

Common Errors Made by Undergraduates when Learning English as a Second Language- A Survey Conducted in relation to the Undergraduates in the Faculty of Applied Sciences, RUSL

PLN Abeywardena¹

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the most common errors made by the undergraduates of the Faculty of Applied Sciences(FAS) when learning English as a second Language(L2). English is a key factor for them as the medium of instructions in the faculty is English. The study is an action research which helps to improve the teaching learning process of the undergraduates in any faculty. The researcher used three groups of undergraduates in the study, i.e. new entrants, first year students and the second year students and the research was conducted by analyzing their oral and written discourses with special attention to the errors made by them. Furthermore, the researcher collected data from other lecturers/instructors in English serving in the faculty using a questionnaire with the aim of investigating their views of the same errors. Methodology of the study involves collection of data from the three groups of students, analyzing the collected data with careful attention to the errors and categorizing them as phonological, morphological, syntactical and semantic errors. The results of the study showed that such errors are common among most of the students and followed a similar pattern. It was also observed that those errors were caused by some common reasons such as social background, economic status, backwardness and dearth of English teachers in schools. The errors were found in such areas as grammar, vocabulary, fluency, organization and cohesion. The results lead to the conclusion that it was the new entrants who made most of the errors while first year and second year students had minimized their errors. This conclusion suggests that such errors could be remedied by proper teaching of English grammar and the four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing which are the main components included in the curricular of the faculty English programmes.

Keywords: errors, undergraduates, English as a Second Language(ESL)

¹ *Department of English Language Teaching, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka; gasmpln@gmail.com*