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Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti

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Diplomski rad

Mentor: izv.prof.dr.sc. Tanja Gradečak Erdeljić

Osijek, 2016.

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Error Analysis of Word Order in L2 Essays

MA thesis

Supervisor: Tanja Gradečak Erdeljić, Associate Professor

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Summary

Errors have always been an inevitable part of learning a language. Therefore, error analysis is an appropriate starting point for the study of second language acquisition. Furthermore, an insight into what kind of errors learners make can help foreign language teachers in organizing their teaching time better.

This research focuses on word order errors in written assignments in the framework of English as a Foreign Language. The results suggest that Croatian learners have problems in mastering the English word order. Moreover, learners' errors were divided in four categories; subject, verb, object and adverbials. Each of these categories was further divided according to the type of the error; misordering, omission and addition. The most common errors seem to be related to adverbials and subjects. This may be attributed to the difference between English and Croatian word order as well as to learning strategies the learners use.

Keywords: errors, Second Language Acquisition, error analysis, word order, English, Croatian

Sažetak

Greške su oduvijek bile neizostavan dio učenja jezika. Analiza grešaka je stoga najbolja polazna točka u proučavanju usvajanja inog jezika. Također, uvid u vrste učeničkih grešaka može pomoći nastavnicima stranih jezika u boljem organiziranju nastave.

Ovo istraživanje proučava greške u redu riječi u pisanju na engleskom kao stranom jeziku. Rezultati upućuju na to da učenici u Republici Hrvatskoj imaju problema u ovladavanju engleskim poretkom riječi. Nadalje, greške učenika su podijeljene u četiri kategorije; subjekt, predikat, objekt te priložne oznake. Svaka kategorija je zatim podijeljena u potkategorije prema tipu greške: krivi poredak, izostavljanje te dodavanje. Učenici su najviše griješili u poretku priložnih oznaka te subjekta. Mogući razlog tomu su razlike u hrvatskom i engleskom redu riječi, ali i strategije koje učenici koriste pri učenju.

Ključne riječi: greške, usvajanje inog jezika, analiza grešaka, red riječi, engleski, hrvatski

1. Introduction

O'Grady (as cited in Al-Khresheh, 2010:106) defined word order as “the syntactic arrangement of words in a sentence, clause, or phrase.” Furthermore, mastering word order is a significant part of learning a language because “word order errors can significantly complicate comprehension” (Boyd and Meurers, 2009:3). Since errors have always been seen as obstacles, it is important to say that they „are now considered as a device that learners use and from which they can learn” (Corder, 1967, as cited in Al-Khresheh, 2010:106). Al Khresheh adds that “conducting Error Analysis (EA) is therefore one of the best ways to describe and explain errors committed by second language (L2) learners” (Al-Khresheh, 2010:106).

With the help of error analysis, this paper will explore word order errors made by EFL learners in Croatia in essays written as part of their state school-leaving exams. The first part of this paper focuses on the theory behind word order, errors, and error analysis in second language learning. Furthermore, it gives insights into word order differences between English and Croatian. It also deals with Contrastive Analysis and the way it differs from error analysis together with the reasons for choosing the latter. Moreover, this part of paper includes the history of error analysis as well as how to conduct it.

The second part of this paper is the practical part of the research. It describes the aim, the sample, the procedure, and the results of the research. The latter includes the error analysis of sentence structure in second language essays that were a part of the state school-leaving exam in Croatia.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Word Order

Word order acquisition is a crucial part of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Therefore, it is important to differentiate between SLA and Foreign Language Learning (FLL). SLA is the acquisition of language where the language “plays an institutional and social role in the community” whereas in FLL it does not (Elis, 1994:11). Ellis (1994) points out that FLL takes place in a more formal environment such as the classroom. He also implies that there should be a “neutral and superordinate term” that would cover both SLA and FLL because there is no evidence that “sociolinguistic conditions of learning determine learning outcomes or learning processes” (Elis, 1994:11-12). He therefore uses the term SLA to cover both types of learning as it will be used in this paper

According to O’Grady, word order is “the syntactic arrangement of words in a sentence, clause, or phrase” (O’Grady, 1996, as cited in Al-Khresheh, 2010:106). Furthermore, he also adds that word order “refers to the different ways in which languages arrange the constituents of their sentences relative to each other” (ibid.). While studying the frequency with which different word orders occur in languages, Tomlin (as cited in Meyer, 2010) found out that out of the six word orders possible (SubjectObjectVerb, SVO, VSO, VOS, OVS, OSV), SOV and SVO were the most common ones found in over 85 % of the languages he studied. According to Biber et al. (1999), English has a SVO word order. That can be seen in 1):

1) Myrna (S) makes (V) the best cucumber salad. (O) (Biber et al. 1999, 398)

This sentence is a clear example that English has a relatively fixed word order since “changing the word order can change the meaning of the sentence” (Attia, 2004, as cited in Al-Khresheh, 2010:106).

2.1.1. English vs. Croatian word order

In contrast, Croatian has a more flexible word order. Even though SVO is the basic word order in Croatian, it does not exclude other word orders (Barić et al. 1979). The difference between English and Croatian word order is thus clear in 2) to 7):

2) Maja voli cvijeće. (SVO): Maja likes flowers. (SVO)

- 3) Maja cvijeće voli. (SOV): *Maja flowers likes. (SOV)
- 4) Voli Maja cvijeće. (VSO): *Likes Maja flowers. (VSO)
- 5) Voli cvijeće Maja. (VOS): *Likes flowers Maja. (VOS)
- 6) Cvijeće Maja voli. (OSV): *Flowers Maja likes. (OSV)
- 7) Cvijeće voli Maja. (OVS): * Flowers likes Maja. (OVS) (Patekar, 2013:390)

First, it is important to distinguish between the marked and the unmarked word order. When it comes to Croatian, 2) (S) *Maja* (V) *voli* (O) *cvijeće* is the unmarked word order and sentences 3) to 7) are examples of the marked word order. That means that the SVO sentence is the most neutral one and that none of the elements in the sentence are emphasized. However, in sentences in which the word order is marked there is always a part of the sentence that is emphasized (Barić, et al. 1979:453). Similarly, the unmarked word order in English is SVO. But, there is a difference when it comes to marked word order. Since changing the word order means also changing the meaning, the English language allows putting a part of the sentence in front of the clause to emphasize it. This is called fronting as in 8):

- 8) Her vegetables (O) Julie (S) buys (V) in the market (Quirk et al. 1985:89).

Other variations on the basic word order include clefting as in 9) and extraposition of the subject clause as in 10), depending on which part of the sentence one wants to emphasize:

- 9) It's *her vegetables* that Julie buys in the market.
- 10) *What you say* doesn't matter. - It doesn't matter *what you say* (ibid.).

Also, Biber et al. suggests S-V inversion as in (11):

- 11) Best of all **would be** (V) *to get a job in Wellington* (S) (Biber, et al. 1999:405).

2.1.2. Studies on word order

A research done as a part of the *Zagreb English - Serbo-Croatian contrastive project* confirmed the assumption that Croatian learners will have difficulty mastering the English word order because it is

relatively fixed (Kitić, 2005, as cited in Patekar, 2013:392). Patekar (2013) explains that the Croatian word order is more flexible because of the grammatical function its words have in the sentence. That means that its word order has no grammatical function, as it does in English, but rather a pragmatic one. This difference can be seen in the way the two languages identify its subject. The Croatian language requires the agreement of the subject and the verb in person, number, gender and case. That means that the position of the subject in the sentence is not important for its identification (Silić and Pranjković, 2007). In contrast, the subject in English is identified by its “preverbal positioning” in the sentence (MacWhinney, 2008, as cited in Patekar, 2013:392).

Also, a study has shown that word order errors belong to the most common writing errors. Ferris et al. (2000) found out that out of 5707 errors sentence structure errors were the most frequent ones with 22.5 %. The study was based on 146 texts written by 92 college-level ESL (English as a Second Language) composition students. Their errors have been analyzed and categorized by 5 researchers (Ferris, 2003:147-148). The results can be seen in Table 1:

Table 1: A list of common ESL writing errors (Ferris, 2003:148)

Error Type	Frequency	Percent of Total
Sentence structure	1,287	22.5
Word choice	654	11.5
Verb tense	624	10.9
Noun endings (singular/plural)	506	8.9
Verb form	443	7.8
Punctuation	391	6.8
Articles/determiners	376	6.6
Word form	371	6.5
Spelling	335	5.9
Run-ons	168	2.9
Pronouns	167	2.9
Subject-verb agreement	165	2.9
Fragments	102	1.8
Miscellaneous	51	.9
Idiom	48	.8
Informal	19	.3
Total	5707	100.0

2.2. Clause Structure

2.2.1. Declarative sentences

But, one must go deeper into the structure of the English sentence in order to analyze word order errors. To begin with, sentences in English can be simple or multiple. Simple sentences consist of a single independent clause whereas multiple sentences consist of more clauses as its constituents (clause elements such as subject and verb) (Quirk et al.1985:719). Furthermore, there are 5 elements of clause structure in English: Subject (S), Verb (V), Object (O), Complement (C), and Adverbial (A). These elements can be seen in sentences 12) to 18):

12) Someone (S) was laughing (V) loudly (A) in the next room (A).

13) My mother (S) usually (A) enjoys (V) parties (O) very much (A).

14) In 1945 (A) the country (S) became (V) totally independent (C).

15) I (S) have been (V) in the garden (A) all the time (A) since lunch (A).

16) Mary (S) gave (V) the visitor (O) a glass of milk (O).

17) Most people (S) consider (V) these books (O) rather expensive (C), actually (A).

18) You (S) must put (V) all the toys (O) upstairs (A) immediately (A) (Quirk et al.1985:49).

As can be seen from the examples above, V is the most central element. That means that its position is medial and not initial or final. Together with S, V is an obligatory part of the sentence and it determines the occurrence of other elements (whether it will be followed by an O, C or A depends on the type of the verb, e.g. transitive verb *give* requires an object, either a direct or an indirect as well). On the contrary, A is the most peripheral element of the clause structure. It can occur in any of the positions, depending on its type (to be discussed in 3.4.4.) Also, adverbials are usually optional and mobile. All the other elements (S, O, C) “are in various degrees more peripheral than the verb, and less peripheral than the adverbial” (Quirk et al.1985:50). Moreover, most of these sentences start with an S which leads us to a very simplified word order formula “(A) S (A) V (O) (O) (C) (A) ...” (ibid.).

2.2.2. *Interrogative, imperative, exclamative sentences*

However, the observations above can only be discussed in terms of declarative sentences (statements). Therefore, the word order in interrogative, imperative, and exclamative sentences must also be explained. According to Quirk et al. (1985), the crucial role in the formation of interrogative sentences (questions) has the operator. The operator is the first or only auxiliary in the sentence (*do, be, have*).

In yes-no questions, the operator comes before the subject. This is called subject-operator inversion (19)):

19) He *had* given the girl an apple.

Had he given the girl an apple? – a yes-no question (Quirk et al.1985:79) .

In wh-questions (20)), the operator has a similar role:

20) Whom (O) is John inviting to dinner?

Where (A) has the gold been hidden? (Quirk et al.1985:80).

But, when the wh-element is a subject as in 21), the word order remains the same as in a statement:

21) Who (S) has borrowed (V) my pencil? (O) (Quirk et al.1985:81).

Also, when there is no auxiliary in the declarative sentence, “the verb *do* is introduced as a 'dummy' auxiliary to perform the function of operator” as in 22):

22) They often go abroad. - *Do* they often go abroad? (Quirk et al.1985:80).

This also happens with negative structures as in 23) (the negation *not* is placed after the operator):

23) We received your letter. - We did not receive your letter (Quirk et al.1985:80-81).

On the contrary, imperative structures such as 24) and 25) (or directives) contain no operator or subject and thus have a different word order:

24) Be (V) quiet! (C)

25) Search (V) the room (O) carefully! (A) (Quirk et al.1985:87).

But, *do* is introduced as an imperative marker in negative imperatives as in *Don't hurry!* (ibid.).

Moreover, exclamatives (26) and 27)) are similar to wh-questions in that they start with a wh-element, but they keep the regular declarative order of S and V. That makes them different from both declaratives and interrogatives:

26) What beautiful clothes (O) she (S) wears! (V)

27) How well (A) Philip (S) plays (V) the piano! (O) (ibid.).

In addition, clause elements will be further discussed in 3.4. below.

2.3. Pronoun Dropping

Apart from the fixed word order, there is another phenomenon that makes the difference between English and Croatian word order even bigger and thus has some significant consequences on the role of word order in SLA. That phenomenon is the pro-drop parameter or the null subject parameter. Languages that have a [+pro-drop] value of the parameter allow the omission of subject pronouns and those with a [-pro-drop] value disallow it. (White, 1989, as cited in Świątek, 2012) The term *pro-drop* originates from pronoun-dropping and was coined by Noam Chomsky in his *Lectures on Government and Binding* (1981). It represented “a cluster of properties of which null subject was one” (Świątek, 2012:2). These properties include:

- Null subjects as in (1): 1. a. Turkish: Kitap okumayı severiz
b. English: * (we) love reading book
- Subject-verb inversion as in (2a): 2. a. Turkish: Geldi John okula
b. English: * Came John to school
- Absence of expletive pronouns as in (3a): 3. a. Turkish: Mutlu olduğu görünüyor
b. English: * (it) Seems that he is happy
- *That*-trace effect as in (4a): 4. a. Turkish: Sarah mutlu olduğunu söyledi
b. English: * Sarah told that is happy (Yılmaz, 1996, as cited in Świątek, 2012:2-3).

According to these properties, English is a non-pro-drop language. Other non-pro-drop languages include French and German since they also require a lexical subject. On the other hand, Croatian is a pro-drop language along with Romance languages, Slavic languages, Modern Greek, Turkish, Hungarian, etc. The difference between English and Croatian is seen in 28):

28) Vidim ga. Dolazi. – Croatian

I see him. **He** is coming. – English (Świątek, 2012)

Świątek (2012) explains that the pronoun **He** can be inferred from the context, whereas the missing pronoun **I** in the first sentence is indicated by the morphology of the verb *Vidim*. That is why it is assumed that “[+pro-drop] languages have rich verbal inflections, so that the nature of the missing subject can easily be recovered compared to [-pro-drop] languages” (White, 1989; Wakabayashi, 2002, as cited in Świątek, 2012:3).

Furthermore, the pro-drop parameter has been the subject of many studies in the last couple of decades. In 1986, White explored the role of transfer (cf. 2.3.1. below). He wanted to find out whether Italian and Spanish ESL learners “transferred the L1 value of the pro-drop parameter to their L2” (Świątek, 2012:4). That is why he also included a French group in his study. He investigated three properties of the pro-drop parameter; null subject, subject verb inversion and that-trace effect. He used “a grammaticality judgment task and a written question formation task with control and experimental groups” (ibid.). The results showed that the Italian/Spanish group made more errors than the French group, especially in terms of null subjects. Therefore, White concluded that “pro-drop parameter is transferred from L1 to L2, but only partially” (ibid.).

Another important study that explored the role of transfer was the one conducted in 1996 by Yilmaz. She investigated the same three properties as White (null subject, subject verb inversion and *that*-trace effect) and also with a help of a grammaticality judgment task. Her participants were Spanish and Turkish ESL learners that were chosen because their L1 were [+ pro-drop] languages. The results showed that Turkish learners transferred less of their [+ pro-drop] L1 values than their Spanish counterparts. That led Yilmaz to the conclusion that the amount of exposure to the target language (English) was crucial for the transfer of L1 parametric values into the learners’ L2 (ibid.).

To conclude, Świątek (2012:18) suggests that “learners’ L1 plays a crucial role in resetting the parameters of L1 into L2.”

2.4. Errors

Corder (1971:56) defines an error as “a breach of the rule of the code.” Another definition says that it is “a linguistic form or combination of forms” that would, “in the same context and under similar conditions of production, not be produced by the speakers' native speaker counterparts” (Lennon, 1991:182, as cited in Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:56). But, these definitions can be used to describe mistakes, too. Therefore, it is important to explain the difference between errors and mistakes. Ellis (1997:17) says that “errors reflect gaps in a learner’s knowledge; they occur because the learner does not know what is correct.” He also adds that mistakes occur not because of the lack of knowledge, but because of the learner’s inability “to perform what he or she knows” (ibid.). Furthermore, Ellis (ibid.) provides a few possible ways of distinguishing between the two. He suggests checking “the consistency of learners’ performance” or asking the learners “to correct their own deviant utterances” (ibid.). Since this research is based on written samples of learner language, none of the ways mentioned are feasible. All errors and mistakes will thus be referred to as errors.

Furthermore, Corder (1967) was one of the first linguists to point out that learner’s errors should not be seen as “annoying, distracting, but inevitable by-products of the process of learning a language” as they were in the past. According to him, learner errors are important because:

“(1) they serve a pedagogic purpose by showing teachers what learners have learned and what they have not yet mastered;
(2) they serve a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned; and
(3) they serve a learning purpose by acting as devices by which learners can discover the rules of the target language (i.e. by obtaining feedback on their errors)” (Corder, 1967, as cited in Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:51).

He also compared learner errors to those of children acquiring their mother tongue and proved that errors are a useful learning strategy (Corder, 1967, as cited in Richards, 1973:25).

In addition, Corder (ibid.) says that errors prove the existence of a system that a learner uses at a particular stage of his learning. Selinker named that system “interlanguage”. It is a “unique linguistic system that draws, in part, on the learner’s first language (L1) but is also different from it and also from the target language” (Ellis, 1997:33). Moreover, James (1970) describes interlanguage

as “an act of linguistic creativity so natural that it would be unrealistic to expect learners to circumvent it and proceed directly from his L1 to the native speaker’s version of the L2” (James, 1970, as cited in Richards, 1973:89). He also adds that the learner must be allowed to construct his own system so that he is able to communicate freely during his learning process.

2.4.1. Types of errors

The fact that the learner’s interlanguage draws on his L1 is a sign that L1 is a source of errors in second language learning. These errors are called “interlanguage errors” and they are caused by “the interference of the learner’s mother tongue” (Richards, 1973:173). That interference is called L1 interference or language transfer and it is considered to be the source of about one-third of the errors that second language learners make (George, 1971, as cited in Richards, 1973:5). Since it causes errors, it is also called negative transfer. But, “in some cases, the learner’s L1 can facilitate L2 acquisition” and this type of influence is known as positive transfer (Ellis, 1997:51).

Additionally, there is another major source of errors. Richards (1973:173) says that sentences such as “did he comed, what you are doing, he coming from Israel, make him to do it, I can to speak French” are examples of errors which “persist from week to week and which recur from one year to the next with any group of learners.” These errors are called intralingual or developmental errors and they “reflect the learner’s competence at a particular stage, and illustrate some of the general characteristics of language acquisition” (ibid.). Intralingual errors have nothing to do with the learner’s L1, but rather originate “within the structure of English itself” (ibid.). They may indicate transitional or final grammatical competence, depending on the learner. Furthermore, intralingual errors are the result of the learner’s attempt “to build up hypotheses about the English language from his limited experience of it in the classroom or textbook” (Richards, 1973:174). Because of that they are the best example of “over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized” (ibid.). These 4 learning strategies are the main reasons why intralingual errors occur and therefore have to be explained:

1. Overgeneralization – “the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structures in the target language” – e.g. *he can sings, we are hope, it is occurs, he come from*, etc. (Richards, 1973:174-175)

2. Ignorance of rule restrictions – the learner applies rules to contexts in which they cannot be applied – e.g. *the man who I saw him (that's the man who I saw), I made him to do it (I asked him to do it), he explained me the book (he showed me the book), we discussed about it (we talked about it)* (Richards, 1973:175-176)
3. Incomplete application of rules – “the occurrence of structures whose deviancy represents the degree of development of the rules required to produce acceptable utterances” – e.g. *Teacher: What was she saying? Student: She saying she would ask him.* (Richards, 1973:177-178)
4. False concepts hypothesized – “derive from faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language” – e.g. *is* interpreted as a marker of present tense in *he is speaks French* (Richards, 1973:178)

Also, some typical intralingual word order errors can be seen in 29):

29) Where it happened? – Omission of *do*

This is the king's horse which he rides it every day. – Unnecessary insertion of object

We saw him play football and we admired. – Omission of object

What was called the film? – Omission of inversion (Richards, 1973:185-188).

Moreover, it is important to differentiate between global and local errors. According to Ellis (1997), global errors affect the structure of the sentence making it difficult to understand (*The policeman was in this corner whistle...*) On the other hand, local errors affect only one constituent in the sentence and are “less likely to create any processing problems” (Ellis, 1997:20).

2.5. Error Analysis

2.5.1. The history of Error Analysis

To further explore the nature of errors it is important to identify and analyze them. This is done by conducting an Error Analysis (EA). Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005:51) define EA as “the study of the errors that learners make in their speech and writing” which “consists of a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining learner errors.” Furthermore, EA first appeared to help teachers organize their teaching time better. In 1957, Lee analyzed around 2000 errors using written samples of learner language written by Czechoslovakian ESL learners. He then hurriedly grouped these errors

into categories that included wrong punctuation, misuse, or omission of articles, misspellings, non-English constructions, and wrong use of tenses. But, these early analyses lacked the methodology to be able to explain the role of errors in SLA (Ellis, 1994:48).

Moreover, a lot of books were written to guide teachers to a better understanding of errors. Some of them included dictionaries of common errors such as Fitikides' *Common Mistakes in English* (1936) and Turton and Heaton's *Longman Dictionary of Common Errors* (1996). Other types of dictionaries focused on errors specific to particular groups of learners such as Swan and Smith's *Learner English: A Teacher's Guide to Interference and Other Problems* (2001) (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:51-52).

Even though it had already been an important part of language pedagogy, EA did not become a part of applied linguistics until the 1970s when it started being used as a substitute for Contrastive Analysis (CA). CA was a means of predicting learners' errors by comparing their L1 to the target language. Furthermore, CA stopped being carried out because of its shortcomings. Since it was based on the assumption that learners make errors primarily because of L1 interference, it did not take intralingual errors into account. This means that CA completely neglected learner language since it "looked at only the learner's native language and the target language (i.e. fully-formed languages)" (Ellis, 1994:47-48). Due to the fact that EA explores learner language and has the methodology necessary to do so, it is "an appropriate starting point for the study of learner language and L2 acquisition" (ibid.). Also, SLA studies have shown that CA "may be most predictive at the level of phonology and least predictive at the syntactic level" (Richards, 1973:172). For this reason, and because it might serve as a guideline to teachers when assessing learning and teaching, EA will be conducted in this paper.

2.5.2. Conducting an Error Analysis

As already mentioned, the first one to suggest that analyzing errors could be a means of investigating learning processes in SLA was Corder. He was also one of the linguists who developed the methodology for conducting an EA (Ellis, 1994:19). According to him, the steps to conduct an EA are:

1. Collection of a sample of learner language
2. Identification of errors

3. Description of errors
4. Explanation of errors
5. Error evaluation (Corder, 1974, as cited in Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:57).

Furthermore, the first step or the collection of a sample of learner language provides the data for the researcher to conduct an EA. But, there is a possibility that “the nature of the sample that was collected may influence the nature and distribution of the errors observed” (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:57-58). Table 2 shows the factors that can influence the sample. A researcher can then use these factors in two ways; (s)he can control them and thereby “narrowly specify his sample” in order to address specific research question or (s)he can “sample errors more generally by collecting a broad sample reflecting different learners, different types of language and different production conditions” (ibid.).

Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) also emphasize that written samples of learner language are relatively permanent and easier to collect. That is why this paper will be based on written samples of learner language that will later on be described in detail according to the factors shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Factors that influence learner errors in samples of learner language (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:58)

Factors	Description
A Learner	
1 Proficiency level	Elementary, intermediate, or advanced
2 Other languages	The learner's L1, other L2s
3 Language learning background	Instructed, naturalistic, mixed
B Language	
1 Medium	Oral or written
2 Genre	e.g. conversation, narrative, essay
3 Content	The topic of the discourse
C Production	
1 Unplanned	The discourse is produced spontaneously.
2 Planned	The discourse is produced after planning or under conditions that allow for careful online planning.

The second step of EA is the identification of errors. To identify an error, one must compare learner's utterances/sentences to those that would have been produced by the learner's native speaker counterpart under the same circumstances. The procedure for this step is:

- “1. Prepare a reconstruction of the sample as this would have been produced by the learner’s native speaker counterpart.
2. Assume that every utterance/sentence produced by the learner is erroneous and systematically eliminate those that an initial comparison with the native speaker sample shows to be well-formed. Those utterances/sentences remaining contain errors.
3. Identify which part(s) of each learner’s utterance/sentence differs from the reconstructed version” (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:58).

However, the problems arise when one tries to reconstruct learner’s erroneous utterances/sentences because some errors can be reconstructed in more than one way and thus identified differently. Since the person reconstructing erroneous utterances/sentences does not know which construction the learner had in mind, (s)he must opt for one himself (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:59). Lennon (1991) suggests considering the domain and the extent of an error. He sees the domain of an error as “the breadth of the context (word, phrase, clause, previous sentence, or extended discourse) that needs to be considered in order to identify the error” (Lennon, 1991, as cited in Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:59). Furthermore, he defines the extent of an error as “the size of the unit that needs to be reconstructed in order to repair the error” (ibid.). In addition, errors that have a broad domain and/or extent are not easily identified. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005:59-60) provide an example of an error that is easily identified since its domain and extent are narrow (the domain is enclosed in brackets and the extent is italicized (30)):

30) They (passed near a zoo and *stop*) in the forest.

Once all the errors have been identified, they have to be described. That means that one has to determine the differences between what the learner has produced and what his/her native counterpart would produce in the same situation. The first step of describing errors includes developing “a set of descriptive categories for coding errors that have been identified” (ibid.). This set of categories has to be elaborated, but still simple and user-friendly. Also, one should not start an analysis with a fully elaborated set of categories, but rather develop one that reflects the errors in the sample. Moreover, the classification of errors into categories is called the taxonomy of errors. There are two types of taxonomy; a linguistic taxonomy and a surface structure taxonomy. Linguistic taxonomy depends on

the descriptive grammar of the target language and includes categories that focus on “basic sentence structure, the verb phrase, verb complementation, the noun phrase, prepositional phrases, adjuncts, coordinate and subordinate constructions and sentence connection” (James, 1998, as cited in Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:60). Each of these categories can then be further divided into different subcategories. For example, *marry* (instead of *married*) in *Yesterday Martin marry his life-long sweetheart* is classified as “verb phrase-past simple-regular verb” (James, 1998, as cited in Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:60-61). On the other hand, surface structure taxonomy deals with the ways surface structures are changed in learner’s erroneous utterances/sentences. The four main ways in which learners change target forms are:

- “1. Omission (for example, omission of copula *be* in the utterance *My sisters very pretty.*)
2. Addition (i.e. the presence of a form that does not appear in a well-formed utterance). This is subcategorized into:
 - a Regularization (for example *eated* for *ate*)
 - b Double-marking (for example, *He didn’t came*)
 - c Simple additions (i.e. additions not describable as regularizations or as double-markings)
3. Misinformation (i.e. the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure):
 - a Regularization (for example, *Do they be happy?*)
 - b Archi-forms (for example, the learner uses *me* as both a subject and object pronoun)
 - c Alternating forms (for example, *don’t + v* and *No + v*)
4. Misordering (i.e. errors characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance as in *She fights all the time her brother*)” (Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982:150, as cited in Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:61).

Even though there are four main categories, James (1998) suggests a fifth category; blends. This category refers to errors such as *The only one thing I want* which is a blend of *The only thing I want* and *The one thing I want* (James, 1998, as cited in Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:61). Moreover, these two types of taxonomy can be combined in an EA. After one has decided on which taxonomy to use and developed a set of descriptive categories, one must also record the frequency of errors in each category. Table 4 shows the frequency of errors in an EA according to both linguistic and surface structure taxonomy (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:60-64):

Table 4: The frequency of errors (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:64)

Error categories	Frequency	% of total errors
A Descriptive		
1 Noun phrase	1	14.3
2 Verb phrase	1	14.3
a subject-verb agreement	4	57.1
b Simple Past Tense	1	14.3
3 Complex sentence		
B Surface structure		
1 Omission	1	14.3
2 Addition	0	0
3 Misinformation	6	85.7
4 Misordering	0	0
5 Blends	0	0

The fourth step of EA is the explanation of errors. To explain an error means to find its source and see why it was made. That means that one has to see if the error is intralingual (caused by a learning strategy), interlingual (caused by L1 transfer) or unique (induced, caused by the way the language was taught). But, identifying the source of an error is not always an easy task because “an error itself can only provide the hint of its source with the result that many errors are ambiguous” (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:66). That means that one error can be “explicable in terms of multiple rather than single sources” (ibid.). Therefore, one should always be careful when claiming to have found the right source. Also, that is the reason why different researchers presented different EA results. For example, Dulay and Burt (1974) reported 5 percent, whereas White (1977) reported 21 percent of interlingual errors despite the fact that they used the same instruments to collect samples of language from Spanish ESL learners. They also reported a different number of intralingual errors which only proves that one can only try to estimate the correct percentage of errors (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:65-66).

The fifth step that Corder suggests is error evaluation. It is actually not a step, but rather the application of EA results. Furthermore, it deals with “determining the gravity of different errors with a view of deciding which ones should receive instruction” (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:67). Since it requires a scale for predicting error gravity that is almost impossible to be made, it is not used anymore. However, it is up to teachers to do some kind of error evaluation, especially because they are the ones that have to decide on which errors to address and which not, the authors suggest.

To conclude, conducting an error analysis can be very difficult because of its shortcomings. EA deals only with learners’ errors and ignores what they do correctly. It also has methodological

problems when it comes to identifying, describing and explaining errors. Furthermore, EA “cannot account for learners’ avoidance of certain L2 forms” (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2005:70). Because of these reasons, EA is no longer the preferred method when it comes to analyzing learner language. Nevertheless, it is an important part of language pedagogy since it provides a better understanding of the nature of errors.

3. Error Analysis of Word Order Errors in L2 Essays

3.1. Aim

The aim of this study was to identify and categorize most common word order errors in EFL essays in Croatia to gain an insight into what kind of errors Croatian language learners tend to make and why. Also, this study aimed to see whether learners transferred the L1 value of the pro-drop parameter to their L2.

3.2. Sample

The sample consisted of 100 EFL essays that were a part of learners' state school-leaving exams in Croatia. Half of them were written by the generation of 2009/2010 and the other half by the generation of 2010/2011. The essays cover all regions in Croatia. Chart 1 shows how these essays were graded.

Chart 1: Grades



The learners were at the intermediate level of language proficiency and their L1 was Croatian. Their language learning background was both instructed and naturalistic. In addition, there were two different topics: (1) *Some people say that international sports events bring countries closer, while others say that they cause problems between countries* and (2) *Some people say that there should be limits to what students can wear at school. Others say there should not.* Moreover, the production of the language collected in this sample was unplanned.

3.3. Procedure

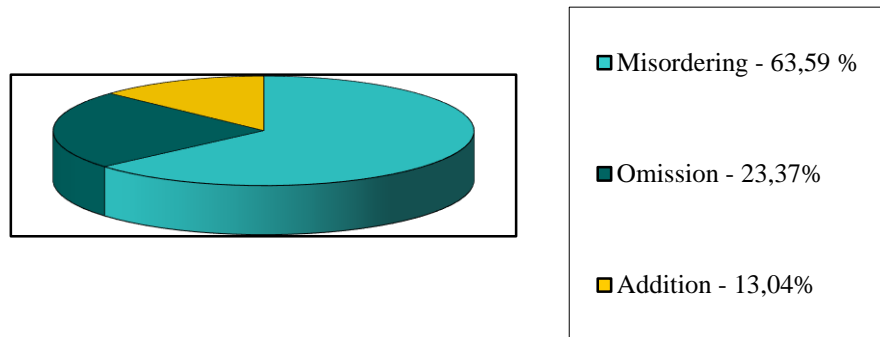
A round number of 100 L2 essays was chosen from the A level of the state school-leaving exams in English. They were chosen according to their grade and region so that the sample would be

representative. Error analysis was carried out and 184 most common errors were categorized according to both surface structure and linguistic taxonomy. Descriptive statistics was used to show the frequency and the type of errors. In addition, there were errors that did not fit into any of the categories and will not be mentioned because they are insignificant for the role of WO in SLA.

3.4. Results

Chart 2 shows the overall results of error analysis divided into 3 main categories together with their frequency which is calculated from 184 most common word order errors. The results are divided into categories according to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) surface structure taxonomy.

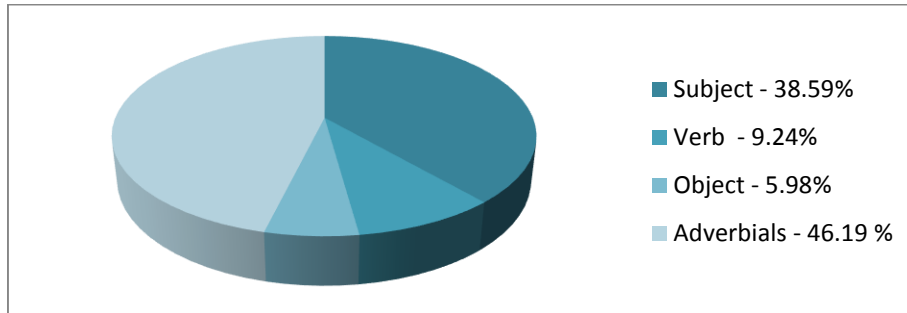
Chart 2: Results according to the surface structure taxonomy



Moreover, Chart 3 shows the overall results according to the linguistic taxonomy of errors. They are divided into 4 categories based on the function they have in the sentence; subject, verb, object and adverbials. Because there were very few, complements were not included as a category.

Additionally, each of the 4 main categories is divided into subcategories, described and explained together with example sentences for each type of error.

Chart 3: Results according to the linguistic taxonomy



3.4.1. Subject

The subject is the most important clause element after the verb. (Quirk et al. 199:724) A subject is the agent of an action or “doer”. It is usually a noun phrase (e.g. “a noun or pronoun and any dependent words before or after it”) and it belongs to five major elements of clause structure together with the verb, object, complement and adverbial. Also, it is an essential part of the sentence and cannot be left out (except for imperative clauses). When there is no subject, the “dummy” subject must be put in the subject position. *It* and *there* are used as dummy subjects as in 31):

31) **It**'s strange the way the weather changes so quickly.

There are lots of things to do here in the city centre (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/subjects?q=Subjects%3A+typical+errors>).

Additionally, its position depends on the type of the sentence. If the sentence is declarative, the subject comes before the verb (***They*** love eating out.). In interrogative sentences, the subject comes “after the auxiliary or modal verb and before the main verb” (Has ***Shona*** been to the house before?). Finally, if the sentence is exclamative, the subject comes “after *How* or *What* and before the verb” (***What a fantastic cook she*** is!) (ibid.).

Furthermore, Table 5 shows the types and frequency of subject-related errors. With 38.59 % of the total number of errors, subject errors are the second most common type of errors in this paper, right after adverbial errors (46.19%) Also, the fact that English is a [-pro-drop] language which allows neither null subjects nor subject-verb inversion seems to have caused Croatian learners a lot of

problems; almost half of all subject-related errors are omitted subjects (46.48%), followed by misordered subjects (42.25%) which include S-V inversion. The rest or 11.27 % of subject errors are unnecessary subjects.

Table 5: Subject-related errors – types and frequency

Type of error	Frequency
Misordering	42.25 %
Omission	46.48 %
Addition	11.27 %

Moreover, Table 6 shows the analysis of subject errors. However, it does not show the analysis of all subject errors, but rather gives an insight into what kind of subject-related errors learners tend to make and why. As can be seen, learners' errors are both interlingual and intralingual. Most of the interlingual errors are caused by the fact that Croatian ESL learners are not aware of the [-pro-drop] value of the English language which results in omission of the subject. Also, a lot of misordered subjects are intralingual errors caused by the fact that learners have not yet mastered the word order of interrogative forms.

Table 6: The Error Analysis of subject-related errors

Learners' erroneous utterances/sentences	Reconstructed sentences	Type of error	Possible source/explanation
I think that is better for us if we do any sport.	I think (that) it would be better for us if we did some kind of sport.	Omission	L1 – the learner might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (Mislim da je bolje za nas...)
During the history we know that international sports events brings countries closer but also some possibility is	We know that international sports events brought countries closer during the history, but there is	Omission	L1 – the learner might have transferred the Croatian [+pro-drop] value to his L2

that they caused bad feeling between countries.	also a possibility that they caused bad feelings between countries.		
Only then international sports events will bring countries closer.	Only then will international sports events bring countries closer.	Misordering	Overgeneralization – the learner put the S before the verb since it is a declarative sentence, the learner is not aware of S-auxiliary inversion Incomplete rule application – the learner is aware of the S-aux inversion, but does not know when to use it
From the beginning, there were organised a lot of sport competitions.	A lot of sport competitions have been organized from the very beginning.	Addition	Overgeneralization/ Ignorance of rule restrictions – the learner is aware of the [-pro-drop] value of the English language, but uses the pronoun when not necessary
If players are friendly and calm then shouldn't be a problems...	If the players are friendly and calm, then there shouldn't be problems...	Omission	L1 – the learner is not aware of the [-pro-drop] value of the English language and might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (...tada ne bi trebalo biti problema...)
I think we should find a way to show young people that is important to know the rules...	I think we should find a way to show young people that it is important to know the rules...	Omission	L1 – the learner is not aware of the [-pro-drop] value of the English language and might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (...da pokažemo mladim ljudima da je važno...)

What students can wear at school?	What can students wear at school?	Misordering	Incomplete application of rules – a question word is simply added to the statement form
Some students will also say:”If teachers could wear anything they want, why we would not?”	Some students will also say:”If teachers can wear anything they want, why can’t we?”	Misordering	Incomplete application of rules – the learner does not use inversion in the question form
... when came warmer time...	...when warmer weather comes...	Misordering	L1 - the learner might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (...kada dođe toplije vrijeme...)
There are many arguments to support view that shouldn’t be limits...	There are many arguments to support the view that there shouldn’t be limits...	Omission	L1 - the learner might have transferred the Croatian [+pro-drop] value to his L2
Maybe is that to precious.	Maybe that is too precious.	Misordering	L1 – the learner might have literally translated the sentence (Možda je to predragocjeno)
Nowadays, some people have discutions about what should students wear at school.	Nowadays, some people have discussions about what students should wear at school.	Misordering	Incomplete application of rules – the learner does not use inversion in the question form
If they think is good to come half-naked...	If they think it is ok to come half-naked...	Omission	L1 - the learner might have literally translated the sentence (Ako oni misle da je dobro doći polugol...), the learner is not aware of the [-pro-drop] value of the English language

3.4.2. Verb

Even though there were not many verb-related errors (only 9.24 %), it is important to notice that learners have trouble with the most important part of the sentence. Table 7 shows the types and frequency of errors when it comes to verbs. Almost half of the verb-related errors (47.06 %) were omitted verbs which is quite shocking considering the fact that V is an obligatory part of the sentence in both English and Croatian. Furthermore, omission of verbs is followed by addition (41.18 %) and misordering (11.76 %). Also, it is important to mention that S-V inversion was included in subject-related errors.

Table 7: The frequency and types of verb-related errors

Type of error	Frequency
Misordering	11.76 %
Omission	47.06 %
Addition	41.18 %

In addition, Table 8 shows the examples of verb-related errors. As it can be seen, most of the errors are unique, rather than intralingual or interlingual. It is hard to explain why learners made that kind of errors, especially at the intermediate level of language knowledge.

Table 8: Error Analysis of verb-related errors

Learners' erroneous utterances/sentences	Reconstructed sentences	Type of error	Possible source/explanation
... and that worth more than anything else.	...and that is worth more than anything else.	Omission	Unique
It is hard to conclude whether do international sport events bring countries	It is hard to conclude whether international sports events bring	Addition	Overgeneralization – the learner introduced the dummy <i>do</i> after the wh-element

closer or cause bad feelings.	countries closer or cause bad feelings.		
People mixed feeling about that.	People have mixed feelings about that.	Omission	Unique
Like I said, in game there always losers and winners.	Like (as) I said, there are always losers and winners in a game.	Omission	Unique
During the history we know that international sports events brings countries closer but also some possibility is that they caused bad feeling between countries.	We know that international sports events brought countries closer during the history, but there is also a possibility that they caused bad feelings between countries.	Misordering	Incomplete application of rules – the learner is not aware of English WO rules – he does not introduce <i>there</i> , he is not aware that he cannot interrupt the phrase (a possibility that they caused bad...)

3.4.3. Object

There are two types of objects; the direct (Od) and indirect object (Oi). If both are present in a sentence as in 32), the indirect object usually comes before the direct object:

32) I (S) gave (V) him (Oi) my address (Od) (Quirk et al. 1999:726).

Furthermore, the difference between the two of them is in the first place semantic. The direct object refers to “an entity that is affected by the action denoted in the clause” as in 33):

33) Norman smashed *a window in his father's car* (Quirk et al. 1999:727).

On the contrary, the indirect object refers to “an animate being that is the recipient of the action” as in 34):

34) Pour *me* a drink (ibid.).

Also, Oi may be replaced by a prepositional paraphrase (also known as prepositional object - Op) as in 35). It is generally placed after Od.

35) Pour *me* a drink. – Pour a drink *for me*.

I'll send Charles another copy. – I'll send another copy to Charles (ibid.).

Additionally, Table 9 shows that misordered objects make the majority (81.82%) of the total number of object-related errors (5.98%) They are followed by omission (18.18%), but there is no addition.

Table 9: Object-related errors – types and frequency

Type of error	Frequency
Misordering	81.82 %
Omission	18.18 %
Addition	0 %

Moreover, the EA of object-related errors in Table 10 shows that there are both intralingual and interlingual errors. Also, L1 seems to be a big source of errors because of its flexible word order. Since it allows Od at the beginning of the sentence due to the case marking of O in L1 in the accusative or objective case, it is not surprising that many L2 sentences begin with an Od (*Big influences on that have TV companies...*).

Table 10: Error Analysis of object-related errors

Learners' erroneous utterances/sentences	Reconstructed sentences	Type of error	Possible source/explanation
That aspects they show by...	They show that aspects by...	Misordering	L1 – the learner might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (Te aspekte/poglede pokazuju tako što...)

Big influences on that have TV companies where students...	TV companies where students...have a big influence on that.	Misordering	L1 – the learner might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (Velik utjecaj na to imaju...)
All in all, it is a good thing to give an opportunity to students to express themselves...	All in all, it is a good thing to give students an opportunity to express themselves...	Misordering	Ignorance of rule restrictions – the learner puts Oi in the middle of Od
People like that we can see every day...	We can see people like that every day...	Misordering	L1 – the learner might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (Takve ljude možemo vidjeti svaki dan...)
In addition, students shouldn't highlight labeled pieces of clothing if wearing.	In addition, students should not show off labeled pieces of clothing if they wear them /if wearing any .	Omission	Incomplete application of rules – the learner is not aware of the fact that <i>wear</i> is a transitive verb (i.e. requires a direct object)
For many people, international sports events bring more problems than satisfaction.	International sports events bring (many people) more problems than satisfaction to many people.	Misordering	Ignorance of rule restrictions – the learner puts Op at the beginning of the sentence (it should go after Od)

3.4.4. Adverbials

As mentioned previously, an adverbial is the most peripheral clause element since it is mostly optional and it comes in different positions in the sentence as in 36):

36) *Perhaps* my suggestion will be accepted. (initial – before the subject)

John *always* loses his pencils. (medial – after the subject or after the auxiliary)

I spoke to her *outside*. (end – after the verb) (Quirk et al. 1999:440).

Additionally, adverbials can be further divided into adjuncts (clause elements), subjuncts (subordinate role to other clause elements), disjuncts (comment on the sentence), and conjuncts (express the relation between two linguistic units). According to Quirk et al., adjuncts (37)) and subjuncts (38)) are “relatively integrated within the structure of the clause”:

37) *Slowly* they walked back home.

38) We haven't *yet* finished (ibid.).

On the contrary, disjuncts (39)) and conjuncts (40)) have “a more peripheral relation in the sentence”:

39) *Fortunately*, no one complained (ibid.)

40) *In addition*, she has written a successful novel (Quirk et al. 1999:632).

Furthermore, only adjuncts resemble other clause elements and will thus be explained in more detail. Adjuncts are further divided into predication and sentence adjuncts. Predication adjuncts can be both obligatory (*He (S) lived (V) in Chicago (A)*) and optional (*Grip (V) the handle (O) tightly (A)*) and they usually occur in the end position (Quirk et al. 1999:504-510). On the other hand, sentence adjuncts are optional and they can occur in any position in the sentence as in 41):

41) She kissed her mother *on the platform*.

On the platform, she kissed her mother. (Quirk et al. 1999:511-512)

She is *temporarily* working in a different building (Quirk et al. 1999:541).

Also, adjuncts can be divided into 7 categories according to their semantic role:

1. Space – position (*in the park*), direction (*westwards*), distance (*a long way*)
2. Time – position (*on Sunday*), duration (*till next week*), frequency (*three times*), relationship (*still*)
3. Process – manner (*slowly*), means (*by bus*), instrument (*with a fork*), agentive (*by John*)

4. Respect (*So far as travelling facilities are concerned...*)
5. Contingency – cause (*of cancer*), reason (*because of his interest in metaphysics*), purpose (*so as to study metaphysics*), result (*so he acquired some knowledge of metaphysics*), condition (*if he reads the books carefully*), concession (*though he didn't read the book*)
6. Modality – emphasis (*certainly*), approximation (*probably*), restriction (*only*)
7. Degree – amplification (*increasingly*), diminution (*a little*), measure (*sufficiently*) (Quirk et al. 1999:479-486)

Moreover, different types of adjuncts come in different positions in the sentence. Adjuncts of space are usually found in the end position (She lives *in a cottage*), but can also occur in the initial position (*From London*, Mary went to Brussels), especially in questions (*Which direction* did she run?). Cases in which they occur in the medial position are possible (You could, *from Manchester*, get a plane to Amsterdam), but very rare. Similarly, time adjuncts usually occur in the end position (The wedding was *on Thursday*), but can also occur in both initial (*Nowadays*, Patricia cycles to work) and medial (those realized by adverbs as in *Mary has sometimes/often acted in Shakespeare plays*) position. Furthermore, all process adjuncts are normally predication adjuncts and that means they can only come in the end position (She spoke to him *coldly*). Exceptions are possible, but very rare (*With a knife like that*, you couldn't cut through this salami). This applies to adjuncts of respect as well (She's advising them *legally*). In addition, adjuncts of contingency usually occur in the end position (She returned home early *because of his insistence.*), but can equally occur in the initial position (*In order to stop the machine*, press the red button). They seldom occur in the medial position (One member had, *so that matters need not be hastened*, been suggesting an adjournment of the meeting). (Quirk et al. 1999:514-565) On the contrary, adjuncts of modality usually occur in the medial position (She has *certainly* been enthusiastic about her work). Additionally, adjuncts of degree can occur in either the medial (I *badly* want a drink) or end position (She had worked *sufficiently* that day) (Quirk et al. 1999:485-486).

Due to their diversity, adverbial-related errors are the most common type of errors in this research (46.19%). As can be seen in Table 11 below, the majority of errors (89.41%) are misordered adverbials. Whereas there is no omission, there were a few additions (10.59%)

Table 11: Types and frequency of adverbial-related errors

Type of error	Frequency
Misordering	89.41 %
Omission	0 %
Addition	10.59 %

In addition, Table 12 shows the diversity of learner errors. These errors are both intralingual and interlingual. Learners seem to be either unaware of rule restrictions or literally translate the sentence from their mother tongue.

Table 12: EA of adverbial-related errors

Learners' erroneous utterances/sentences	Reconstructed sentences	Type of error	Possible source/explanation
There will be always trouble...	There will always be trouble...	Misordering	Ignorance of rule restrictions – the learner ignores the fact that time adjuncts realized by adverbs have to be placed in the medial position (after <i>will</i>)
However, they become sometimes rude and...	However, they sometimes become rude and...	Misordering	Ignorance of rule restrictions – the learner ignores the fact that time adjuncts realized by adverbs have to be placed in the medial position (after S)
These days is the sport only a other name for solving problems in „old fashion“ way?	Is sport these days only another name for solving problems in an old-fashioned way?	Misordering	Incomplete application of rules – the learner does not know how to form a question
They see in football just fun and because of that...	They see just fun in football and because of that...	Misordering	Ignorance of rule restrictions – adverbial of place comes after the object

... because people in moments like these can't think properly.	...because people cannot think properly in moments like these.	Misordering	L1 – the learner might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (...jer ljudi u takvim trenucima ne mogu razmišljati kako treba.)
At international sports events there are always a lot of police.	There are always a lot of police officers at international sports events.	Misordering	L1 – the learner might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (Na međunarodnim sportskim događajima je uvijek puno policajaca.)
...if two countries together organised a tournament...	...if two countries organized a tournament together...	Misordering	L1 – the learner might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (ako dvije države zajedno organiziraju turnir...)
...not-having expensive clothes also can lead to depression...	...not having expensive clothes can also lead to depression...	Misordering	L1 – The learner might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (...također može dovesti do depresije)
Also, in school are rich and poor children.	Also, there are both rich and poor children in school.	Misordering	L1 – The learner might have literally translated the Croatian sentence (Također, u školi su bogata i siromašna djeca)
In my opinion , I think students should have limits...	I think (that) students should have limits...	Addition	Overgeneralization/ignorance of rule restrictions – the learner is aware of the phrase but does not know how to use it
They would not need to buy every season new clothes...	They would not need to buy new clothes every season...	Misordering	Ignorance of rule restrictions – time adjunct comes after the object

3.5. Discussion

The error analysis of learners' word order errors shows that learners generally make errors in the placement of adverbials (46.19%). They are followed by subjects (38.59%), verbs (9.24 %) and objects (5.98%). When it comes to the type of the error, misordering (63.59%) is the most common one, followed by omission (23.37%) and addition (13.04%). The results also show that Croatian learners transfer the L1 value of the pro-drop parameter to their L2. That is the main reason there are so many omitted subjects. Also, the error analysis of subject-related errors has shown that the learners have not yet fully mastered the formulation of questions.

Furthermore, there were interlingual, intralingual and unique errors. Interlingual errors are mostly a result of literal translations and transfer of the Croatian [+pro-drop] value to English. When it comes to intralingual errors, a lot of learners ignored rule restrictions or were unaware of them. Some of them also overgeneralized rules or did not know how to apply them. Surprisingly, there were learners who made inexplicable errors such as the omission of the verb that were then marked unique. Moreover, the fact that English has a relatively fixed word order seems to have troubled Croatian learners, especially when it comes to objects and adverbials. They placed objects in the initial position and ignored the rules of adverbial placement.

4. Conclusion

This research was conducted in order to identify and categorize the most common word order errors Croatian EFL learners make in their writing. Furthermore, its aim was to see whether learners would transfer the Croatian [+pro-drop] value to English. The corpus of 100 L2 essays from the A level of the state school-leaving exams was compiled and an error analysis of learners' errors was conducted.

The results were divided in 4 categories; subject, verb, object and adverbials. Complements were not included since there were not as many as to justify any relevant analysis. Each of these categories was further divided according to the type of the error; misordering, omission and addition. It turned out that the majority of learners made errors in the adverbial placement. These errors are followed by errors related to subjects, verbs and objects. Moreover, the results show that there were learners who transferred Croatian [+pro-drop] value to English. Also, learners made interlingual, intralingual and unique errors.

However, this research is not to be taken as completely reliable. There are several limitations to this research that have to be considered. Firstly, both the number of essays and the number of errors that were analyzed are relatively small. Secondly, this study does not take learners' grades into account and they can certainly play a major role in both number and types of errors made. Furthermore, error analysis was carried out by only one person. The results and the explanation of errors would maybe be different if more people analyzed these errors. Also, the study included only learners at the intermediate level. Nonetheless, this study can serve as a guideline for Croatian teachers when it comes to teaching word order.

In addition, further implications of this study include research on word order errors at different knowledge levels or in speech. Grades are also a factor that could be taken into consideration when doing further research.

To conclude, word order has a significant role in SLA. Therefore, it has been an inevitable part of many studies. Furthermore, errors should not be seen as obstacles that hinder learning, but rather as a device that learners use and from which they can learn. Also, this research provides an insight into what kind of errors Croatian ESL learners make when it comes to word order. It can lead teachers to a better understanding of the strategies learners use and serve as a guideline in the foreign language classroom.

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