as a subject rather than a language and the outcome of language learning is tested only through writing. As the learners do not have confidence in constructing their own sentences in English, they memorize the content from their text book or teacher's notes and write their examinations. They are able to get through the examination with high, average or just pass score, but the ability to write grammatically correct sentences in English remains to be a question. When students of this language background choose to study English Literature, they find it difficult to construct grammatically correct sentences in their writing. It is presumed that English major students should possess the ability to connect the grammar and language patterns to the wider purpose of communication. Apart from this, 81% of students have answered in the questionnaire that they have planned to become a teacher after completing B.A English Literature course. When the learners are incapable to write or speak proficiently in English, they will not be able to transfer their language skills at their respective workplace. So, transfer of grammar knowledge in writing is essential to improve and facilitate future learning. Research conducted since early 1960s show that grammar instruction is considered as a separate entity from written instruction and that does not improve students' writing competence (Braddock et al., 1963 & Hillocks, 1986). Further, there are limited

quantitative studies investigating English major students' ability to transfer the grammar knowledge they learned into their writing. In this regard, it is necessary to examine to what extent grammatical structures can be transferred into their writing and the factors that facilitate the transfer of learning.

## **6. Research questions**

1. Are students able to transfer grammar structures they learned into their writing? If so, to what extent they are able to transfer their knowledge of grammar in writing?
2. What are the grammatical features that can (or cannot) be transferred in their writing?
3. What are the factors that promote students' transfer of grammar knowledge in their writing?

## **7. Methodology**

### *7.1. Participants*

The study was conducted with 58 second year B.A English Literature students of Sri Bharathi Arts & Science College for Women, Pudukkottai. A paper on Grammar and Usage is prescribed in their fourth semester. In the semester examination their grammatical proficiency is tested for 60 out of 75 marks through grammar in discrete items and discourse writing. The pass percentage in the semester examination is very low ranging from 15 to 20 out of 60 students in a class every year. As most of the students hail from rural background and had regional medium of instruction till their higher secondary education, their proficiency in writing was below average and required improvement. In addition, Sri Bharathi Arts & Science College for Women has an administrative body addressing the needs of improving the proficiency in English and was proactive in providing the necessary support to conduct this experimental study with their students. Further, it is essential for B.A English Literature students to employ the language proficiently in their academic and social career. So, the study was carried out with fourth semester B.A English Literature students as a regular course of the study.

### *7.2. Tools used in the study*

#### *7.2.1. Pre-study questionnaire*

Pre-study questionnaire was used as a basic research instrument to know the students' awareness on the type of grammatical errors they would commit in their writings with respect to tense, articles, prepositions and concord. The specific intention of the questionnaire was to know whether they believed that their knowledge of grammar would help them to be accurate in their writing. In addition, it is used to obtain the students' demographic and academic details.

#### *7.2.2. Pre-task*

Error-free writing is a significant assessment factor for students majoring in English Literature, but then most of the time it results as an impediment for second language learners. In academic and workplace settings second language proficiency is evaluated on the basis of grammar and usage. The ability to produce well-formed sentences is essential for second language writers. In this regard, pre-writing task was assigned to the students' to know the area of difficulty in writing a paragraph with respect to grammatical aspects. Further, it was intended to know whether wrong sentence construction obstructed their writing process.

#### **7.2.3. Worksheets**

Gap-fill exercises in each grammatical aspect were administered to the students. They were asked to write the appropriate grammatical item in the blanks and the questions in the worksheets were set in a graded structure catering to the comprehending level of the students. The number of worksheets for each grammatical feature was decided on the basis of students' performance in each worksheet. Four worksheets were given for tense and prepositions respectively and two worksheets were given for articles and concord respectively. The worksheets were administered to assess their comprehension in each grammatical item and make them aware of their errors.

#### **7.2.4. Post-task**

Knapp and Watkins (1994) claimed that knowledge of grammar by a writer should shift language use from the implicit and unconscious to a conscious manipulation of language and choice of appropriate texts. In addition to this, the success of second language learning lies, in how far the learners were able to transfer the metalinguistic knowledge to their writing. In this regard, post writing task was assigned to assess how far the students were able to write error free sentences in English.

#### **7.2.5. Post-study questionnaire**

Post-study questionnaire was also administered to know whether the study had facilitated the students to achieve the requisite proficiency in writing skill. The knowledge of grammar would help the learners to write with accuracy and clear exposition. In this respect, post-study questionnaire sought to find out how far the students were able to use the grammatical features in their writing after the course. The students were asked to rate their meta-knowledge in the grammatical components such as tense, articles, preposition and concord ranging from excellent to poor options.

### **8. Implementation**

In this study, a schedule of 12 classes with 1 hour duration spread over a period of four weeks was conducted to improve the writing proficiency of the learners. The students were required to attend the class regularly. It is believed that continuous noticing of errors would enable the learners to write error-free sentences. In the

initial class the students were asked to write 150 words on the topic ‘The Subject I Like Most’ in order to examine their ability to employ the appropriate grammatical forms in writing. The type of grammatical error and its occurrences were categorized. The frequency and percentage of errors were also calculated. It was observed in this study that preposition, tense, concord and articles were the high frequency errors. So in the first week, the study concentrated on preposition which was ranking highest in the frequency of errors committed in students’ writing. A handout comprising pictorial representations was used to instruct on preposition with reference to time, place and action. Twenty minutes were given for the students to go through handouts. Then, the instructor interacted with the students regarding the usage of preposition in sentences and worksheet consisting of gap-fill exercises was administered. The corrected worksheets were distributed to the students and explicit written corrective feedback was given to make the students’ consciously aware of their errors. The facilitator also gave the general oral feedback on the common prepositional error committed by the students’ in the worksheets and clarified the doubts raised by some students. When the students had shown considerable improvement in employing the appropriate preposition in the fourth worksheet Tense and aspect was introduced through group task. The learners were divided into eight groups and they were made to identify and discuss about the usage of verb tense in the given paragraphs. The facilitator distributed a handout comprising rules for tense and aspect with illustrations. The students discussed on the usage of correct tense and aspect in the given sentences with their peers and clarified some of their doubts in using verb tenses with the facilitator. Worksheets consisting of gap-fill exercises were administered to assess their performance in tenses. Then, concord and articles rules were explained with illustrations. Students were asked to form sentences for each instructed grammatical feature and their ability to use it in the given context were examined through gap-fill exercises. Eventually, the students were assigned to write on a topic “A Memorable Day in My Life” in about 150 words to examine the learners’ ability to transfer the knowledge of grammar in continuous writing. The type of grammatical errors were analysed after pedagogical intervention to consolidate the level of improvement in the writing proficiency.

## 9. Data analysis

After evaluating the first task a total of 2037 errors were identified in the students’ scripts and they were categorized into 19 error types.

Table 2. Errors Found in Discourse Writing (Pre-Task)

| S. No | Type of Error      | Frequency of Errors | Percentage% |
|-------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1     | Preposition        | 448                 | 21.99%      |
| 2     | Verb Tense         | 312                 | 15.32%      |
| 3     | Articles           | 260                 | 12.76%      |
| 4     | Concord            | 246                 | 12.08%      |
| 5     | Spelling           | 191                 | 9.38%       |
| 6     | Capitalization     | 138                 | 6.77%       |
| 7     | Pronoun            | 118                 | 5.79%       |
| 8     | Punctuation        | 59                  | 2.90%       |
| 9     | Adverb             | 49                  | 2.41%       |
| 10    | Fragment Sentences | 43                  | 2.11%       |
| 11    | Singular Plural    | 34                  | 1.67%       |
| 12    | Adjective          | 33                  | 1.62%       |
| 13    | Conjunction        | 30                  | 1.47%       |
| 14    | Noun               | 25                  | 1.23%       |
| 15    | Determiner         | 22                  | 1.08%       |
| 16    | Word Choice        | 14                  | 0.69%       |
| 17    | Word Order         | 8                   | 0.39%       |
| 18    | Abbreviation       | 6                   | 0.29%       |
| 19    | Ordinal Number     | 1                   | 0.05%       |
| Total |                    | 2037                | 100%        |

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of each error type in a hierarchy of descending order. It was observed from table 1 that the major four errors (prepositions, verb tense, articles and concord) make up to 62% of the total and they were the commonly made frequent errors. The next group of errors comprising Spelling, Capitalization, Pronoun, Punctuation, Adverb, Fragment Sentences, Singular Plural, Adjective, Conjunction, Noun and Determiner together constitute 36% of the total errors. The last group of errors such as Word Choice, Word Order, Abbreviation and Ordinal Number form a minimum 2% of the total errors.

### 9.1. Prepositions

The highest number of errors in this study had occurred in prepositions. There were 448 errors accounting to 21.99% of the total number of errors. The students either omitted prepositions or added unnecessary prepositions due to ignorance of rule restrictions.

Table 3. Mean for Students' Worksheets in Prepositions

| Worksheets | No. of Students | Total Errors | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|---------|----------------|
| W1         | 49              | 1326         | 27.0612 | 2.64109        |
| W2         | 38              | 924          | 24.3158 | 3.66212        |
| W3         | 51              | 849          | 16.6471 | 3.83575        |
| W4         | 45              | 684          | 15.2000 | 2.06265        |

Table 3 shows the students' gradual improvement in using appropriate prepositions in the given gap-fill exercises. The mean values of four worksheets imply that the pedagogical intervention has facilitated the students' to be aware of the prepositional usage.

### 9.2. Verb tense

Errors in the use of verb tense and form were ranked second after prepositions. There were 312 errors estimating 15.32% of the total errors. Students had committed errors in using the verb form of simple past tense, past perfect tense and future tense. In addition, they had confusion in using auxiliary verbs. These errors indicated that the students had miscomprehended or overgeneralized the usage of verb forms. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) had reported in their study that second language learners misinterpret present perfect with simple past; past perfect with simple past; simple present with present progressive.

Table 4. Mean for Students' Worksheets in Verb Tenses

| Worksheets | No. of Students | Total Errors | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|---------|----------------|
| W1         | 54              | 1425         | 26.3889 | 6.05140        |
| W2         | 50              | 583          | 11.6600 | 3.36009        |
| W3         | 35              | 478          | 13.6571 | 3.74121        |
| W4         | 48              | 446          | 9.2917  | 3.10770        |

Table 4 reveals the students' continuous development in applying the appropriate verb tense in the given worksheets. It indicates that group task and gap-fill worksheets have promoted the students to use correct verb tense in writing. But then, on comparing the prepositional errors with tenses, errors on verb tense persisted to some extent.

### 9.3. Articles

The frequency of errors in articles was 260. They form 12.76% of the total number of errors. It was inferred that mother tongue interference had prevented the students to internalise English articles (definite & indefinite) in their writing. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) had claimed that second language learners find it difficult to learn articles, as their native language did not have articles or the way in which articles used were entirely different from the usage of English articles. So, explicit grammar instruction was followed to make students aware of linguistic dissimilarities in two languages.

Table 5. Mean for Students' Worksheets in Articles

| Worksheets | No. of Students | Total Errors | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|--------|----------------|
| W1         | 50              | 432          | 8.6400 | 2.48883        |
| W2         | 48              | 334          | 6.9583 | 2.95324        |

The mean values of table 5 indicate that the errors in articles have reduced considerably. It suggests that the form focused instruction can contribute the students' knowledge in grammar.

#### *9.4. Concord*

The fourth most common error found in students' writing was subject-verb agreement. The total count of errors was 246. They constitute 12.08% of the total number of errors. Students committed errors in subject-verb agreement, as they lack a basic understanding in it. They had overgeneralized the plural by adding -s to the verb that follows and omitted the -s in the verb if the subject was singular. Hendrickson (1979) had stated that the most common errors in his study occurred in subject-verb agreement.

Table 6. Mean for Students' Worksheets in Concord

| Worksheets | No. of Students | Total Errors | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|--------|----------------|
| W1         | 51              | 445          | 8.7255 | 3.09243        |
| W2         | 49              | 69           | 1.4082 | 0.57440        |

It is observed from the mean values of Table 6 that errors in concord have reduced drastically than the above mentioned grammatical features. It reinstates that pedagogical intervention had nurtured the learners' ability to use the metalinguistic structures appropriately.

#### *9.5. Analysis of errors after pedagogical intervention*

The exit level task was analysed to see whether the students were able to transfer the knowledge of grammar in their discourse writing. Though pedagogical intervention was focused on Prepositions, Verb Tense, Articles & Concord, the other errors in students' writing were also counted to examine their ability to transfer grammatical knowledge in their discourse writing.

Table 7. Errors Found in Discourse Writing (Post-Task)

| S. No | Type of Error      | Frequency of Errors | Percentage% |
|-------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1     | Verb Tense         | 361                 | 23.53%      |
| 2     | Preposition        | 315                 | 20.53%      |
| 3     | Articles           | 150                 | 9.78%       |
| 4     | Concord            | 147                 | 9.58%       |
| 5     | Spelling           | 109                 | 7.11%       |
| 6     | Pronoun            | 107                 | 6.98%       |
| 7     | Conjunction        | 51                  | 3.32%       |
| 8     | Punctuation        | 45                  | 2.93%       |
| 9     | Adverb             | 39                  | 2.54%       |
| 10    | Capitalization     | 37                  | 2.41%       |
| 11    | Word Order         | 32                  | 2.09%       |
| 12    | Fragment Sentences | 30                  | 1.96%       |
| 13    | Singular Plural    | 30                  | 1.96%       |
| 14    | Noun               | 27                  | 1.76%       |
| 15    | Adjective          | 22                  | 1.43%       |
| 16    | Determiner         | 17                  | 1.11%       |
| 17    | Word Choice        | 13                  | 0.85%       |
| 18    | Abbreviation       | 2                   | 0.13%       |
| 19    | Ordinal Number     | 0                   | 0.00%       |
| Total |                    | 1534                | 100%        |

It is observed from Table 7, that the frequency of errors in students' writing was 1534. It implies that errors have reduced considerably in the exit level task after form focused instruction. The total number of errors was categorized into 19 types to compare with the entry level task errors. Errors in Verb Tense persisted in students writing. In addition to it, errors in unfocused grammatical features such as Conjunction and Word Order also retained in students' writing. Apart from these errors, the other focused grammatical elements Preposition, Articles & Concord and unfocused grammatical elements Spelling, Pronoun, Punctuation, Adverb, Capitalization, Fragment Sentences, Noun, Adjective, Determiner, Word Choice, Abbreviation & Ordinal Number have reduced considerably.

## 10. Inter-rater reliability analysis

Cohen's (1960) Kappa Inter-rater reliability is computed to measure the agreement between pre-task and post-task on the assignment of categories of a categorical variable. On the basis of students' level of improvement in employing the correct grammatical features in writing, category 1 is considered as High level of improvement, category 2 is considered as Above average, category 3 is considered as Average and category 4 is considered as Low level of improvement. Table 7 represents

the correlation coefficient of Preposition in Pre and post-task. In addition, Table 8 shows the inter-rater reliability kappa value for the same.

Table 8. Crosstabulation for Preposition in Pre- and post-task

|                    |      | Post Preposition |      |      |      | Total |
|--------------------|------|------------------|------|------|------|-------|
|                    |      | 1.00             | 2.00 | 3.00 | 4.00 |       |
| Pre<br>Preposition | 1.00 | 16               | 11   | 3    | 0    | 30    |
|                    | 2.00 | 4                | 13   | 4    | 4    | 25    |
|                    | 3.00 | 1                | 0    | 0    | 1    | 2     |
|                    | 4.00 | 0                | 0    | 1    | 1    | 2     |
| Total              |      | 21               | 24   | 8    | 6    | 59    |

Table 9. Kappa Inter-Rater Reliability Value for Preposition in Pre and Post-task

|                      |       | Value | Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup> | Approx. T <sup>b</sup> | Approx. Sig. |
|----------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Measure of Agreement | Kappa | .230  | .090                           | 2.584                  | .010         |
| N of Valid Cases     |       | 59    |                                |                        |              |

Cohen's Kappa ranges generally from 0 to 1, in which 1 represents better reliability and 0 or less than 0 represent that agreement is attributable to chance alone. According to Landis & Koch's (1977) bench mark scale, kappa value (0.230) in table 9 reveals that there is a fair agreement with regard to prepositions in pre-task and post-task with statistically significant value  $p<0.01$ . It implies that the learners' have shown substantial improvement from pre-task to post-task in using prepositions.

Table 10 and Table 11 show the correlation coefficient of Tense in Pre and post-task and inter-rater reliability kappa value respectively.

Table 10. Crosstabulation for Tense in Pre and Post-task

|           |      | Post Tense |      |      |      | Total |
|-----------|------|------------|------|------|------|-------|
|           |      | 1.00       | 2.00 | 3.00 | 4.00 |       |
| Pre Tense | 1.00 | 16         | 6    | 0    | 0    | 22    |
|           | 2.00 | 14         | 8    | 1    | 0    | 23    |
|           | 3.00 | 4          | 4    | 0    | 0    | 8     |
|           | 4.00 | 3          | 2    | 0    | 1    | 6     |
| Total     |      | 37         | 20   | 1    | 1    | 59    |

Table 11. Kappa Inter-Rater Reliability Value for Tense in Pre- and Post-task

|                      |       | Value | Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup> | Approx. Tb | Approx. Sig. |
|----------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Measure of Agreement | Kappa | .085  | .089                           | .983       | .326         |
| N of Valid Cases     |       | 59    |                                |            |              |

According to Landis & Koch's bench mark scale, kappa value (0.085) in table 10 reveals that there is a slight agreement for Tense in pre-task and post-task. The statistically not significant value  $p=0.326$  which is  $p>0.05$  suggests that learners have difficulty in using appropriate tense in their writing. It is inferred that the learners faced this impediment as conscious unlearning has to occur in students, as they have learnt and used these erroneous structures for a long period of time.

Table 12 and Table 13 depict the correlation coefficient of Articles in Pre and post-task and inter-rater reliability kappa value respectively.

Table 12. Crosstabulation for Articles in Pre and Post-task

|              |      | Post Articles |      |      |      | Total |
|--------------|------|---------------|------|------|------|-------|
|              |      | 1.00          | 2.00 | 3.00 | 4.00 |       |
| Pre Articles | 1.00 | 27            | 9    | 4    | 0    | 40    |
|              | 2.00 | 6             | 0    | 3    | 7    | 16    |
|              | 3.00 | 0             | 2    | 0    | 0    | 2     |
|              | 4.00 | 1             | 0    | 0    | 0    | 1     |
| Total        |      | 34            | 11   | 7    | 7    | 59    |

Table 13. Kappa Inter-Rater Reliability for Articles in Pre and Post-task

|                      |       | Value | Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup> | Approx. T <sup>b</sup> | Approx. Sig. |
|----------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Measure of Agreement | Kappa | .019  | .064                           | .218                   | .828         |
| N of Valid Cases     |       | 59    |                                |                        |              |

On the basis of Landis & Koch's bench mark scale, kappa value (0.019) in table 12 reveals that there is a slight agreement for Articles in pre-task and post-task. The statistically not significant  $p=0.828$  ( $p>0.05$ ) in Articles indicates that the students were not able to exhibit the substantial improvement in the post-task. Though they were able to show considerable improvement in the worksheets, they were not able to retrieve and execute in the post-task due to their mother tongue interference.

Table 14 and Table 15 indicate the correlation coefficient of Concord in Pre and post-task and inter-rater reliability kappa value for the same.

Table 13. Crosstabulation for Concord in Pre and Post-task

|             |      | Post Concord |      |      |      | Total |
|-------------|------|--------------|------|------|------|-------|
|             |      | 1.00         | 2.00 | 3.00 | 4.00 |       |
| Pre Concord | 1.00 | 17           | 9    | 0    | 0    | 26    |
|             | 2.00 | 10           | 3    | 12   | 2    | 27    |
|             | 3.00 | 3            | 0    | 0    | 2    | 5     |
|             | 4.00 | 0            | 0    | 1    | 0    | 1     |
| Total       |      | 30           | 12   | 13   | 4    | 59    |

Table 14. Kappa Inter-Rater Reliability Value for Concord in Pre and Post-task

| Measure of Agreement | Kappa | Value | Asymp. Std.        | Approx. T <sup>b</sup> | Approx. Sig. |
|----------------------|-------|-------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------|
|                      |       |       | Error <sup>a</sup> |                        |              |
| N of Valid Cases     |       | .003  | .076               | .037                   | .970         |

On the basis of Landis & Koch's bench mark scale, kappa value (0.003) in table 14 reveals that there is a slight agreement for Concord in pre-task and post-task. The statistically not significant  $p=0.970$  ( $p>0.05$ ) shows that the learners were not able to show considerable improvement. It is inferred that learners were not able to unlearn certain overgeneralizations in concord, though they exhibited substantial improvement in the worksheets.

## 11. Results and discussions

### 11.1. Research question 1

This study confirms that students are able to transfer the simple grammar structures they learned into their writing. The total number of errors in the pre-task is 2037, which has been reduced to 1534 in the post-task. This is a clear indicator that the students' were able to transfer grammar structures they learned into their writing. But taking into account the inter-rater reliability analysis of the learners' improvement from pre-task to post-task, it is found that the students found it difficult to transfer their learned knowledge of grammar with regard to verb tense, articles and Concord. It is conformed that interference of mother tongue, complexity of grammar rules and overgeneralizations has inhibited the transfer of these learned grammar items into their writing. The increase in instruction time and practice in discourse may facilitate the transfer of language learning to a great extent in students' writing.

### 11.2. Research question 2

Focused grammatical feature Preposition has been easily transferred into their writing. It indicates that grammar feature that is not influenced by mother tongue interference can be transferred easily. In addition, Prepositions have no complex rules. They have multiple semantic usages. When the learners are able to comprehend

the multiple functions of syntactic structures, they are able to transfer it into their writing. Further, the students have also transferred unfocused grammar elements such as: Spelling, Capitalization, Punctuation, Word Choice, Determiner & Singular Plural. It is inferred that focus on main grammatical features have influenced students to consciously notice and be aware of all the grammar structures.

Errors in Verb Tense persisted in students' writing because students faced great difficulty in mastering English Tense-Aspect due to linguistic complexity and several grammatical functions. The ambiguities in using appropriate Verb Tense in students' writing are:

- (i) Tense Error- ambiguity between use of Tense and Aspect
- (ii) Form Error- misconception in using the infinitive and gerund forms
- (iii) Inflectional Error- Addition of inflection on an infinitive verb

It implies that the students' have overgeneralized the target language Verb Tense rules. The incomplete application and misconception of Tense rules inhibit the students to use it appropriately in their writing. More exposure to target language and practice in discourse can assist the students to use Verb Tense appropriately in their writing.

In addition to verb tense, errors pertaining to Articles, Concord, Word order and Conjunction also persisted in students' writing. The recurrence of these errors is due to the negative transfer of mother tongue linguistic structures over target language structures. When Articles are not found in mother tongue, the second language learners either fail to use it or misplace them in their writing. In English, the syntactic pattern has a specific word order (S+V+DO+IO); when the students' native language differs from the target language, the errors in word order occur. In the same manner, errors in Conjunction are caused due to mother tongue interference. The students in this study have included the conjunctions 'and' & 'but' redundantly in their writing. When the teacher made the students to be consciously aware of the linguistic differences between two languages, the errors regarding Word order and Conjunction have reduced to a large extent. With reference to Concord, learners' have to unlearn certain overgeneralizations misunderstood by them. It requires considerable time to unlearn the misconstrued rules from their young age. More exposure to concord and discourse would pave way for significant improvement.

### *11.3. Research question 3*

Detterman & Sternberg (1993) believe that transfer of learning is influenced by certain factors. On this basis, the factors that instigate students' transfer of metalinguistic knowledge in writing are analyzed in this study. It was observed that four Pedagogical factors foster the transfer of language. They are:

- a) Form focused instruction
- b) Sequence of worksheets

- c) Conscious noticing of errors
- d) Application transfer
- e) Motivation

Form-Focused instruction equipped the learners to be consciously aware of the target language structures. The conscious awareness of language helped the learners to transform the declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge. It was evident from the students' writing that grammar instruction has fostered the learners to reflect the metalinguistic knowledge in their writing. Discrete-point worksheets were administered to make them comprehend the usage of specific grammatical features. The evaluated worksheets were also distributed to the students to make them consciously notice the errors, which in turn facilitated the students' to transfer appropriate learned grammar structures into their discourse writing. The application of learned grammar knowledge has made them aware of the nuances of functional grammar and aided them to be autonomous in their writing tasks. When the students were informed about the entry & exit level performance, they were excited to note that the errors in their writing had reduced considerably. This positive factor motivated them to write appropriate grammatical structures confidently in their subsequent activities. It was surprising to note that when the learners' level of confidence was high, they are able to transfer their learned previous grammar knowledge successfully into their writing.

## 12. Conclusion

Transfer in Language Learning with specific reference to grammar skills is involved in the transfer of linguistic features with the learner's performance. The outcome of grammar learning lies on the learners' ability to transfer the learned grammar knowledge in all communicative contexts. The results of this study indicate that learners who have received Form-Focused instruction are able to transfer the grammar knowledge attained through discrete-point grammar tasks into their written discourse. It implies that Form-Focused pedagogical intervention can assist the learners to transfer their learned grammar knowledge into their L2 writing. In addition, there is a substantial decrease of errors in students' writing. It can be concluded that pedagogical factors play a significant role in the transfer of learned grammar knowledge into L2 writing.

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