

A Syntactic Errors Analysis in the Malaysian ESL Learners' Written Composition

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Abstract : Syntax error analysis studies have a significant role in English language teaching especially in the second language. This study investigates the syntax errors in written composition by 50 multilingual ESL learners in Politeknik Kota Kinabalu Sabah, Malaysia. The subjects speak their own dialect, Malay as their second language and English as their third or foreign language. Data were collected from the written discourse in the form of descriptive essays. The subjects were asked to write in the classroom within 45 minutes. 15 categories of errors were classified into a set of syntactic categories and were analysed based on the five steps of the syntactic analysis procedure. The findings of the study showed that the mother tongue interference, as well as lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, were the major sources of syntax errors in the learners' written composition. Learners should be exposed to the differentiation of Malay and English grammar to avoid interference and effective learning of second language writing.

Keywords : errors analysis, syntactic analysis, English as a second language, ESL writing

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