



An Error Analysis of Reported Speech Made by Korean Students

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Abstract: This paper focuses on some particular aspects of reported speech and analyses the common mistakes in using Reported Speech by Korean students. The authors aim to find out the common errors and then suggest some possible solutions to them. Error analysis has also provided insights about the second language acquisition process, which results in major changes in teaching practices. This leads to a greater understanding of the difficulties that Korean students, who aim to study English as a second language in learning English grammar.

Keywords: Errors, Reported Speech, Direct & Indirect Speech, Students

1. Introduction

Nowadays, English has become an international communication language to access to many fields of human life such as science, technology, trade, communication and research as well. In recent years, there is a considerable increase in Korean learners' need of learning English because they are aware of the importance of English for their job prospect. To the persons who possess, understand and make full use of English, it is considered as a multifunctional key to achieve success in life.

Like many other languages, English language's complexity really makes many Korean students confused. Numerous errors are made during the process of learning the English language because of the differences between two cultures in terms of ways of thinking, literature and learning styles.

Principally, English teaching and learning process cannot be free from mistakes or errors, misinterpretation, misapplication about something that has been learnt (Brown. 1987: 9).

As Spada and Lightbown (2002, p. 167) stated that: "Errors are natural part of language learning. The errors reveal the patterns of learners' developing interlanguage systems- showing where they have over generalized a second language rules or where they have inappropriately transferred the first language rule into the second language."

Korean students, who are studying general English, make mistakes in their production of the second language. The

errors can be seen in different parts. For instance, in syntax, Korean students made wrong use of prepositions, articles as in the following sentences "Does anyone live in the island?" or "Will you have the lunch with me?". Another example is about wrong use of word order in the sentence "Unexpected something happened." and so on.

For the reasons mentioned above, the author would like to conduct a study dealing with an analysis of errors committed by the first year students of English major in terms of using reported speech, entitled "An Error Analysis of Reported Speech made by Korean Students"

The aim of this paper is first to identify students' errors and causes leadings to errors in using Reported Speech in English to help learners understand more about its usage. Finally, the paper also tries to find out the solutions to help improving the effects of teaching and learning English.

2. Aims of the Study

The study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

- (1) To identify students' errors in using reported speech in English.
- (2) To find out the causes leading to errors committed by students in using reported speech.
- (3) To point out solutions to help students to avoid the errors.
- (4) To suggest implications for students and teachers during teaching and learning process.

3. Research Questions of the Study

The study is to answer the following questions:

- (1) What types of errors may high school students make in using reported speech?
- (2) What might be the causes leading to the errors?
- (3) What recommendations could be made so as to avoid the errors in using reported speech?

4. Methods of the Study

The main method employed in this study is survey method. A group of 50 Korean students are involved in the survey. The errors collected in written tasks, particularly five tasks done by the students within 50 minutes are analyzed, classified and counted to see how often they occur and look for their causes. The short interview is conducted right after the students hand in their papers. All data are analyzed and conducted under theoretical knowledge of errors and error analysis.

5. Theoretical Background

5.1. Direct Speech

If you want to write what someone has said, the simplest way is to repeat the exact words that they had used in quotation marks (“...”). This is called ‘direct speech’.

“I really enjoyed the meal,” he said.

She went upstairs and shouted, “Time to get up!”

If you mention the speaker at the end of the sentence, and do not say he or she, you usually reverse the order of the subject and the verb. For example:

“It’s much too cold to swim,” said Frank.

“Go back to your room,” said her mother.

5.2. Indirect Speech

You can also report what someone has said without using quotation marks. This is called ‘indirect speech’. The usual way of doing this is to use a clause which begins with + (that). For example:

“I’m tired!”

He said he was tired. OR He said that he was tired.

That is more common in written English and in formal spoken English.

5.3. Changing from Direct to Indirect Speech

When changing from direct to indirect speech, you need to change the grammar in certain ways.

Verb tense forms usually need to change. In most cases, you change the present tense into the past tense.

She said, “I am staying at the Chelsea Hotel.”

She said that she was staying at the Chelsea Hotel.

If the direct speech is already in the past tense, you need to put the verb even further back in time, using had. This applies to both past tense and present perfect forms of the verb.

He said, “I came by bus.”

He said that he had come by bus.

She said, “I’ve definitely seen John recently”.

She said that she had definitely seen John recently.

However, you do not use this rule if the verb in the direct speech already uses had.

She said, “I had given up hope of seeing him again.”

She said that she had given up hope of seeing him again.

The correct relationship between the verbs in the reporting clause and the verb in the reported clause is called the ‘sequence of tenses’.

If you report something that someone said, which is still true now, you do not need to change the tense of the verb.

“I want to get married.”

She said she wants to get married.

“Blue’s my favourite colour.”

She said that blue’s her favourite colour.

If the direct speech contains will, shall, or may, these also need to change.

will → would; shall → should; may → might

She said, “I will see you soon.”

She said that she would see us soon.

Would, should, could, might, and must do not change.

She said, “I could visit him on Thursday.”

She said she could visit him on Thursday.

You also need to change certain personal pronouns. I and you have to be changed to he and she, unless the original people are still taking part in the conversation. Similarly, my and your need to be changed to his and her.

Mary said to John, “I saw your cat.”

Mary said that she had seen your cat. (if the person who says this is talking to John)

Mary said that she had seen his cat. (if the person who says this is not talking to John)

You also need to change times and places which depend on the speaker’s point of view.

He said, “I saw the car here yesterday.”

He said that he’d seen the car there the day before.

In this case here becomes there because you are in a different place, and yesterday becomes the day before because you are now speaking at a later time.

Similarly, now becomes then, last week becomes the week before, two months ago becomes two months before, tomorrow becomes the next day, and so on. Of course, if the time phrase does not depend on the speaker’s point of view, it can be used without change.

He said, “I bought the car in November 1996.”

He said he had bought the car in November 1996.

5.4. Errors in Language Learning Process

Errors play an important role in English learning process because committing and analyzing errors will help learners realize and try to avoid them better.

According to Corder (1975), an error is referred to as a linguistic form that is either superficially deviant or inappropriate in terms of the target language.

According to “Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics” by Richard et al, error is considered as

“the uses of a linguistic item (e.g. a word, a grammatical item, a speech act, etc.) in a way in which a fluent or native speaker of language regards as showing faulty or incomplete learning”.

A lot of definitions of errors have been given due to various standards. From those, the writer may suggest another definition “errors are what the second language learners’ produce, which are unacceptable, unnatural and faulty to native speaker in the particular context”.

5.5. Error Analysis

Error analysis has served as foundation for language learning and teaching approaches. Error analysis has been taken into considerations by linguists and methodologists. By the late 1960s, it had become a favorable paradigm for studying second language acquisition, an acceptable alternative to behaviorism.

According to Chomsky, language acquisition was not a product of habit formation, but rather one of rule formation learners are exposed to the rules of the target language from hypothesis about them, and apply them to produce a target language utterance. In this process, learners would commit errors and they would modify their hypotheses so that their

utterances would increasingly conform to the target language. Definitions of error analysis have been presented by a lot of linguists and grammarians.

Cook (1993) also argues that error analysis is “a methodology of dealing with data rather than a theory of acquisition”

6. Results

6.1. Multiple-Choice Questions

In Task 1, five questions are given and students can get one point for one correct answer. Wrong choice or no choice is not marked. On the parameter of 5 points, student’s task is considered “pass” if it has 3 points and upwards. 13 out of 50 students pass with the score ranging from 3 to 4 points, making up 26%. No students get full 5 points or zero.

The point of non-pass ranges from 1 to 2 points, taking account of 74%. It is obvious that the Korean students fail to use reported speech in different contexts. The result is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Students’ performance in doing task 1.

Marks	Non-pass			Pass		
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Numbers & Percentage	0 (0%)	19 (38%)	18 (36%)	12 (24%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Total	37 (74%)			13 (26%)		

6.2. Rearrangement Task

Task 2 is a kind of reordering exercises. Four jumbled sentences are given to check how students use different structures with reported speech and their possible positions. One point is scored for each correct answer. No points are given to the students with no response or incomplete

sentences. A student’s task is considered “pass” if it can reach a half of correct sentences and upwards. On the parameter of four points, 48 out of 50 students (96%) pass the test with the score ranging from three to four points. No students get zero and one point. Most of the students (41) achieve the full point of four. Only two students fail to do this task with two points. The table below described the result:

Table 2. Students’ performance in doing task 2.

Marks	Non-pass			Pass	
	0	1	2	3	4
Numbers & Percentage	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	7 (14%)	41 (82%)
Total	2 (4%)			48 (96%)	

6.3. Paraphrasing Task

Task 3 is much more challenging for the students in comparison with task 1 and task 2. The students are asked to rewrite the sentences with given words and phrases in certain contexts. This task includes 5 English sentences; in which if the students produce one meaningful sentence, they will have one point. They can pass the test if they get 3 marks and upwards.

No point is given to any wrong sentences or no answer. As can be seen from the table below, nearly a half of students (48%) are scored “pass”. No students reach the maximum score of five points. 52% of the students are considered “non-pass” with the score ranging from zero to two points. It is clear that students have a lot of difficulties in transforming the sentences into reported speech and get trouble in collocation patterns. The result is illustrated in the table below:

Table 3. Students’ performance in doing task 3.

Marks	Non-pass			Pass		
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Numbers & Percentage	4 (8%)	13 (26%)	9 (18%)	21 (42%)	3(6%)	0 (0%)
Total	26 (52%)			24 (48%)		

6.4. Translation Task

Task 4 is merely a Korean English translation exercise, which really challenges high school students because they have to be aware of not only reported speech use in English but also corresponding phrases in Korean.

This task consists of 5 questions for translation; each correct answer is scored one point. The difficulty of the task

is shown by the modest number of passed students. On the parameter of 6 points, only 27 out of 50 students pass with the score of 3 points and upwards, occupying 54%. No student could reach the full score of 5 points. 23 out of 50 students (46%) are evaluated “non-pass” with their score varied from zero to 2 points. Details are demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Students' performance in doing task 4.

Marks	Non-pass			Pass		
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Numbers & Percentage	5 (10%)	8 (16%)	10 (20%)	15 (30%)	12 (24%)	0 (0%)
Total	23 (46%)			27 (54%)		

6.5. Error Judgment and Correction Task

This task is a kind of production exercise. Students are required to recognize errors in using reported speech in particular contexts and then suggest appropriate substitutions. The task includes 5 sentences, each correct judgment is scored 1 point. No point is marked for any

wrong judgments and incorrect substitutions. This task is rather challenging. 52% of the students with the score of 3 points and upwards pass. Four of them get full score of 5 points (taken up to 8%). No students get zero and non-pass students from 1 to 2 points reach 24 (48%). Table 5 displays the details.

Table 5. Students' performance in doing task 5.

Marks	Non-pass			Pass		
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Numbers & Percentage	0 (0%)	9 (18%)	15 (30%)	12 (24%)	8 (16%)	4 (8%)
Total	24 (48%)			26 (52%)		

6.6. Errors and Their Causes

After collecting the results, errors are explained and evaluated with finding out their causes, which lead students to fail in using reported speech during the process of learning.

Type 1: Interlingual errors

As can be seen clearly in the task “Translation Task”, many students cannot do it correctly because of the interference of the mother tongue.

For example: The students translate the sentence “그 애가 어제밤 나한테 전화했었다고 했어” as follows:

She said phone me last night.

No students write as: She said she phoned me the night before.

Type 2: Over-generalization

Errors occur when the students creates a deviant structure on the basis of their experience of previously-learnt one in the target language.

For instance:

He said me if he could pick me up. (He asked me if he could pick me up.).

Type 3: Ignorance of rule restrictions

This phenomenon belongs to over-generalization, and it happens when the learners fail to observe the restrictions.

For example:

He said to me that he would lend me a red pen the next day

(1)

He told to me that he would lend me a red pen the next day

(2)

The learners think that the second sentence has the same structure to the first sentence, so he/she applies the rule of the first sentence to the second one: “said to”- “told to”

When reporting the commands, most of the students typically make mistakes with the form of both tell and say as follows:

Peter said me to sit down.

Or Peter told to me to sit down.

Type 4: Incomplete application of rules

There are too many rules in reporting others' utterances or words. Therefore, all the students cannot avoid making errors when they apply their theoretical knowledge to deal with the tasks. A lot of students have difficulty with the inverted word order and the use of if / whether for yes/no questions:

“Can I start early tomorrow? He said.

He asked could he start work the following day.

They also commonly make errors when reporting questions with do, did and does in the following example:

“Did you have a good day?” She asked.

She asked me if I did have a good day.

She asked to me if I did have a good day.

Or “When did you arrive?” Lan asked.

Lan asked when did you arrive.

(Lan asked me when I arrived.)

Most of the students violate the back-shifting of the tenses because there is a variety of English tenses with the back-shifting rules for each tense, which makes the students confused and fail in their application. In addition, they don't use the past form correctly, especially in the negative and in regard to auxiliary verbs and often confuse the past simple and past perfect. As a result, they are wrong when reporting the present verbs into the past simple verbs and even reporting the past-simple verbs into the past participles.

For instance:

"Did you have a nice weekend together last week?" She asked.

She asked if we did had a nice weekend together the week before.

"You don't tell me the truth." I said to him

I told him that he didn't told me the truth.

Type 5: Hypercorrection

This kind of errors is caused by both over-application of the general rule of tense change in reported speech and by lack of awareness of the exceptions to the rule. The general rule is that what would be present tense in direct speech becomes past tense in reported speech. For example:

She said, "I LIKE the weather."

She said that she LIKED the weather.

However, there are exceptions to the rule. For instance, when an action is constant, expresses an eternal truth, or refers to religious verities, the verb isn't inflected for tense in reported speech. For example, it is perfectly legitimate to write:

He said their son LIVES in London (if he still lives there

She said they HAVE WRITTEN to her many times (if it's possible that they will continue to write).

However, most of the students tend to be misguided by insufficient familiarity with the complexity of grammatical rules. When they deal with the task, they often commit errors like this:

He said he believed God existed.

It should be written as He said he believes God exists because for religious people, God can't or won't die and the man still believes in God.

Another example is that many students write: He said the sun rose in the East. As far as we know, the sun rises in the East is an eternal, unchangeable truth. Therefore, the sentence should be He said the sun rises in the East.

Another exception to the rule is that the original tense in direct speech is often retained if an action has not yet occurred at the time of reporting it, as in "she said the national debt WILL [not WOULD] be eliminated in 2015."

In addition, if the reporting verbs are put in present tenses, we do not change the verb tense in the indirect speech. In reality, some of the students rarely remember this note and they are easy to consider every sentence as the same.

For instance:

"We are coming here next week", he says.

He says that they were coming there the following week.

(He said that they are coming there the following week.)

Type 6: Misanalysis

It is the common kind of errors that the students are easy to commit. These errors results from the wrong process of analyzing the information and understand the whole sentence. As a result, they changed the pronouns, possessives, object pronouns in the direct speech into those in reported speech inappropriately.

For example:

+ "What are you doing, John?" She asked.

She asked John what you were doing.

+ "My brother has written 5 letters this week." He said to me.

He told me that my brother had written 5 letters that week.

+ "We didn't tell you the truth", said they.

They said they hadn't told you the truth.

Type 7: Wrong use of reporting verbs

There are too many other verbs we can use apart from said, told and asked. The choice of reporting verbs depends on the whole meaning of the sentence. The students have to understand the speaker's implication before reporting the speech. For example, the sentence may imply an invitation, an advice, a command, a suggestion, an exclamation, an apology, a warning, an offer or a promise, etc. Therefore, the students are often confused and fail to use an appropriate reporting verb for each particular situation and context.

For example:

"Don't forget to post the letter" my mother told me.

My mother told me not to forget to post the letter.

This sentence is not wrong but it should be written as follows:

My mother reminded me to post the letter.

Type 8: Wrong use of collocation patterns

Most of the students get trouble in using the structures of the reporting verb collocations because they have to remember and learn by heart a variety of structures in various categories. Moreover, some reporting verbs may appear in more than one of the following groups.

For instance:

"Why don't you write a letter to them?" he said.

He suggested me to write a letter to them.

(It must be: He suggested that I should write a letter to them.)

"I will never be here any more" she said. She promised not be there anymore.

(It should be: She promised not to be there anymore.)

7. Major Findings and Implications

7.1. Major Findings

As mentioned above, after students' errors are counted, classified with their possible causes, the following findings have been made:

Students taking part in the survey test commit a great number of errors. With classification of actual errors, the total errors found in students' task performance reach 710

errors belonging to both semantic and morpho-syntactic categories. In reality, students fail to use reported speech in different situations and contexts, which is illustrated by a large number of errors in paraphrasing and translation tasks.

Among 8 types of errors explored from the real data covering both semantic and morpho-syntactic categories, type 4, type 6 and type 8 are counted with highest frequency, details are presented as follows:

Type 4. Incomplete application of rules with 227 errors found makes up 32%.

Type 6: Misanalysis with 172 errors takes up to 24%.

Type 8: Wrong use of collocation patterns with 92 errors taking account of 13%.

Other types are also committed but with lower frequency: the lowest frequency found in type 3: Hypercorrection with only 13 errors occupies 6%.

In terms of the causes, the following findings have been pointed that after the necessary analysis of error causes, basing on theoretical background and the results of the short interview, it can be seen clearly that both interlingual and intralingual causes lead students to a great deal of error commitment, incomplete application of rules, misanalysis and students' poor language knowledge are main sources. In addition, responsibility for students' errors is attached to other causes such as ignorance of rule restrictions, hypercorrection, overgeneralization, etc.

As a result, Korean students face lots of problems and challenges using reported speech and commit a variety of errors. These errors mainly result from their poor knowledge of English language or their confusion about various uses and structures.

7.2. Implications for Teaching and Learning Reported Speech in English

Generally, second language English learners have considerable trouble learning to use reported speech due to the number of grammatical elements that need to be taken into account. It is important therefore to present reported speech in a clear and effective context. This may not be easy in a classroom of adult students from a variety of different backgrounds, with different personal and professional interests, and different motivations for learning English. Furthermore, reported speech is something that is usually only used once or twice in any given situation and so finding a context to work on reported speech in depth is difficult and does not reflect the way language is used outside the classroom. Therefore, it may prove more effective to present reported speech in a variety of situations, rather than in a single context.

Matching the teaching style to learning style preferences present in the class may also be a problem. It would be best to match content and teaching style to the particular learning style and needs of each student, as students are better able to learn if teaching methods match their preferred learning styles. However, in classroom situations it will be necessary to adopt a wide variety of approaches, incorporating different cognitive learning strategies, to accommodate individual learning styles.

The class texts are also a problem. In most cases, class texts focus predominantly on the main reporting verbs say, tell, and ask. There is a shortage of material focusing on the wide variety of reporting verbs used in English. Therefore, finding interesting material and activities that relate to the learners language needs and interests is a real challenge.

What's more, because there are so many areas that can potentially cause the learners problems, it is not always easy to manage a classroom. Therefore, teaching reported speech can turn into an exercise in classroom management skills.

The following points are therefore only general guidelines applicable to a range of contexts:

7.3. Engage the Students, Provide a Context, and Identify a Genuine Need

Firstly, it is important to start any grammar lesson in the right way, which means avoiding openings such as, "Today we are going to study the use of reported speech.", or "Please open your books to page..." Instead, a far more useful approach is to establish a clear context that the students can relate to, which highlights a genuine need for the new grammar. In general, any context that provides the students with an opportunity to talk about their lives is sure to work well. A context I have used successfully is that of organizing a night out or a class holiday.

7.4. Involve the Students

Secondly, try to involve the students as much as possible throughout the learning process to keep interest and motivation high: elicit the target language, ask questions, and have students write on the board. In this way the teacher is talking with the students, rather than to them, and is a part of the learning process rather than the focus. Adopting a participative, student centered approach to learning promotes learner autonomy, which is a necessary ingredient in the language learning process.

7.5. Provide a Lot of Examples Rather Than a Rule

Thirdly, provide a lot of examples as it will be easier for the students to see the pattern. In this way, the students will be better able to learn inductively through the process of discovery, which requires a deeper level of cognitive processing, and therefore aids the learning process.

7.6. Provide a Lot of Opportunity to Practice

Fourthly, it is important to provide a lot of opportunity for practice and to accommodate the different learning styles with a balance of activities that focus on the form, function, and meaning of the different reporting verbs, as well as the different skills; there should also be a gradual shift from passive to productive skills in the classroom as passive skills can be focused on by the students for homework.

8. Conclusion

The study is a full treatment of problems in using English reported speech. Errors are collected from written task performance of students on theoretical foundation of an interview on English reported speech to test what types of errors students may commit with assistance of predictable errors. During the time of conducting the study, the author follows all necessary procedures. First, errors are collected, counted, and then they are categorized into different types and analyzed to find out the causes. The findings of the study have pointed out that students really have a lot of difficulties in using reported speech in English and commit nearly most of the errors predicted in previous sections.

With regard to error causes, it has been found incomplete application of rules, misanalysis and wrong use of collocation patterns are the main sources. From the major findings, implications for teaching and learning English reported speech have been provided to help students for better learning and avoiding errors.

Recommendations

In fact, the study cannot cover all aspects of errors in using English reported speech and all their usages. The research actually has focused on errors in using reported speech in English in written tasks without regarding to errors in speaking and other skills.

In terms of participants, the number of subject group is just 50 students. It is promised to have more precise results if the survey is participated by greater number of students and is carried out at different universities.

For what mentioned above, the author hopes that it is beneficial for those who concern in this area of English language and wish to go further on reported speech.

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