

Analysis of errors in subject-verb agreement among Malaysian ESL learners

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Abstract

This article analyses errors on subject-verb agreement among post-graduate teacher trainees in a college in Malaysia. Twenty postgraduate (English Language Studies) students from a teachers' training college from the northern state of Malaysia participated in the study. The study examined errors in 5 types of subject-verb agreements: person, number, coordinated subject, indefinite expression of amount and also notional agreement and proximity. 2 types of written compositions (argumentative and factual) were analyzed to identify the problems in writing grammatically correct subject-verb agreement by the students. The results of the study reveal that the majority of the students commit errors in subject-verb agreement, especially in SVA of number followed by SVA of person. The students were found to avoid using the complex sub-rules of SVA that include the agreement with coordinated subject, agreement with indefinite expressions of amount and also notional agreement and proximity.

Keywords error analysis, subject-verb-agreement, grammar in ESL, second language learners, second language teaching.