

A Study Based on Writing Errors in Changing the English Direct Simple Past Declarative Sentences into Indirect Speech Past Perfect Form

In English grammar, direct and indirect speech is needed because people can report or share their statements or thoughts to other people especially when they communicate between each other. Thus this study focuses on the errors made by the 50 randomly selected Management level students in Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management, Colombo Campus after a pilot test in order to discover the writing errors in changing direct simple past declarative sentences into indirect past perfect form and find solutions to overcome this problem based on the perfect solution. Primary and secondary data were collated for this research. This research used descriptive quantitative study. In collecting the data, at the beginning of the teaching programme a questionnaire was given to find the reasons for the writing errors in changing the English direct simple past declarative sentences into indirect speech past perfect form. A pretest was conducted on changing the English direct simple past declarative sentences into indirect speech past perfect form to check the knowledge and understanding of students. After the pretest lectures were conducted to teach how to use past perfect form in reported speech. The below mentioned written corrective feedback methods were utilized to evaluate the effect of lecturing; direct written corrective feedback, indirect written corrective feedback, metalinguistic written corrective feedback and focused written corrective feedback. After utilizing the most appropriate feedback methods, an immediate test was conducted to measure their progress. Finally a delay test was conducted to check if the students did less number of errors. Further previous researches, research reports, text books, encyclopaedias, journals, dictionaries and websites were referred to gain the theoretical knowledge and understanding of errors. The types of errors identified with regard to changing the English direct simple past declarative sentences into indirect speech past perfect form are categorized as follows while the main focus was on sequencing of tenses; errors in sequencing of simple past tense into indirect speech past perfect form, errors in changing auxiliary verbs, pronouns, possessive adjectives, determiners and adverbials of time and place. The students found reported speech very difficult as it involves a lot of elements which caused students to feel confused and make many errors. Making numerous errors of reported speech is not good as it might cause serious consequences in their industrial training. In addition, reported speech often appears in their assessments, final tests and placement tests. Results suggest that grammar rules of reported speech were not followed when the students made attempts to answer. Insufficient familiarity with the complexity of English grammatical rules and their usage, lack of awareness of the exceptions to the rule, carelessness of grammar rules, less usage and less exposure to fluent English were the main reasons for the students to make the above mentioned errors. Amalgamation of deductive and inductive methods appropriately to teach reported speech is highly recommended to give a better understanding to the students for avoiding mistakes. These findings will be vital for Assistant English Lecturers, English Instructors and English teachers to improve their methods and approaches in teaching grammar, curriculum developers to revise their curricular and grammar text book writers to enrich and alter their grammar tasks.

Keywords: Direct Simple Past

Indirect Past Perfect

Declarative Sentences

Descriptive Quantitative

Corrective Feedback Methods