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Disorder of Spanish Verbs Usage in the Production of Grammatical Sentences Based on Pictures

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Abstract

The aspect of verbs is one of the grammatical aspects that is more complex than the other word classes in learning Spanish as a foreign language. This happens because Spanish is a synthetic relative language that has a high inflection level on verb conjugation. The differences between the verb system in Spanish and the students' native language cause confusion to the students in producing grammatical sentences in writing and lead to error. This study focused on the disorder and verb errors encountered by students in producing Spanish sentences. The respondents consisted of 30 students taking Spanish level I course at Sultan Idris Education University, Perak (UPSI). This study used the descriptive qualitative method with the application of the Taxonomy of Errors by Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982) to analyse the data. The results of the study showed that verb disorder occurred particularly on the various forms of verb conjugation based on the subject (doer) and number, the use of verb Ser, Estar, Tener, and reflexive verb of Gustar. This confusion caused grammatical errors, ungrammatical sentences, the addition of unnecessary verbs, reduction of the important elements, incorrect verbs selection, and inaccurate order in sentence construction.

Keywords: Disorder, Error, Verb, Grammatical Sentence, Spanish Language, Conjugation.

Introduction

Teaching Spanish as a foreign language in Malaysia is a very challenging process for language instructors. This is because the grammar system of the Spanish language (SL) is very different from the students' mother tongue which are Malay language, Chinese, Tamil, and other languages of ethnic groups such as Iban, Bidayuh, Dusun and others. These differences caused disorder to occur during the learning process and errors that cannot be avoided (Mariyati, 2018). Many errors occurred throughout the process of learning and the most frequent errors were in the morphology which is word construction, and syntax which is sentence writing. Generally, students who enroll in Spanish as a foreign language course at the Malaysian public universities are students who have no direct

knowledge of the language. This is because SL is not taught in Malaysian public schools except in international schools. Different backgrounds, motivations, and interests also increase the difficulty of teaching and learning processes to students (Hasmidar, Mardian and Puteri, 2018).

For students whose mother tongue is Malay language, SL confuses because Malay language is a type of agglutinative language that uses many morphemes with verbs and forms new words while changing the meaning and function of the word in a sentence (Karim et al, 2010). While SL uses an inflection-shaped verb system that has three distinct suffixes for each verb and suffix changes for each word. The change of word form is caused by several factors such as the change in the word type, whether it ends with -*ar*, -*er* and -*ir*, the difference of doer or subject (doer who does an action), the number of subjects (singular or plural), and time frame (present, past, future, in progress or subjunctive).

It is difficult for students to master the morphological aspect particularly derivation and conjugation of verbs that are varied and deformed when used. The difference between the mother tongue system and the target language will confuse the learner, however, the similarity will give advantages and ease the teaching and learning process (Brown, 2000). Other than verbs, students are also facing grammatical gender issues and adjectives in SL which are masculine and feminine, gender pairing for adjective and noun, and the number of singular and plural words (Mariyati, 2019). These Spanish language-learning issues and problems clearly show that learning a foreign language among students in Malaysia is not easy. There are many obstacles, constraints, and challenges that a lecturer needs to face to ensure that SL can be well mastered by the students and they can produce accurate and grammatical sentences. According to Edison (2017), the error in SL verb conjugation is not caused by the number of languages spoken by the learner but influenced by the other factors relating to the acquisition of a second language such as linguistic input and individual differences. The study showed that the problem faced by the students in conjugating the SL verb is *intraference* which is the factor of the language system itself and *interference* which is the influence of the language spoken by the student is not the dominant factor.

However, the confusion faced by students and error that they committed give useful input to the instructors to produce a method or strategy that can help students to master SL as a foreign language. For example, in a study conducted by Ismail (2016), students used Zone of Proximal Development activities in constructing sentences in SL. His study observed how students were able to solve problems in sentence construction without a teacher or expert assistance. The finding showed that students were able to achieve self-regulation with the help from Google Translate, friends, and books even if the students were novices in SL learning. The study by Shat et al. (2017) was conducted on the strategy to enhance syntax ability among foreign students in learning Malay language. In the study, a structured method was introduced to develop the students' syntax ability from one level to another, ranging from words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. The result of this study was in line with Hassan's opinion (2010) that a language can only be mastered after a trial process. Besides, Holtheuer & Short (2013) showed that a strategy of error correction done by parents helped the students to use the language better and was able to minimise the verb errors. This is because the errors and mistakes committed by students throughout the learning process in or out of the classroom are a common phenomenon faced by students.

There are two main objectives in this study which are, 1) analysing disorder of verb usage in SL writing among level I students at Sultan Idris Education University; and 2) provide suggestions to minimise verb error in SL and construct grammatical sentences.

Spanish Verbs
SL has a very rich inflection, especially on the verbs. Every base verb has a different inflectional ending depending on the doer and the time of action. Spanish verbs have three different inflectional endings which are the suffix *-ar, -er,* and *-ir.* For example, the verbs end with suffix *-ar* are, *estar* ('to be'), *hablar* (speaking), *estudiar* (study), *escuchar* (hear), *bailar* (dance), *cerrar* (close), *cantar* (singing) and so on. The base form of verbs that end with *-er* are *tener* (have), *leer* (reading), *ver* (watch), *comer* (eat), beber (*drink*) comprender (*understand*) and verbs with suffix *-ir* are *escribir* (writing), *dormir* (sleep), *vivir* (stay), *recibir* (accept), *abrir* (open), *salir* (exit), *compartir* (share) and others.
When these verbs are used in a sentence, they should be amended at the end or conjugated by using the inflection that has been determined depending on the doer and the time of action. For example:

Table 1: Examples of regular verb conjugation at present

Yo (I)	Estudi**o** (I study)	com**o** (I eat)	Viv**o** (I live)
Tú (you)	Estudi**as** (you study)	Com**es** (you eat)	Viv**es** (you live)
Él/ella/usted (he, she and second person (formal)	Estudi**a** (he/she studies) (Mr., Mrs. studies)	Com**e** (he/she eats) (Mr., Mrs. eats)	Viv**e** (he/she lives) (Mr., Mrs. lives)
Nosotros/as (we)	Estudi**amos** (we study)	Com**emos** (we eat)	Viv**imos** (we live)
Vosotros/as (you)	Estudi**áis** (you study)	Com**éis** (you eat)	Viv**ís** (you live)
Ellos/ellas/ustedes (they, second-person plural - formal)	Estudi**an** (they study, Mr. and Mrs. study -formal)	Com**en** (they eat, Mr. and Mrs. eat - formal)	viv**en** (they live, Mr. and Mrs. live - formal)

The inflectional suffix that needs to be changed for each subject and time frame (present, past, future, ongoing, subjunctive) gives a difficulty because verbs in SL are not only in regular form but also irregular in which changes are applied to the base form and need to be changed before being conjugated. For example:

Table 2: Examples of *irregular* verb conjugation at present

Yo (I)	Enc**ue**ntr**o** (I meet)	V**ue**lv**o** (I come back)	D**ue**rm**o** (I sleep)
Tú (you)	Enc**ue**ntr**as** (you meet)	V**ue**lv**es** (you come back)	D**ue**rm**es** (you sleep)
Él/ella/usted (he, she and second-person (formal)	Enc**ue**ntr**a** (he meets /Mr. /Mrs. meets)	V**ue**lv**e** (he comes back /Mr. /Mrs. comes back)	D**ue**rm**e** (he sleeps /Mr. /Mrs. sleeps)
Nosotros/as (we)	Encontr**amos** (we meet)	Volv**imos** (we come back)	Dorm**imos** (we sleep)
Vosotros/as (you)	Encontr**áis** (you meet)	Volv**éis** (you come back)	Dorm**éis** (you sleep)
Ellos/ellas/ustedes (they, second-person plural -formal)	Enc**ue**ntr**an** (they/ Mr. /Mrs. meet)	V**ue**lv**en** (they/ Mr. /Mrs. come back)	D**ue**rm**en** (they sleep)

The base verbs in Table 2 show the change in vowel 'o' to be diphthong 'ue' for verb used for the subject 'I, you, he' and 'they' while for the subject 'we' and 'you' the base forms do not change except for the suffix. The change or conjugation of these verbs caused considerable difficulties to the learners because each mistake can bring different meanings and the sentence constructed would not be grammatical. This is in line with the virtue in learning and teaching the aspect of SL morphology which begins with the word groups (root word or base form) and the word conjugation for each verb learned.

All verbs in SL either regular or irregular need to be conjugated, and learners need to be proficient to apply them in sentences. The suffix rules '-o, -as, -a, -amos, -áis', '-an' and '-o, -es, -e,-emos/imos, -eis/is, -en' only work on regular verbs that end with *-ar, er* and *-ir*. However, for *irregular* verbs and past tense verbs, future verbs, progressive verbs, subjunctive, or reflexive, these verbs are conjugated with different suffixes. This causes the students to be confused and the disorder arises when the verbs are used in sentences.

Apart from that, level 1 SL students are also confused with the use of verb *ser* and *estar* which mean *to be* in English, but they have different functions in sentences. *Ser* is used to mention a name, occupation, character/nature of a person/object, the origin, skin colour, time and day, but *estar* is used to mention the existence of a person/object, emotion, health condition, marital status and action that is taking place. For example, different use of *Ser* and *Estar* can be seen in the table below:

Table 3: Use of the verbs *Ser* and *Estar*

Subject	SER	Sentence Examples
Yo (I)	Soy (I am)	Yo soy Qisya I am Qisya
Tú (you)	Eres (You are)	¿ Tú eres Adni? Are you Adni?
Él/ella/usted (he, she and second person (formal)	Es (You are (f))	Ella es estudiante She is a student
Nosotros/as (we)	Somos (we are)	Nosotros somos Malasios (We are Malaysian)
Vosotros/as (you)	Sois (You are (p)	¿ De dónde sois? (Where are you from?)
Ellos/ellas/ustedes (they, second person plural -formal)	Son they are	Ellos son amables (they are kind)
	ESTAR	**Sentence Examples**
	Estoy (I am)	Estoy bien (I am fine)
	Estás (You are)	¿Estás nerviosa? (Are you nervous?)
	Está (You are (f))	Está mal (He is not feeling well)
	Estamos (we are)	Estamos felices (we are happy)
	Estáis (You are (p)	¿Estáis en clase? (Where are you?
	Están (they are)	Están estudiando (They are studying).

There are many studies conducted on the errors of usage of verb *Ser* and *Estar* among non-native students who study Spanish as a foreign language. *Ser* and *Estar* are the two most frequently used verbs in SL (Real Academia Española, CREA, 2009) and these two verbs are not only confusing to children but also adults who are learning them (Silva-Corvalán and Montanari (2008). For example, Holtheuer and Short (2013) studied whether parents' correction input in the children's conversation using the verbs *ser* and *estar* could help children to speak using correct sentences. The results of this study showed that after correcting the use of *ser* and *estar*, children could use these verbs more accurately and grammatically. In SL, the sentence e*lla es bonita* (she is beautiful) and *ella está bonita*

(she is beautiful) is different. *Ser bonita* refers to the adjective/ nature (face) of a beautiful person, while *estar bonita* refers to the condition of someone who looks beautiful only when the sentence is said. If viewed, there is no difference in Malay language to reveal both situations. The differences between these functions confuse the students when they try to transfer their mother tongue habit to the target language.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted using the descriptive qualitative method. The data of this study consisted of written text produced by the respondents of the study, without obtaining any assistance from the teacher. The text analysis method was used to analyse the error of using verbs in students' writing based on pictures.

Respondent of the Study

Respondents of the study were 30 undergraduate students at Sultan Idris Education University, Tanjung Malim, Perak. The students took SL course Level I. Analysis of errors was made based on the students' writing, regardless of gender. These students had learned Spanish as a foreign language for a semester which consisted of 14 weeks of learning. Throughout the teaching and learning process, students had learned the SL verb structure and conjugation process to form grammatical sentences using the verb *-ar, -er* and *-ir* in present form. Besides, the students were exposed to the use of verb *gustarse* (indicating preferences) and the difference of verb *Ser* and *Estar (to be)* in sentences. Learning verbs in Level I syllabus covering the structure of regular and irregular verbs.

Data of the Study

The first stage of data collection was started with the development of a question paper to be answered by the students. The question paper developed was verified by a moderator who is a lecturer at the same university. The verification process was done to ensure that the level of the question was appropriate for the respondents' learning stage at that time. In the second stage, the respondents were given a question paper with five pictures. The respondents were required to construct sentences using Spanish verbs in 30 minutes. Students were not allowed to use any alternative assistance such as dictionaries or online translation platforms while answering the question. Upon completion of the question, the respondents submitted the question and answer papers to the instructor.

Theory Application

Error in sentence construction is common in the second language (L2) learning process. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) said that most of the mistakes done by students who learned L2 were more specific to the language itself, as opposed to interference from their mother tongue. Students who learn L2 normally will obtain a simple structure first before successfully acquiring a more complex structure. To further explain mistakes often performed by students who studied L2, Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) had categorised the errors made by them into four categories which are the omission, addition, selection, and ordering. This classification is known as the Taxonomy of Error (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982).

Data Analysis and Discussion

This section discusses the findings from data analysis. The key discussion is focusing on the forms of disorder and errors in using Spanish verbs in writing based on pictures. Based on the collected data, most of the respondents used common verbs, which had been learned in class to describe pictures in the given question. The total number of sentences produced by 30 students in the answer transcriptions was 420 sentences.

Disorder of Verbs in Writing Sentences based on Pictures by Students

The results showed that there were a lot of common verbs used by students in the answer scripts, for example, *leer* (read/reading), *vivir* (live), *comer* (eat), and so on. However, the most frequent verbs used with a high number of mistakes were *gustarse, ser, tener,* and *estar.* The most frequent verbs used by students and forms of errors in the use of the verbs are as follows:

Table 4: Types of Spanish verbs in the answer scripts

Types of Spanish verbs	Frequency
Gustarse	30
Ser dan *Estar*	15
Ser dan *Tener*	7

Table 4 shows the types and frequency of errors made by students in constructing sentences based on the given pictures. The most common error was the verb *gustarse* which was committed 30 times. The other verb errors involved the use of the *ser* and *estar*, which were committed 15 times and the use of verbs *ser* and *tener* for 7 times. Errors that occurred did not only involve the use of the verbs but also the errors of addition, reduction, selection, and ordering of verbs in the sentences produced.

Table 5: Forms of errors in the Spanish verbs in sentence writing based on pictures

Forms of error	Frequency
Conjugation	40
Reduction and addition	62
Incorrect selection of verbs	32
Ordering	7

In total, there were four forms of errors and disorder of the use of Spanish verbs in sentence writing by the respondents. The forms of errors were conjugation, error in the use of reflexive verb *Gustarse*, confusion in distinguishing the use of verb *Ser* and *Estar* and, confusion on the function of verb *Ser* and *Tener*. The error resulted in another error of unnecessary addition of elements, reduction of essential elements, improper selection of verbs, and inaccurate order in producing sentences.

Verbs Conjugation Errors
Examples of errors in Spanish verb conjugation are as follows:

Incorrect use of conjugation form: Proper use of conjugation form:

i.   *Ellos **es** mi familia*   -   *Ellos **son** mi familia* (they are my family)

ii. *Ella **eres** cariñosa y trabajadora*   -   *Ella **es** cariñosa y trabajadora* (She is beautiful and dilligent)

iii. *Ella **leer** estas novelas*   -   *Ella **lee** estas novelas* (She reads/is Reading the novel)

The examples above show conjugation errors of Spanish verbs. In the answer scripts that were collected, it was found that students often committed errors by using the wrong forms of conjugation. For example, in sentence (i), the student chose the wrong form of conjugated verb based on the subject/doer who performed the action. *Ellos es mi familia* (they are my family) shows the error of using the base form of verb *ser (to be)*. In the Spanish grammatical structure, the base form of verb *ser*, is a third-person plural when used with *ellos (they),* the resulting form of conjugation is *son*, not *es*, because *es* is a form of conjugation derived from the use of base verb *ser* with *él* (he) and *ella* (she) which are second-person singular, and *usted* (you) which is a formal second-person singular. Supposedly, in this situation, the respondent must use the correct form of conjugation, which is *ellos son mi familia* (they are my family).

The same error occurred in sentence (ii). In sentence (ii), the respondent used the base verb *ser*, but the referred subject was *ella* (she) which is third-person singular. As explained above, the base form of verb *ser* when used with a single third-person subject of *él* (he) and *ella* (she), the correct conjugation form is *es*. However, the respondent used the conjugated form of *eres* (you) which is used to refer to a second-person singular.

In sentence (iii), the respondent used the verb *leer* (read/reading) with *ella* (she), a third person singular. *Leer* is a regular verb, so conjugation must be done according to the regular change (refer to table 1). If the verb *leer* is conjugated with the third-person singular *ella*, then the correct form of the verb is *lee* (he reads/is reading). However, there was no conjugation of 'verb-subject' used by the students in the answer scripts. Instead, respondents used the infinitive verb *ella leer estas novelas* in the constructed sentences. In this situation, the sentence with the correct 'verb-subject' conjugated form and follows the structure of the SL grammar is *ella lee estas novelas.*

Errors in Using Verb Gustarse
The verb *gustarse* (*to like*) belongs to the category of reflexive verbs and it is used to express our interest and enjoyment in something. The verb *gustarse* must be used along with the reflexive pronoun *me, te, le, nos, os, les* (myself, yourself, himself, ourselves, yourselves and themselves). The reflexive verbs are used as a stand-alone. In other words, the Spanish reflexive verbs do not need to be conjugated with the subject/doer as the regular and other irregular verbs (refer to table 1 and 2). The conjugation form of verb *gustarse* with subject/doer should not be done as the conjugation of regular verbs and other irregular verbs. This verb conjugation only produces a singular (if the subject/doer is singular) and the plural form (if the subjects/doers are in plural). For example, *Me*

gusta el chocolate (I like chocolate (singular subject) and *me gustan los chocolates* (I like chocolates (plural subject). *Gustarse* can also be used along with other base verbs. For example, *Me gusta comer los chocolates* (I like to eat chocolate). In this case, the verb that comes after the verb *gustarse* does no need to be conjugated and the infinitive verb is used. This causes the learners to be more erroneous and often the learners will conjugate the verb that comes after the verb *gustarse* and the learners also often leave the reflexive pronoun which should be used along with the verb *gustarse*. The use of the verb *gustarse* is as follows:

Table 6: Forms of verb conjugation *gustarse*

Reflexive pronoun	*Gustarse*	Ejemplo
(A mi)me (I)	*gusta/gustan* (like)	*Me gusta comer laksa* (I like to eat laksa)
(A tí) te (you)	*gusta/gustan* (like)	*¿Te gusta estudiar español?* (Do you like to learn Spanish?)
(A él /ella/usted) le(he)	*gusta/gustan* (like)	*Le gustan los chocolates* (He likes to eat chocolate)
(A nosotros/as) Nos (we)	*gusta/gustan* (like)	*Nos gusta la naturaleza* (we like nature)
(A vosotros/as) Os (you)	*gusta/gustan* (like)	*¿Os gustan los gatos?* (Do you like cats?)
(A ellos/ellas/ustedes) Les (they)	*gusta/gustan* (like)	*Les gusta la profesora* (The like the lecturer)

The followings are some examples of mistakes done by students in the study:

Use of wrong conjugation forms of the verb *gustarse*:	Use of correct conjugation forms of the verb *gustarse*:
iv. *Te gusta **escuche** música*	- *Te gusta **escuchar** música* (You like to listen to music)
v. *Te gusta **practica** deportes*	- *Te gusta **practicar** los deportes* (You love to practice sports)
vi. *Amanda **les** gusta **hablo** porque…*	- *Amanda **le** gusta **hablar** porque ella es profesora* (Amanda likes to talk because…)

Sentence (iv), (v) and (vi) were verb conjugation of *gustarse* with base verb *escuchar* (hearing), *practicar* (practicing), and *hablar* (speaking) written by respondents in the answer scripts. Sentence construction using verb *gustarse* and base form as in the examples above was wrong, did not follow the structure of Spanish grammar and ungrammatical.

For example, in sentence (iv), the use of the reflexive pronoun and the conjugation form of verb *gustarse* was appropriate; the subject used was the second-person singular 'te' and verb conjugation of the *gustarse* in singular should be 'gusta'. However, respondents should not perform the conjugation process on base verb *escuchar* → *te gusta escuchar música*. Clearly, the respondent had

again conjugated the base verb *escuchar música* → *te gusta escuche*, making the sentence constructed not only wrong in terms of the grammar but also did not have any grammatical meaning. Similarly, in sentence (v) the respondent used the correct conjugation form of *gustarse* that coincided with the subject/doer of the verb → *te gusta*. However, the same error was committed when the respondent did not use the base verb *practicar* after the verb conjugation of *gustarse*, causing the sentence constructed to be grammatically wrong.

While the example in sentence (vi) contained errors not only on the verb conjugation form but also on the use of reflexive pronouns which incorrect. In this sentence, the subject or the doer was the third-person singular, and the correct reflexive pronoun is *le*. However, the respondent used *les* that referred to a third-person plural. The base verb *hablar* used was also incorrect because the respondent used a conjugated form rather than the infinitive form.

Errors in using verb *Ser* and *Estar*
These verbs are among the most widely used verbs in sentences (Real Academia Española, CRE, 2009). However, the use of *Ser* and *Estar* are confusing for students and they often use them wrongly in context. The wrong use in sentences leads to different meanings and raises misunderstanding and confusion. The followings are the errors in using verbs *Ser* and *Estar* in the sentences produced by the students based on the given picture:

Wrong use of the verb *ser* and *estar*:	Correct use of the verb *ser* and *estar:*
vii. *Ellos **están** mis amigos*	- *Ellos **son** mis amigos* (They are my friends)
viii. *Ella **está** Sofía*	- *Ella **es** Sofía* (She is Sofía)
ix. *Ellos **son** feliz*	- *Ellos **están** felices* (They feel very happy)

As explained in the previous paragraph, the verb *ser* and *estar* carry the same semantic intent which is 'to be' in English, and there is no comparable meaning in the Malay language. This is because, to explain about beautiful nature of oneself, for example, English uses the subject structure-verb 'to be-adjectives:

Eliza	*is*	*pretty*
(subject)	(to be)	(adjective)

However, to explain the concept of nature/character of a subject in Spanish, the verb *ser* is used:

Eliza	*es*	*Guapa*
(subject)	(to be)	(adjective)

In contrast, to explain the same concept in Malay language, the verb 'to be' in the sentence is ellipsis:

Eliza	-	*Cantic*
(subject)	(to be)	(adjective)

Eliza cantik → there is no verb needed in Malay sentence to explain someone's nature.
To explain the location of a subject/doer at a certain time, English uses the same verb 'to be':

Eliza	*is*	*In*	*the*	*class*

(subject)	(to be)	(preposition)	(article)	(noun)

However, in Spanish, the verb *estar* (to be) is used to explain the concept of the location of a subject/doer:

Eliza	*está*	*En*	*la*	*clase*
(subject)	(to be)	(preposition)	(article)	(noun)

Look at the next examples:

> *Pablo es guapo* (*Pablo is handsome*) → verb *ser* (to be) is used to explain the nature/character of a subject.
>
> *Pablo está en casa* (*Pablo is at home*) → verb *estar* (to be) is used to explain the location of a subject/doer at a certain time.

The use of two different verbs of *ser* and *estar* but carrying the same semantic intent makes the learners more erroneous and it encourages them to do mistakes in sentence construction. For example, in sentence (vii), (viii) and (ix).

Since *ser* and *estar* share the same semantic meaning but they are used in different contexts, educators need to explain that *ser* is regularly used, to talk about 'what'. *Ser* is normally used to describe traits, characters, occupations, properties and times, and *estar* is used to talk about 'how' and 'where'. In other words, *estar* is used to explain the circumstances, location, emotions, and actions within a certain period. Educators can give a few situations that use both verbs so that learners can differentiate them.

Errors in Using Verb Ser and Tener

In Spanish, the verb *tener* (to have) is used to describe two different concepts, which are, 1) to explain the rights and belongings; 2) to explain age. In contrast, to explain rights and belongings in English, the verb *to have* is used, while *to be* is used to talk about age. For example:

Table 7: The verb *tener* and the concept of use

Concept	Verb		
	Spanish language	English language	Malay language
Explaining the right and belonging	*tener* **Tengo** *dos hermanos*	*to have* *I **have** two brothers*	*ada* saya ada dua orang abang
Explaining the age	*tener* **Tengo** *40 años*	*to be* *I'm 40 years old*	- Saya berumur 40 tahun

Table 7 explains the concept and use of the verb *tener* and *ser* in SL. It is clear that English and Spanish use different verbs in describing the above two concepts. For Malaysian students who understand and speak English well, this will cause a bit of confusion in the application of appropriate verbs when explaining those concepts. Confusion and errors made by respondents can be seen in the following examples:

| Wrong use of the verb *tener* and *ser*: | Correct use of the verb *tener* and *ser*: |

x. *Él **es** 25 años*

xi. *Ibrahim **tiene** arrogante*

xii. *Profesora **tiene** bonita y simpática*

- *Él **tiene** 25 años* (She is 25 years old)

- *Ibrahim **es** arrogante* (Ibrahim is arrogant)

- *La profesora **es** bonita y simpática* (She is a beautiful and kind tecaher)

-

The use of verb *ser* in sentence (x) was wrong because the situation that wanted to be conveyed was about a person's age. As stated above, SL uses verb *tener* to explain the concept of age, but English uses the verb *to be*. In this case, the influence of English confused the students and they could not use the correct verb to describe the concept of age in SL.

Sentenced (xi) and (xii) indicated the same feature of error which was the use of the verb *tener* to describe a person's trait/personality/character/nature. In this situation, the respondent clearly used the wrong verb, because SL uses the word *ser* to explain the concept of trait/character as described earlier.

The use of the verb *tener* was clear but when the verb was used to explain a person's age and condition, the student would wrongly use it with the verb *ser*. Educators can directly correct the error for learners to be aware that the verb *ser* cannot be used to describe age and someone's eternal nature or character. In this case, the English translation should not be used at all. Students need to be exposed to different types of sentences and situations so that all confusion can be answered, and mistakes can be avoided.

Errors in Verb Addition

According to the Taxonomy of Errors (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982), addition referred to the prevalent use of certain rules. Errors can occur as a result of regularisation, overlook, exception, application of something that is not in its place, and putting unnecessary elements.

Unnecessary addition of verbs:	Use of correct verbs:
*xiii. Ellos **son** comen*	- *Ellos comen* (they eat)
*xiv. él **es** hacer deporte*	- *Él hace deporte* (he plays sports)
*xv. él **es** cantar*	- *Él canta* (he sings)

The addition involves the use of two verbs in a single sentence. For example, in sentence (xiii), *ellos son comen* showed the addition of conjugation form of verb *ser* for the third-person plural *son (they are)* in the sntence *ellos comen* (they eat). The sentence *ellos son* can be constructed but requires an object or complement to complete it. For example, *ellos son amables* (they are good) and *ellos son de Malasia* (they come from Malaysia). However, the sentence *ellos comen* can be constructed without a complement. In Malay language, this sentence is called as intransitive verbs without complement. Sentence (xiv) and (xv) also showed the addition of verb conjugation for the third-person singular *es* (he is/she is). However, the student did not conjugate the verb *hacer* (make/do) for a single third-person which was *él* (he) to be grammatical as *él hace deporte* (he does sports activities) and *cantar* to be *canta*.

Verbs Reduction

Hazlina Halim (2011) said that the error of reduction happened due to the respondent's direct thoughtlessness to the attribution of a certain element that needs to be present along with the words used. For example, the use of verb *gustarse*, other than committed error on the base verb conjugation in a sentence, students also often left the reflexive pronoun and this aspect of reduction occurred because students left out the function words compared to the content words that carried meaning. Examples of reduction that occurred are as follows:

Reduction of the reflexive pronoun with verb gustarse:	Correct use of the reflexive pronoun and verb gustarse:
xvi. *ellos **gustan** comer*	- *Ellos **les gustan** comer* (they like eating)
xvii. *ella **gusta** bailar*	- *Ella **le gusta** bailar* (she likes dancing)
xviii. *él es guapo y **gusta** cantar hacer en su tiempo libre*	- *Él es guapo y **le gusta** cantar en su tiempo libre* (He is handsome and likes to sing during free time)

The above sentences show the error of reflexive pronoun reduction in sentences that used the verb *gustarse* which were *les* and *le*. *Ellos gustan comer* had a reflexive pronoun reduction *les* and *ella gusta bailar* also had a reduction of *le* before the verb *gusta*. *El es guapo y gusta cantar hacer en su tiempo libre* also experienced a reflexive pronoun reduction of *le* before the verb *gustar* but, the use of the next verb which was *cantar* (singing) was correct. However, there was an element of addition to the third verb which was *hacer* (making) that was not required in this sentence and this addition made the sentence ungrammatical.

Wrong Selection of Verbs

Wrong selection of verbs   Correct selection of verbs

*xix. Ella **está** sophea*   - *Ella **es** Sophea* (She is Sophea)

*xx. Mi hermana **están** muy romanticos*   - *Mi hermana **es** muy romantica*
                                                  (My sister is very romantic)

*xxi. Ella **juega** el piano*   - *Ella **toca** el piano* (She plays piano)

Error in verbs selection in the above sentences involved verbs that shared the same semantic meaning which were verb *ser* and *estar* (to be) as well as the verb *jugar* and *tocar* (play/playing). Some students were confused with the use of these verbs and considered that they can be used in both contexts (sports and musical instruments). The selection of verb *ser* and *estar* cannot be exchanged with one another because each of these verbs, has a different syntax function even they have the same semantic meaning (refer to the above description). It is similar to *jugar* which is used to explain playing sports equipment/sports training while *tocar* is used to explain about play musical instruments. Students had done the generalization process, by applying the rules in Malay language by using the verb '*bermain'* or '*play'* in English that can be used in both contexts to write Spanish sentences.

The Error of Verb Order

The error of verb order refers to the placement of a word that is not in the place. This study found that students had made mistakes of writing verbs not in order which caused the sentences produced to be ungrammatical.

Examples are as follows:

Error of verb order: Correct order of verb:

xxii. El futbol es jugador   - *Él es un jugador de futbol*
                                                              (He is a football player)

xxiii. Nosotros nos comparti con la familia   - *Nosotros compartimos con la familia*
                                                              (We share with the family)

xxiv. Ellos con amigos charlan.   - *Ellos charlan con los amigos*
                                                              (They chat with friends)

The finding shows that the students made mistakes in constructing sentences using verbs. For example, in sentence (xxii), the verb *es* (to be) should come after the pronoun *Él* (he) not after the noun *futbol*. The sentence produced by students had an illogical meaning which is 'the ball is a player' and it was not grammatical as it was not referring to the person as a player. On the other hand, sentence (xxiii) referred to the conjugated verb for the third-person plural which was *compartimos*. The students might make a spelling error of *mos* to be *nos* and put the word before the verb *compartir*; share.

Those verbs need to be written in a single word and not separately such as the verb *gustarse* and need to be written after the pronoun *nosotros* (us). In the next sentence, *Ellos con amigos charlan* showed an error in the position of the verb *charlan* which was placed at the end of the sentence even verb was supposed to come after the pronoun *ellos*. The sentence is called putting a part of the predicate before the subject in Malay language, but such a sentence is ungrammatical in SL and should be corrected.

To strengthen the understanding of verb conjugation, students should be exposed to as much as possible the use of verbs in different contexts of sentences. The links between verb conjugation and subjects or doers should be explained more often to remind the students that a change to a suffix of an infinitive verb is dependent on the subject of the action. The instructor can also show a YouTube video on ways to conjugate regular verbs, for example,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQhIJyIksSA and discuss the types of errors done by students so that the same error is not repeated. Thus, it can help to minimise the error. It is also suggested to the instructor to continue making corrections and enlighten the students when errors are being made so that errors can be improved. According to a study done by Holtheuer and Short (2013), corrections done immediately can help students to learn.

Table 8: Example of Spanish verbs used in Blog

Conclusion

The results of the study showed that verb disorder occurred particularly on the various forms of verb conjugation based on the subject (doer) and number, the use of verb Ser, Estar, Tener, and reflexive verb of Gustar. This confusion caused grammatical errors, ungrammatical sentences, the addition of unnecessary verbs, reduction of the important elements, incorrect verbs selection, and inaccurate order in sentence construction. The most common error was the verb *gustarse* which was committed 30 times. The other verb errors involved the use of the *ser* and *estar*, which were committed 15 times and the use of verbs *ser* and *tener* for 7 times. To strengthen the understanding of verb conjugation, the use of the verb Ser, Estar, Tener and Gustarse students should be exposed to as much as possible the use of verbs in different contexts of sentences. The links between verb conjugation and subjects or doers should be explained more often to remind the students that a change to a suffix of an infinitive verb is dependent on the subject of the action. The instructor can also show a you tube video on ways to conjugate regular verbs and discuss the types of the errors done by students so that the same error is not repeated. Thus, it can help to minimise the error. It is also suggested to the instructor to continue making corrections and enlighten the students when errors are being made so that errors can be improved. Corrections done immediately can help students to learn. Since *ser* and *estar* share the same semantic meaning but they are used in different contexts, educators need to explain that *ser* is regularly used, to talk about 'what'. and *estar* is used to talk about 'how' and 'where'. Educators can give a few situations that use both verbs so that learners can differentiate them. Grammatical errors and spelling errors also can be checked using Generic Spelling Checkers such as the one included in Microsoft word, Spanishcheckers, Language Tools and Stilus. The spell checkers tested in previous study have a high frequency of error detection, detecting more than 85% of the spelling errors in essays written by SFL students. This also might make the self-correction work

less complicated for the SFL learner (Blanquez and Fan, 2019). All aspects related to verbs need to be mastered by the learners and failure to understand this aspect in the correct context will lead to failure in generating grammatical sentences and inaccuracy in terms of the meaning. Therefore, the input derived from the data of the students' writing is expected to provide useful ideas and information to Spanish language teachers to improve the teaching and learning of SL. Besides, educators can systematically arrange their teaching materials to suit the students' level. Online teaching medium can also serve as an interesting application to increase the interest and understanding of students.

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