A Review of Errors in the Journal Abstract

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This study examines 29 journal abstracts that were completed reviews for publication in the year 2012. It was done to investigate the number (percentage) of abstracts that involved with errors, the most erroneous part of the abstract, and the types and frequency of errors. Also the purpose expanded to compare the results with those of the previous study done on error analysis of abstracts in 2007. This comparison was to check if the corrective feedback on the abstract in the past several years played any role in reducing errors. The parts which had most errors were methods (79%) and results (76%), respectively. Throughout all four parts, purpose, methods, results, and conclusion, using the wrong words (expressions) was the most troublesome type of errors. Preposition errors, omission and addition of words along with some miscellaneous errors decreased compared to the results of 2007 study. Giving corrective feedback on the abstract during the past years might have helped the researchers in nursing profession reduce errors since some of them continuously submitted research papers to the same journal and some others may have referenced the previously published abstract prior to their submission. It is advised to provide L2 learners with corrective feedback so that they can notice, understand errors and build cognitive error correction processes.

Key Words: abstract, types and frequency of errors, corrective feedback

1 Introduction

With an increasing number of new nursing colleges throughout the entire regions of Korea, the total number of nursing institutions in the peninsula reached 202 colleges. Thereby, more nursing professors have been recruited for newly accredited institutions and a large number of nursing students have been enrolled all over the country, both national and private schools. Also in recent years, more nurses have applied for Ph.D. programs than ever to be eligible for college faculties. Such an increase in the number of nursing college has partly to do with the longevity as it reaches 84.5 for women and 77.6 for men (according to the Statistics Korea as of 2011 official data, the most recent figures available), respectively. Aging society certainly calls for health related

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concerns and higher demands for more health care.

Vying for faculty position and getting ready for staff evaluation, the demand for professors' research papers has gone up. Further reasons of more research studies may lie in applying for government grants and research funds in the healthcare field.

It is obvious that abstracts are to be written in a clear, accurate, succinct and formal way so that they present the "gist of the article in a precise and maximally efficient way" as Ventola (1997) suggested. However, the errors in L2 writing are inevitable in some cases and difficult to overcome for many L2 learners.

When L2 writers make errors in class, they usually expect to be specifically told of their errors as to where and how to be corrected. In some cases, however, they are not even aware they made errors. Without corrective form or feedback, even some writers who are considered to have decent level of proficiency feel at unease let alone beginner-level learners.

Theories in language acquisition have taken different views on learners' errors and corrections. Behaviorists claimed that errors are detrimental to learning processes and correcting them is necessary. On the other hand, those who are called nativists viewed differently. Their views on Universal Grammar propose that the ability to learn grammar is hard-wired into the brain suggesting that linguistic ability manifests itself without being taught. And interactionists emphasized that errors can be corrected through more competent interlocutors' feedback arising in their interaction with learners.

Studies on written corrective feedback have increased but not as much as those on oral feedback and the reason may have been due to the fact that oral communicative competence has more highly been emphasized than writing. But this phenomenon is gradually changing. Compared to the past, say twenty or thirty years, current English education is focused on all four skills of the language. Therefore, writing does not seem to be in the periphery of teaching English anymore.

Though the writing skill is considered important and more emphasis is being placed than ever, producing flawless research papers is still long way to go for some Koreans who have shunned English for some time and those who are not comfortable with the language. It is essential to know what types of errors are frequently made by L2 learners to fully understand ways to reduce or avoid them. It is certainly noteworthy to look into what causes the errors and what to do with them so that the instructors can better teach learners to minimize the errors.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1) To see which areas of the abstract have more errors
2) To learn the nature and frequency of the errors in the abstract
3) To compare the results with the study done in 2007 on 26 abstracts (Lee, 2007) to see if providing years of corrective feedback has contributed to

fewer errors

4) To suggest ways to minimize errors.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Error analysis

In the ESL context, speaking and writing in the way native English users do are challenging. To provide the learners and ESL writers with the appropriate teaching instruction in writing, it is important to know the types, classifications and frequencies of errors (Ellis, 1985). There have been numerous studies on the topic of error analysis (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982; James, 1998; Jung, 2006; Kim, 1998; Park, 2005; Ryoo, 1992; Schachter, 1974).

Ellis (1985) stated the importance of considering whether the sentences are 'overtly idiosyncratic' or 'covertly idiosyncratic.' In some cases, as many scholars pointed out, errors are due to the first language transfer. Among the four major factors that affect errors suggested by Brown (2000), two kinds of transfer are the sources of errors. The first, 'interlingual transfer,' involves the assumption that many errors result from native language interference and second, 'intralingual transfer,' is largely resulted in overgeneralization within the target language itself. The other two factors are context of learning and communication strategies. Brown further claimed that errors are possible when teachers give misleading explanations and learners obtain faulty presentation of structures in textbooks. He called this 'context of learning.' Fourth sources of errors are 'communication strategies' employed by learners and they also induce errors.

2.2 Corrective feedback

Truscott (1996) claimed that written corrective form should be abandoned in L2 writing instruction as it is not only ineffective but even harmful to development of L2 implicit knowledge. On the other hand, some studies such as Ellis et al. (2008) and Sheen (2007) looked into what types of written corrective forms are more beneficial than others. It is linked to a question of what and how much information is to be required in corrective form for its optimal efficacy. Written corrective form is explicit and sufficient to signal the occurrence of error irrespective of its type. Direct corrective form shows the error's location and its corresponding correct form.

Ellis et al. (2008) proved that focused direct corrective form was beneficial in the acquisition of English articles by L2 learners. Here the main argument is that attention to L2 grammatical features is a necessary path to their acquisition. Attention involves conscious awareness which occurs at two different levels according to Schmidt (2001). One is the level at which the learner 'notices' a new form and the gap between his/her interlanguage output

and target language form. The other level refers to 'understanding' rules and patterns involving an L2 form. Schmidt (2001) and Sheen (2010) argued that understanding requires more complex cognitive processing and leads to greater L2 learning in comparison with noticing.

This paper tries to examine if recent years of providing corrective feedback on the abstract influenced on the decrease in the errors by comparing the results with the 2007 error analysis done on 26 abstracts.

2.3 Accuracy

Accuracy is one of the three concepts of syntactic complexity, accuracy, and fluency that have appeared as measures to assess second/foreign language development (Skehan, 2009). This concept is considered to comprise distinct variables to measure the language learners' linguistic performance that can be separately measured under various second language–learning contexts (Housen & Kuiken, 2009).

According to Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998), accuracy is based on the errors in grammar, vocabulary, and complexity referred to the use of simple and complex clauses. Foster and Skehan (1996) defined it as "freedom from error" and Hammerly (1991) and Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998) defined it as "the degree of deviancy from a particular norm.

3 Method

3.1 Data

For the current study, a total of 29 abstracts (11 in May, 9 in August and 9 in December issues of 2012 nursing journal) were examined. These abstracts, already reviewed by the editorial board members of the Korean Journal of Occupational Health Nursing and approved to be published, were emailed to the leading researcher of the study for abstract reviews. All 29 articles were written by Korean researchers in Korean except the abstracts. The English abstracts were thoroughly reviewed with corrective feedback for each error and emailed back to the researchers for final editing prior to the publication. Then all the 29 abstracts were analyzed on a master sheet for error analysis and compared with the results of the previous study to see the differences.

3.2 Data analysis procedure

The first batch of abstracts was emailed to the leading researcher in April, the second, in July and the last in November 2012. All abstracts were written in accordance with four distinct parts, purpose, methods, results, and conclusion. Each part of the abstract was reviewed in terms of the number (percentage) of sentences and frequencies and types of errors. Each error was categorized in the

same way it was done in 2007 for comparison of both results of the studies except for one particular category as informal and (or) too descriptive expression.

4 Results and Discussions

Every purpose was written in just one-sentence-only for all 29 abstracts, methods, one to four sentences (mean 2.2 sentences), results, two to five, (mean 3.4 sentences) and conclusion, one to two sentences (mean 1.3 sentences). Eleven out of 29 abstracts (38%) made at least one error in the purpose, 23 (79%) in the methods, 22 (76%) in the results, and 18 (62%) in the conclusion. Table 1 shows the number of sentences in each part and number of abstracts that contained errors.

Table 1. Number of Sentences and Abstracts that Involved with Errors

Part	N. of S. (average)	N. of Abstract with Errors(%)
Purpose	1.0	11(38%)
Methods	2.2	23(79%)
Results	3.4	22(76%)
Conclusion	1.3	18(62%)

N. of S.(number of sentences)

The errors in each part were further categorized into types and frequencies in the similar way that was done in 2007 with slight differences. Omission of necessary words and addition of unnecessary words were separately categorized in the past but treated as one type of error for this study. Also informal expression and (or) too descriptive expression were marked as another type of error which was not separately categorized in 2007. For all the errors, the types and frequencies were recapped on a master sheet.

The most commonly occurred errors in the purpose were using wrong words and prepositions in 5 (29%) cases each followed by 2 (12%) of wrong word order, and 2 (12%) of word omission and addition. The other errors were an informal expression, an article and a plural error, respectively. Among the 39 errors made in the methods, the most troublesome errors were the wrong words, word order, article and subject & verb agreement errors. Out of 69 errors in the results, the most erroneous types were wrong words, word omission & addition, subject + verb agreement, prepositions and word order. Of the 32 errors in the conclusion, wrong words were again the most troublesome errors, followed by informal and too descriptive expressions, article and word omission and addition errors. Table 2 shows the types and frequencies of errors in the purpose, methods, results and conclusion.

Table 2. Category & Frequency of Errors in Purpose, Methods, Results & Conclusion

Category of errors	Purpose	Methods	Results	Conclusion
WW, 55(35%)	5(29%)	10(26%)	28(41%)	12(38%)
Prep, 15(10%)	5(29%)	4(10%)	5(7%)	1(3%)
WO, 15(10%)	2(12%)	7(18%)	5(7%)	1(3%)
O & D, 21(13%)	2(12%)	3(8%)	12(17%)	4(13%)
IE, 13(8%)	1(6%)	2(5%)	5(7%)	5(16%)
Pl, 3(2%)	1(6%)	1(3%)	0	1(3%)
Art, 16(10%)	1(6%)	6(15%)	4(6%)	5(16%)
S+V, 13(8%)	0	5(13%)	6(9%)	2(6%)
Misc, 8(5%)	0	3(8%)	4(6%)	1(3%)
Total 157(100%)	17(11%)	39(25%)	69(44%)	32(20%)

WW: wrong words, Prep: preposition error, WO: word order, O & D: word omission and addition, IE: informal or too descriptive expression, Pl: plural error, Art: article error, S+V: subject & verb agreement, Misc: all the other errors such as run-on sentence, voice, and tense errors

The next table shows the types of errors made in these abstracts in the order of occurrence. Using the wrong words was the most commonly occurred.

Table 3. Categorized Errors in the Order of Most Commonly Occurred

Types	Number of occurrence
Wrong words	55 (35%)
Word omission &deletion	21 (13%)
Articles	16 (10%)
Prepositions	15 (10%)
Word order	15 (10%)
Informal (too descriptive)	13 (8%)
S+V agreement	13 (8%)
Miscellaneous	9 (6%)
Total	157 (100%)

Among the four parts of the abstract, it was noted in the results and conclusion that a few informal expressions were explicitly used and some sentences were too descriptive. There was a tendency to elaborate on the results and conclusion of these abstracts.

In the following section, examples of each categorized errors are shown.

1) Errors on the wrong words are as follows:

*Workers were selected through conveniently sampling.
→ The data (or the subjects) were selected through convenience sample.

*These factors explained 49.8% of the nurses stress.
→ These factors accounted for 49.8% of the nurses' stress.

*It had an explanation rate of 28.3%.
→ It accounted for 28.3%.

*The study used based on the data . . .
→ The study was based on the data . . .

*marriage state
→ marital status

*more various
→ more diversified

The word 'data' was mistaken as singular by a number of researchers. And the statistical term, 'convenience sample' was confused with convenient sample or conveniently sampling. Also quite a few studies used 'explain' to indicate 'account for.' 'Marriage state' or 'marriage condition' was incorrectly used for 'marital status.' The word 'various' was used in a comparative form. It was noted that some errors were rooted in the interference from the Korean language.

2) Errors on the word order are as follows:

*nursing staff stress
→ stress of the nursing staff

*Study subject included 103 nurses.
→ The subjects in the study were 103 nurses.

*satisfaction with a part-time worker
→ part-time workers' satisfaction

*higher group of social support
→ social support of the higher group

Some of the above errors also seemed to be influenced by interference.

3) Errors on the preposition are as follows:

*Improvement was made of the scores.
→ Improvement was made on the scores.

*influence of work place violence to anger
→ influence of work place violence on anger

*similar with
→ similar to

*During Sept. to October
→ From September to October

Prepositions are one of the most troublesome areas for L2 learners. Since some of the prepositions are used in a manner of collocation, they are to be acquired through frequent use and accuracy drills of the grammar.

4) Errors on the subject & verb agreement are as follows:

*There was a significant differences.
→There was a significant difference (or 'There were significant differences').

*An effect factor were . . .
→The affective factors were . . . (This sentence was classified into both S+V agreement and wrong words.)

*There were no significant difference.
→ There were no significant differences.

*There were significant improvement.
→ There was significant improvement.

*A sample were recruited,
→A sample was selected. (This sentence was also classified into both S+V agreement and wrong words.)

Subject & verb agreement errors often occur in L2 writing. Accuracy drill practice may help learners to be familiarized with these errors.

5) Errors on the informal expression and/or the too-descriptive are as follows:

*The study was done with an objective of getting information.
→ The study was done with an objective of obtaining information.

*These results from this study might provide information that can be used in improving researches . . .

→ These results might provide information for improving researches . . .
(Or "These results might provide information to improve researches . . .")

*Symptom was little bit lower.
→ Symptom was slightly alleviated (or 'decreased'). (This sentence was also classified into both informal and wrong words.)

For these errors, learners are to be provided with explanations on the different aspects of formal and informal expressions and the fact the abstract should be terse.

6) Errors on the omission of necessary words and addition of unnecessary words are as follows:

*take care the beneficiaries
→ take care of the beneficiaries

*315 people of office workers
→ 315 office workers

*We tried present a basic data. (This sentence contains an article error, too.)
→ We tried to present the basic data.

*assess the level social support
→ assess the level of social support

Often times, necessary words are omitted and unnecessary words are added in L2 writing. The errors shown above can be avoided when basic grammar in writing is reviewed. Drill practice including the above is recommended so that the learners become at ease of the usage.

7) Errors on the article are as follows:

*Mean score was higher than the . . .
→ The mean score was higher than the . . .

*It was the more effective way to improve . . .
→ It was a more effective way to improve . . .

In comparison with the results of the study done on 26 research abstracts in 2007, the current results showed significant decrease in the frequencies of some errors such as prepositions, word omission and addition, article, and other miscellaneous errors. The next table shows the results on the categorized errors

and frequencies in both studies.

Table 4. Comparison of the Current Results with the 2007 Study

Category of errors	Current(N=29)	2007(N=26)
WW	23 (79%)	20 (77%)
Prep	9 (31%)	17 (65%)
WO	6 (21%)	6 (23%)
O & D	6 (21%)	20 (77%)
Art	13 (45%)	15 (58%)
S+V	6 (21%)	6 (23%)
Misc	5 (17%)	20 (77%)

It is understood that corrective intention is critical for its efficacy on L2 acquisition. According to Carroll's (2001) autonomous induction theory, corrective form cannot work for L2 learning if learners do not recognize its corrective function. This is because corrective form is to lead to noticing and understanding when the learner recognizes errors.

As with Jang's (2012) study on the written corrective feedback, findings of the study could help assure language teachers in general and writing instructors in particular that the effect of written corrective feedback is not limited to improving linguistic accuracy of a revised writing text but it also works to further interlanguage development. The study added that the positive effect does not manifest uniformly across corrective feedback types.

5 Conclusion and Implications

This study set out with an aim of looking into the number (percentage) of abstract with errors, most troublesome part of abstract, types and frequencies of errors, and comparing the results with those of the study done in 2007. This comparison was to see if years of providing corrective feedback played any role in reducing errors.

Methods contained most errors (79%), followed by results (76%), conclusion (62%) and the least errors were purpose (38%). The most troublesome errors in the results of the current study were using wrong words (79%), followed by article errors (45%), preposition errors (31%), word order (21%), omission and deletion of words (21%), and miscellaneous errors (17%). However, the results of 2007 showed slight differences: WW (77%), Art (58%), Prep (65%), WO (23%), O&D (77%), and Misc (77%). Preposition errors, omission & deletion of words, and miscellaneous errors were reduced significantly while the rest of the errors were similar in frequency. Since some of the words and phrasal verbs were repeatedly and similarly used in the studies, corrective feedback seemed to play a role in reducing these errors.

Since producing abstracts with minimized errors, if not error-free articles,

is a major concern for L2 researchers, error analysis provides an opportunity to be aware of the types and frequencies of errors and how to help learners with corrective form.

Chaudron (1988) called global errors for the ones that deter conveying the clear message of the statements and suggested they be corrected much earlier than local errors that are less critical in confusing readers. As Hartshorn et al. (2010) pointed out feedback becomes practically manageable because "with a shorter piece of writing, teachers can identify all linguistic errors produced by their students, without overwhelming themselves or their students." Researches including Jang's (2012) study confirmed that written corrective form is beneficial to improving both explicit and implicit knowledge of English article rules, refuting Truscott's (1996) argument against the utility of written corrective form in developing implicit L2 knowledge.

Upon receiving corrective form, learners should pay attention to further cognitive processes for their language acquisition. Therefore, cognitive processing steps involved in corrective form-facilitated L2 acquisition are activated: recognizing corrective force of corrective form, noticing correct form of error, and understanding rules that govern the form (Carroll, 2001).

Learners' capability of revising the original writing text to produce the same text of higher quality was taken as a measure for the writing class's success. Revision was the purpose and object of L2 writing class and treated as a dependent variable in L2 writing studies (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005).

Corrective form research is directly and closely relevant to language pedagogy as corrective form is a pedagogical technique that teachers frequently use in their classrooms. Sheen (2010) pointed out that corrective form is an ideal object of inquiry for researcher-teacher collaboration and constitutes an area of inquiry that can connect theory, research, and practice.

As Ortega (1999) pointed out, linguistic development does not take place at the same rate. Hwang's (2012) study backed Ortega's claim that there are different patterns across language proficiency. Teaching grammar for writing may help L2 writing as they are not separate as independent learning systems. Learners need some sets of knowledge of grammar to write with. Therefore, it is conducive for L2 learners to be given accuracy drill practices in writing courses for the most commonly made errors while they are given writing assignment tasks.

This study has some limitations. First, error analysis was not performed by multiple reviewers and interpretation may have been different from one another. Second, the reduction in the number of errors may not be simple to explain what caused to decrease. It was assumed that providing corrective feedback must have played an important role, however, this alone may not pinpoint the results. However, since a number of researchers continuously submit their research papers to the same journal, the conclusion may not be greatly deviated from the fact. Further studies on a larger sample size may

contribute to a better generalization of the corrective feedback and error analysis.

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Appendix

A. Erroneous Abstracts under Categorized Types on 29 Abstracts

Abstract	WW	Prep	Art	WO	O&A	Pl	S+V
1	o		o		o		
2	o		o				
3	o			o			
4		o	o				
5		o	o			O	o
6	o	o		o			o
7		o	o		o		
8	o	o		o			o
9	o						
10	o						o
11	o						
12	o		o				
13	o				o		
14	o		o	o		O	
15	o		o	o			
16	o		o				
17	o	o			o		
18	o	o					
19	o						
20	o		o				o
21	o	o					
22	o				o	O	
23	o	o					
24	o						
25							
26							
27			o		o	O	
28	o		o	o			
29	o		o				
Total	23	9	13	6	6	4	6

WW (wrong word), Prep (preposition), Art (article), WO (word order), O & A (word omission and addition), Pl (plural), S+V (subject and verb agreement), Misc (all other errors are not included in this table)

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B. Types and Frequencies of Errors in 29 Abstracts

Part	WW	Prep	Art	WO	O&A	Pl	S+V
Purpose	5	5	1	2	2	1	0
Methods	10	4	6	7	3	1	5
Results	28	5	4	5	12	0	6
Conclusion	12	1	5	1	4	1	2
Total	55	15	16	15	21	3	13