


Chapter 3

Error Analysis of Teacher Technical Writing: The Corpus of EFL Lesson Plans

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter delves into an investigation of pre-service English as a foreign language teachers' technical writing products, by employing the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982). By shedding light on the written errors of future English language teachers, this study contributes to our understanding of their language learning needs and presents implications for improving teacher education practices. The chapter examines a corpus of lesson plans written by senior students (n=140) enrolled at a public university, aiming to become English language teachers. Lesson planning can be considered a form of technical writing for language teachers since it requires adherence to specific techniques and the use of appropriate language structures to effectively convey in-class procedures. The analysis reveals that the prospective teachers produced erroneous utterances falling into four distinct categories: omission (45%), misinformation (30%), addition (17%), and misordering (7%). These findings serve as a foundation for several suggestions to enhance teacher education.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6222-5.ch003

INTRODUCTION

Language users produce incorrect samples of language whether it is L1 or L2, written or spoken communication (Corder, 1967; Erdoğan, 2005). Based on the feedback they receive; the language users can improve their knowledge of target language grammar rules. Language learner errors are defined as deviations from the target language norms (Brown, 2014; Corder, 1973; Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 2008). When talking about language learning context, it is imperative to distinguish errors from mistakes: While the former stems from a lack of knowledge of the learners, the latter refers to performance deviations due to a lack of attention, tiredness, or carelessness (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Ellis (1997) suggests to practically identify whether the ill-formed utterance is an error or a mistake, we need to look at the performance of the learner: if they sometimes employ the correct form and sometimes the deviant form then it can be categorized as a mistake; on the other hand, if they use the incorrect form all the time, then it is an error. Language learners' errors are observed to be systematic and thus they indicate the learners' advancement in the target language (Montrul, 2011).

Identifying and analyzing language learners' errors provides valuable insights into their interlanguage, which is the language system that learners create as they develop their proficiency in a target language (Atmaca, 2016; Corder, 1975). This process is essential for language teaching, planning, and design (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Error analysis (EA), as defined by Corder (1967), is a technique used to evaluate the speech or writing performance of EFL learners. Brown (2014) clarified EA as a reflective approach to the status of the learners' understanding of a remedial method in constructing structures for language learners, while Al-Sobhi (2019) debated the importance of EA. The literature suggests that EA can provide guidelines for instructors and syllabus designers in designing remedial language courses (Al-Sobhi, 2019; Corder, 1967; Gass, Behney, & Plonsky, 2020). For example, by following one of the methods proposed by Dulay et al. (1982), teachers could analyze students' frequent errors, understand their current level of language learning, and then use these errors as a learning tool to create pedagogical strategies to improve their language ability.

It is crucial to examine the technical writing errors of future English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers since these errors provide insight into the participants' target language proficiency (Almusharraf & Alotaibi, 2022; Dulay et al., 1982; Uzdu Yıldız & Çetin, 2020). Analyzing lesson plans is also important for understanding the target language needs of prospective EFL teachers. In other words, understanding the target language competency of future EFL teachers is essential for making inferences about their subject matter knowledge (Berry, Depaepe, & van Driel, 2016) or content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). Given that pre-service teachers are the future English

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