

Review on past tense affixes



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The study was conducted to analyse the plural inflections of English language among Malay students. Generally, the duration of exposure towards English language in classroom setting would be approximately 11 years among Malaysian students. Although English language has been given much respect and attention, there are still learners being underachievers and not proficient in the language at the end of their secondary school level. Due to this, the researcher claims that there are still students who fail to understand the most basic rules of English language structure, such as plurality. . 1 Hypothesis As cited by the researcher, Fries (1945), Lado (1957) and Van Els (1984) agree that different grammatical structure between languages is a possible factor of students' incompetency in the targeted language.

Thus, the hypothesis of this study is, Malay students find it difficult to understand and use English language plural inflections because there are no plural inflections in the Malay language. 1. 2 Aims of the Study There are three aims mentioned to be achieved throughout this study: 1. To identify and explain students' error regarding plural inflection 2. To identify the differences & similarities of plural inflections between Malay & English language. 3. To measure and determine whether the differences of plural inflections formation between Malay and English language contribute to the errors in students' writing. 2. 0 Methodology 2. 1 Sampling In this study, a total of 40 semester one students were selected as the sample of the study. They were 20 lower proficiency students and 20 higher proficiency students of a local semi-private higher learning institution in Malaysia.

The students' level of proficiency was pre-determined by an English Placement Test which is a compulsory assessment of the institution.

Students who passed the English Placement Test are categorized as higher proficiency while those who failed are categorized as lower proficiency students.

2. 2 Instruments/ Tools In order to achieve the aims of this study, the researcher implemented 3 assessment tools to collect the data which are 1) Cloze-tests, 2) Essays, and 3) Fill in the blank.

2. 3 Procedures The first approach used by the researcher was Cloze-test.

The researcher used two sets of Cloze test to gather a more genuine data regarding plural inflection. There were ten questions in each Cloze test and students have to answer to a total of twenty Cloze test questions. Each Cloze test questions consisted of various morphological & syntactical structures. However, once the Cloze test was collected, analysis was made only on plural inflections. The second approach implemented by the researcher was Essay. Only six essays were taken to be analyzed. These essays were chosen based on students' proficiency levels.

Three essays representing the low proficiency and three essays from higher proficiency students. All essays were about the same topic which is 'Is television a bad influence?' and they had been marked earlier. Instead of focusing on all grammatical errors, analysis was made only on plural inflections. The third approach applied by the researcher is Fill in the blank. There are ten questions consisting of ten singular nouns. Students were to convert these singular words into their plural forms. The data gathered from these three approaches were then analyzed and turned into percentage as the findings.

3. 0 Finding The findings will be explained in a reference to the <https://assignbuster.com/review-on-past-tense-affixes/>

few excerpts taken from the article. 3. 1 Cloze-tests Excerpt 1: Errors on plural inflection in Cloze? test 1 Based on the chart in the Excerpt 1 above, it is found that 3 or 15% of the higher proficiency students committed errors in Question 1. Surprisingly, all of the lower proficiency students answered Question 1 correctly. Majority of the students of the higher and lower proficiency answered the question incorrectly for Question 4.

As for Question 6, 11 or 28% of students from each proficiency level respectively answered B. beachs instead of the correct answer C. beaches. For the final question in Cloze-test 1, only 6 out of 20 or 30% of higher proficiency students answered Question 9 wrongly. On the other hand, 14 out of 20 or 70% of lower proficiency students mistakenly answered Question 9. Most of the students who gave the wrong answer circled B. childs and D. childrens whereas the correct answer should be C. children. Excerpt 2: Errors on plural inflections in Cloze? test 2

It is observed that there were more students from lower proficiency level committed error for Question 3 and 5. However, for Question 7, it is noteworthy that there were more students from higher proficiency category committed error. 3. 2 Essays Excerpt 3: Frequent errors made by students in essays Based on Excerpt 3 above, the words in bold are the errors made by students in their essay. From it, it is found that students included the suffix -s in the words? **childrens**, **peoples** and **womans**. However, for words like **actress** and **dress**, the students overlooked the suffix -s. . 3 Fill in the blanks Excerpt 4: Errors on plural inflections in Fill in the blank task There are 10 words that the respondents need answer in this Fill in the blank task.

It is found that the higher proficiency students perform better in this task compared to the Cloze? test as they only answer Question 2, 6 and 9 incorrectly. In contrast, the lower proficiency students got the wrong answers for all questions, except for question number 8. It is identified that majority of students from both proficiency levels over-generalize the use of suffix –s in all words. . 0 Discussion Unlike the Malay language, the plural formation of words in the English language is much more complicated because there are many spelling rules. Malaysian students are exposed to the idea that the suffix –s is needed to indicate plurality. There are a lot of complicated and confusing spelling rules to indicate plurality in English language. From the Cloze? tests and Fill in the blank tasks, the students were clearly aware of the usage of plurality. The only drawback they faced was the over? generalization of the suffix ? s for all words.

The students from either higher or lower proficiency level are confounded with the complex plural inflections because the formation of plural words is easier in the Malay language. It can be seen in Excerpt 5 as illustrated by the researcher below. Excerpt 5: Rules for formation of plural forms in Malay language In the Malay language, the common method to show plurality is by reduplication. Plurality is called ‘ kata ganda’ which simply means ‘ duplicate’. Plural inflections exist in three common suffixes? /? s/, /? es/ and /? ies/ for English language.

However, in the Malay language, things are much simpler as students are needed to just reduplicate the words in order to make it plural. Excerpt 6: Comparison between English and Malay language plural forms In English language, students have no option rather than to know that the suffix /? es/ <https://assignbuster.com/review-on-past-tense-affixes/>

must be added to words that end with /? f/. If students spell it as shelves, it would be wrong. The Malay language is easier compared to the English language since students have option to either duplicate the word ' rak' using the symbol (?) or to insert cardinal or ordinal words before the word ' rak' in order to show plurality.

If cardinal or ordinal words are used, the word ' rak' will remain no changes at all, for instance some shelves = beberapa rak. To be safe, most students will apply the use of reduplication. Despite all the differences in the formation of plurality between both languages, there are similarities identified by the researcher. In both languages, plurality is indicated by cardinal like all (semua), some (sebahagian/beberapa) as shown in Excerpt 7. Excerpt 7 The second similarity is both languages have quantitative nouns that indicate numbers as shown in Excerpt 8. Excerpt 8 5. 0 Study's

Conclusion

This study has found that there are differences and similarities regarding the formation of plural forms between Malay and English language. In responding to the aim of this study, it is believed that the differences of plural inflections formation between those languages contribute to the errors in students' writing. Based on the data collected, it is found that the respondents understand the when and why should we use the plural form. The errors occurred not because the respondents failed to grasp the idea of plurality, but they are confused with the complicated rules of plural inflections in the English language. . 0 Commentary 6. 1 A meaningful study In general, the study itself is a very good research. It touches on a very specific area which is plural inflection. Generally, Malaysian children were

introduced to this language as early as four or five years old, at their pre-school level. This teaching and learning process gradually continues from pre-school to primary and secondary school. The duration of exposure towards English language in classroom setting would be approximately 11 years.

Although English language has been given much respect and attention, there are still learners being underachievers and not proficient in the language at the end of their secondary school level as claimed by the researcher.

Contrastive analysis is an inductive investigative approach based on the distinctive elements in a language. In this study, the researcher focused on the analysis of morphemes which carries grammatical meaning which is plural inflection. Some researchers believed that when similarities and differences between L1 and L2 were identified, pedagogy could be more effective.

This statement is developed from the master mind of contrastive analysis, Lado (1957) where he states “ those elements that are similar to the learners’ native language will be simple for him, but those that are different will be difficult. ” Hence, this study is significant since the aspect of plurality is being analyzed in terms of both languages. Lado’s statement supports this paper’s hypothesis that Malay students find it difficult to understand and use English language plural inflections because there are no plural inflections in the Malay language.

Hashimah, Norsimah, Kesumawati (2008) in their study of grammatical structures agree that different construction of plural forms in Malay and

English language contributes to the difficulty of acquiring the language. 6. 2 Methodology Moreover, other strength in this study is the reliability and validity of instruments. The use of Cloze-test is a very good approach. The researcher included various structures; however, once the Cloze? test is collected, analysis is made only on plural inflections. It is predicted that she does not wish for her respondents to be aware that this was a test on plural form.

This is a brilliant idea to avoid students giving more attention to certain questions. As the result, the findings would be questionable. 6. 3 Findings It is observed from the findings of Cloze-test 1 and Cloze-test 2, there are two noticeable interesting findings. 1) Cloze-test 1: 3 or 15% of the higher proficiency students committed errors in Question 1 while surprisingly; all of the lower proficiency students answered Question 1 correctly. 2) Cloze-test 2: For Question 7, it is noteworthy that there were more students from higher proficiency category committed error.

Based on these two interesting findings, we can generalize that, there are actually more students from higher level of proficiency that committed errors in forming plural inflections for certain words. Clearly here we can see that, even though those who are among higher level of proficiency and expected to know more about the English language structures and rules, yet still committed more errors. This denies the assumption that only those who are among lower level of proficiency will have more tendencies to commit error in forming plural inflections due to lack of knowledge of L2 structures and rules.

Thus, I am in favour of what the researcher has claimed, “ The errors occurred not because the respondents failed to grasp the idea of plurality, but they are confused with the complicated rules of plural inflections in the English language”. 6. 3 Pedagogical Implications This study is significant for it creates awareness to the readers on the importance of knowing the differences between two language structures. It has an impact to the teaching and learning environments as it serves as a guideline for educators. Now, the educators will have the opportunity to acknowledge the areas that students are weak in.

With the results from this study, educators are able to prepare better lesson plans to cater the students’ difficulties. Teachers can provide better explanation for grammatical structure like the plural inflection in classroom by considering comparing rules of both languages. 6. 4 Limitations and Recommendations This study was done on a small scale of samples, there were only 40 students from semester one in an institution only. As for future study, it is suggested to other researcher to consider of incorporating more samples to measure the students’ authentic understanding on the usage of plural inflections.

It is also recommended that in the future study, emphasis should also be given to other aspects of plurality such as the loan words (e. g. stimulus stimuli) rather than just focusing on the inflections /? s/, /? es/ and /? ies/. 7. 0 Conclusion In conclusion, despite of few limitations of study, it is true to say that this study is a good research. It gives more contributions especially for ESL learners in general, Malay students in specific. Also, the result of study can be benefit by the ESL teachers. As for future study, it is important

in making sure that the research caters all the possibilities and limitations of this study.