

An Analysis of Errors Made in Malaysian Chinese Students' English Compositions

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ABSTRACT

The aptitude to write compositions free of errors is a goal for many learners of English as a second language. However, it is still not achieved among secondary school students, especially in Malaysia. In the past, many studies have been done on students studying in Malaysian national schools, but hardly any research on students studying in international schools. The conceptual framework for this research is based on Corder's Error Analysis and Interlanguage Theory. Besides, the objectives of this research were to investigate the types of errors that occur most frequently in English compositions, to examine the variety of errors found in English compositions written by students at different year groups and to explore the causes for students to make errors in their English compositions. This research used error taxonomy and content analysis to identify, classify, describe, explain and evaluate the errors made by the students. Analysis of the data revealed that the most common errors made were verb tense and punctuation. Year 7 students made most errors in punctuation and subject verb disagreement. Year 9 students made most errors in verb tense and punctuation. Furthermore, the causes for the errors were false concepts hypothesized, overgeneralization, mother tongue interference and incomplete application of rules. In conclusion, this research can serve as a guide to emphasize the challenges faced by Malaysian Chinese students when using English in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Besides, relevant teaching pedagogies can be derived from this research to improve the quality of English language teaching in Malaysia.