A Conversational and Compositional Grid for Freshman University Students II: Application and Analysis*

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Abstract

Previously a tool was designed for the purpose of improving the standard of the sentence production of Freshman University Students with an ESL low level, which assisted them to avoid errors in syntax precision and sentence generation. The lamenting aspect of the previous article is that the tool was not tested for effectiveness. In this article, the results are presented of applying the tool in a class situation. The focus was on problems that beginners experience in a ESL situation regarding syntax in grammar and whether this tool could help them. A project was designed for the students to watch a small video of a robot-"donkey" designed by Boston Dynamics in their online video. The actions of the robot had to be described by them following the instructions of the teacher as to how to use the grid for each sentence. For 2014 spring semester 10 products of students were selected without instructions how to use the syntax tool as compared to 10 products of students for spring semester 2015 in which the tool was mandatory. In both years the students had to know descriptively, procedurally and processionally. The characteristics of the students were listed, namely gender, major, final grade, ranking in team presentation, and listening TOEIC score. The reason the characteristics were brought to the table surrounding the specimens to be investigated is that every specimen can be "weighed" better and it would also permit more interpretation velocity. The errors were listed and the results demonstrated that there are less syntax errors in 2015 than for 2014 but both researchers felt that "Further investigation is needed with a larger sample size". Students were given a questionnaire to indicate their feelings and this was also analyzed. We felt, with reasonable reservation that the Grid has a significant impact on aiding students and that one should continue to improve the current Grid as well as developing Grids for pre-intermediate and advanced students.

1. Introduction

One of the main problems for Korean students is that they struggle to get the order of the words up to standard. In the *digimodernism period* and especially this *new-past future time* (2015) there are still no proper grammars for beginners in English except the traditional grammars that existed before 1940's. Noam Chomsky set the pace for the cognitive approach in linguistics in the 1950's and traditional grammar science basically dried up since that time and the current Beginners in Second Language Education do not have a proper grammar to help them with simple grammatical definitions for simple sentences. For South Korea there is a traditional English grammar written by Chung Chi-Geun originally published in 1961 (정치근. (2009). 1일 1과 100일완성기본영어.서울: 경심사). The Grid tool was designed to help solve this problem for beginners. It was described in a previous article.[1]

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[1]K. van Wyk, "A Conversational and Compositional Grid for Freshman University Students." *International Journal of Language and Linguistics* 2/1 (2015): 54-66. The study was mainly descriptive of the Grid Tool and did not include an applicational example or examples and students response to the exercise.

The limit at that time was the fact that the Grid-tool was not applied to classes in order to evaluate whether it is beneficial or not for ESL learners. While the article was published the Grid tool was then experimented with in a University class setting with more than 150 students. This research will analyze the project of application, the descriptive knowledge, the procedural knowledge, the processional knowledge and finally again procedural knowledge and processional knowledge for the learner that led to the final product. From the whole corpus of nearly 150 a selection at random was made of 10 products for Spring Semester 2015 and at random 10 were selected for spring 2014 to compare the two years on the aspect of the quality of their performances. In this research the difference between the two sets of data or specimens, is that the specimens of 2014 were not subjected to a procedural requirement and processional Grid tool supposedly for raising the level of their syntax production. The 10 specimens of 2015 were subjected to the procedural and processional Grid tool. This research compares sets of specimens, the Grid-fewer groups of 2014 and the Grid group of 2015 to see if the common errors show any differences in the types of variants. The term *variants* refer to the different kinds of errors that students committed during the composition of the paragraph but also during the typing of the handwritten composed paragraph. The research purpose is to investigate whether the Grid made a difference between the kind of errors students committed in 2014 generally and those of 2015. The error count is statistically evaluated with only a small random sample from each corpus for the year 2014 and 2015. It is intended to be a pilot study that may lead to a major investigation. The hope is expressed that should the data show promising results that the tool can be computerized as an app in such a way to assist beginners with their ordering in sentences. Further development of a Grid II for pre-intermediate students and Grid III for Advanced students is a consideration at this stage. After the analysis, the researchers also want to analyze the subjective psychological emotion of the students who did the study.[2] They were asked to fill out a questionnaire after the submission of the product to express their feelings about the meaning of the Grid and its application for them. At the end conclusions will be made regarding most aspects of the utilization of the Grid for syntax improvement in an ESL low-beginner situation.

2. Literature Review

It is said by David Y. W. Lee and Sylvia Xiao Chen (2009) that research on learner corpora is still in its infancy stage as compared to research on native-speaker corpora.[3] Our investigation of the learner corpora is thus standing within this infancy stage of the research on students' corpora analysis. Literature dealing with the phenomena of paragraph writing is served from a number of avenues. There is the focus on the role of the teacher in letting students work almost mechanical without emphasis on creativity.

While this article was published the Tool was applied in a University setting at Kyungpook National University for the Spring semester. This article is a description and analysis of that ESL experience with the help of prof. Andy Chung, a colleague in the Department of Liberal Education.

[2] It is of course necessary for us to not design education by emotions of the clients for that will mean that the teaching trade is navigation less and has nothing to contribute and serve only to be fire-extinguishers and not educators of propriety and good values. If the educators of a society focus on the subjective view of the students for their curriculum planning, then it is a sign that the educators are not educated enough since the sciences of each kind has certain requirements that has to be fulfilled regardless if it is entertaining or not. Oversensitivity about the audience and their likes or dislikes is not proper education but education manipulated by the audience. The Grid for example, is a necessary requirement in all languages whether the students like it or not. Proper sentence production will mean that the Grid was used, even if it was their own mental lexicon or mental grammar that happened to be the same. The Grid may have in future smartphone designs funny pop-ups in an app for right or wrong answers that makes the audience giggle while using it, but that the Grid will be necessary, explicitly or implicitly, is a fact.

[3] "That research on learner corpora is still relatively in its infancy compared to research on native-speaker corpora, and it is precisely such research on the characteristics of learner writing that is most immediately applicable to pedagogical contexts" (David Y. W. Lee *, Sylvia Xiao Chen [2009], Making a bigger deal of the smaller words: Function words and other key items in research writing by Chinese learners. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 18, 281–296, especially page 281). "Corpus-based research is especially strong in dealing with lexico-grammar, and research on learner corpora has the potential to contribute to the pedagogical approach of form-focused instruction. Whether the form-focused approach is used reactively as language problems crop up in the learning process or proactively through design and advance planning (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Long & Robinson, 1998; Nassaji, 1999), it can have a positive role in teaching L2 writing if it is learner centered and needs based. This is supported by a growing body of research (see Ellis, 2001; Fotos & Hinkel, 2007; Spada & Lightbown, 2008 for overviews)."

The issue is whether the insistence for the students to use the provided handout and limitation within a confined set of option, does not encourage student writers' transgressive intertextuality? They hardly go beyond what is provided and the question is whether this is not just another case of the early stages of patchwriting? The pedagogical practice of the handouts and the donkey in this class exercise may be considered that it implicated in students behavior of the final product. What was emphasized in this exercise is the reproduction of authority of the tool and handouts over self-production. It is definitely a case that the student in this exercise is like an artist selecting colors and here and there coloring in on lines provided to make a beautiful picture but all the pictures are the same. In a study by A. R. Abasi and N. Akbari (2008) they demonstrated that patchwriting is actually encouraged when teachers place symbolic legitimacy demands on the students which they cannot meet. Instead of creative writing, the emphasis is on the reproduction of authority.[4] Says Abasi "Textual analysis of the participants' use of published sources revealed that the majority of the students in the study had relied with varying degrees on a strategy that Howard (1995) refers to as "patchwriting". That is, they had appropriated source materials in their texts with few lexical or syntactic alterations."[5] In a way a Syntax Grid tool is not a symbolic power but linguistic power since it is a grammatical standard that is globally accepted as the correct procedures with linguistic consensus. The composition of the Syntax Grid spans also millennia with built-in grammatical theory and definitions. Another situation is mentioned by Howard (1995), namely, that reliance on a coping strategy, called "patchwriting", means that the students are copying passages while making only minor changes in vocabulary and grammatical structures due to their difficulty in comprehending the texts.[6] In our case of investigation, the students did not have difficulties in comprehending what the Robot was doing but how they are going to write in syntactically correct. They thus utilized the handouts and copying phrases and words while making minor changes in the vocabulary and grammatical structures provided in the right margin of the handout.

There may be scholars who argue that this activity of mechanically "painting" a paragraph with supplied and limited vocabulary and phrases, or patchwriting, is really plagiarism. R. M. Howard in 1986 and later asserted that patchwriting, which was commonly classified as plagiarism, "might be of positive value as a composing strategy (Howard, "Plagiarism Pentimento"). In a subsequent article he argued that patchwriting should be differentiated from plagiarism (Howard, "Plagiarisms, and Authorships). Then in a book he went one step further by advocating that patchwriting should be removed from the juridical category of plagiarism (Howard, Standing).[7] C. Bazerman (2004) explained that originality or creativity almost never exist in writing. He spent time explaining the concept of "intertextuality" and how texts rely on other texts. [8] He says that almost every word we use we have seen or heard before. Instead of borrowing from the sea of our memory of what we have read or heard before the student in our particular exercise had the opportunity to "borrow" from a list of options as far as vocabulary and sequencing phrases were concerned for the descriptive paragraph, all provided on a handout. One may critically say that our exercise only prompt them to "fill out the blanks" and amounts to "spoon-feeding" or in the case of an artist, to paint within the lines provided with colors provided.

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[4]A. R. Abasi, & N. Akbari (2008). Are we encouraging patchwriting? Reconsidering the role of the pedagogical context in ESL student writers'transgressive intertextuality. *English for Specific Purposes*, 27 (3), 267–284. The authors made their conclusions using the social literacies perspective (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanič, 2000), the theory of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991), and Bakhtin's theory of language (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986).

[5]Abasi 2008, 270.

[6] Barks, D. (2001) 'Textual borrowing strategies for graduate-level ESL writers', D. Belcher and A. Hirvela (eds), *Linking Literacies: Perspectives on L2 Reading-Writing Connections* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 250.

[7]R. M. Howard, (2000) 'Sexuality, textuality: the cultural work of plagiarism', *College English*, 62 (4): 473-91, 475.

[8] "Almost every word and phrase we use we have heard or seen before. Our originality and craft as writers come from how we put those words together in new ways to fit our specific situation, needs, and purposes, but we always need to rely on the common stock of language we share with others….We create our texts out of the sea of former texts that surround us, the sea of language we live in. And we understand the texts of others within that same sea. Sometimes as writers we want to point to where we got those words from and sometime we don't. Sometimes as readers we consciously recognize where the words and ways of using words come from and at other times the origin just provides an unconsciously sensed undercurrent. And sometimes the words are so mixed and dispersed within the sea, that they can no longer be associated with a particular time, place, group, or writer. Nonetheless, the sea of words always surrounds every text. The relation each text has to the texts surrounding it, we call intertextuality. Intertextual analysis examines the relation of a statement to that sea of words, how it uses those words, how it positions itself in respect to those other words." (C. Bazerman, [2004]. Intertextuality: How texts rely on other texts. In C. Bazerman& P. Prior (Eds.), *What writing does and how it does it* (pp. 83–89). New Jersey: Erlbaum).

The approach of supplying the students with a word list/phrase list, namely, providing the learners of ESL with a given catalogue of putative academic formulae is critically perceived by Lee and Chen (2009) and should be because they are focusing on academic writing which shifts the attention to pre-intermediate, intermediate and advanced students.[9] Our focus is primarily the beginner and for them this approach of providing a list is functional in the formation process. Lee and Chen have found that the general tendency for Chinese learners is to favor additive [and, also] connectors over subordinating expressions [as a result] and relative clauses [which, who].[10] For the lower beginner level Korean Freshmen University students, this phenomenon is actually to be expected. C. Campbell studied the writing of university students with others' words and compared the native and non-native students' use of information from a background reading text in an academic composition.[11] This study is relevant since we are supplying the student with image information (video) and a handout with a catalogue of words and phrases. The total focus of Campbell is not the same as in this research. It is pointed out that many scholars in the past studied how readers recall; reader's general comprehension; reading to learn but that the unique contribution of Campbell is the use of information reading a text.[12] A number of studies are listed which focused on reading as an active process involving factors like a personal background and schemata (also called scripts or frames).[13] A schema is the supplied background information. In our case meaning for the students evolves from a supplied piece of data from which the student can construct a series of events imitating the images in a video also supplied. Rose in 1984 studied the writer's block and he had his subjects do a writing task based on "background reading in order to give them an equivalent knowledge base from which to begin".[14] This is very similar to what our intention was with the handout and video. The video was intended to play a back grounding function and the handout with the catalogue of words and phrases was to play a foregrounding function. In our case we do not give them a text but assistance towards a text and the menu choices they have to make themselves. The Grid tool was to help them reach a higher standard of production presumably than what they would have done without the tool. The function of the video is the input assistance for comprehension and the function of the handout is output assistance for production.[15] In an article by S. Kim (2001),[16] a description is given of a summarizing task of two texts (easier and more difficult) in order to see the strategies that Korean students are employing in summarizing.

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[9] Lee and Chen, 2009: 293.

[10] Idem.

[11] C. Campbell (1990). Writing with others' words: Using background reading texts in academic compositions. In B. Kroll (Ed.), *Second language writing: Research insights for the classroom* (pp. 143–155). London: Routledge. Original Report online available as: Campbell, Cherry (1987) Writing with Others' Words: Native and Non-Native University Students' Use of Information from a Background Reading Text in Academic Compositions. California Univ., Los Angeles.Center for Language Education and Research.Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. Document number Ed 287 315 Report no. CLEAR-TR4 Contract 400-85-1010.

[12] C. Campbell 1987: 6.

[13] C. Campbell 1987: 6 listed the scholars of reading as an active process: Anderson, 1977; Britton et al., 1985; Carrell, 1981, 1983; Hosenfeld, 1979; Olshavsky, 1976-1977; Schank & Abelson, 1977; Wittrock, 1983. R. C. Anderson (1977). *Schema-directed processes in language comprehension*. (Tech. Rep. No. 50). Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading. B. K. Britton, S. M. Glynn, & J. W. Smith (1985). Cognitive demands of processing expository text: a cognitive workbench model. In B. K. Britton & J. B. Black (Eds.), *Understanding expository text: A theoretical and practical handbook for analyzing explanatory text*, (pp. 227-248). Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; P. L. Carrell (1983). Some issues in studying the role of schemata, or background knowledge, in second language comprehension. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 1, 81-92; Hosenfeld, C. (1984). Case studies of ninth grade readers. In J. C. Alderson & A. H. Urquhart (Eds.) *Reading in a foreign language* (pp. 231-249). New York: Longman; J. E. Olshavsky (1976-1977). Reading as problem solving: an investigation of strategies. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 654-675; R. C. Schank & R. P. Abelson (1977). *Scripts, plans, goals and understanding.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. M. C. Wittrock (1983). Writing and the teaching of reading. *Language Arts*, 60, 600-606.

[14] M. Rose (1984). *Writer's Block: The Cognitive Dimension.* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

[15] Robert M. DeKeyser and Karl J. Sokalski, (December 1996). The Differential Role of Comprehension and Production Practice. *Language and Learning* 46/4, 613-642.DeKeyser and Sokalski found that according to general language acquisition theory "input practice is better for comprehension skills, and output practice for production skills, but these patterns are obscured when both testing time and the morphosyntactic nature of the structure in question favor one skill or the other." For this reason we tried to keep the morphosyntactic nature of the video events and the selection number of words and phrases in the catalogue very short and simple due to the Beginner level we are dealing with.

[16] S. Kim (2001b). Characteristics of EFL readers' summary writing: A study with Korean university students. *Foreign Language Annals*, 34: 569–581.

It was found that of the three summarizing rules (deletion, selection and transformation), deletion was the most commonly used followed by selection and lastly transformation. Students in our task also had to delete some words they were not going to use and select those they would and at times transform the lines to fit their meaning. The creativity of the more advanced students was in a way limited due to the summarizing nature of the task.

3. Method

The design of the Grid and how it was constructed is necessary to explain. One needs to explain how the students were instructed to use the grid. A video was used to give students by images background information which was intended to stimulate their cognitive functions to produce a descriptive paragraph. The textbook [17] required from the students a number of paragraphs to write using sequencers[18] that fit every type[19] of paragraph.

How the grid was constructed

The Syntax Grid was decided upon due to the numerous errors that still persist despite the excellent textbook. It was as if there should be an easier tool, constructed from the book, but that supplies the beginner, especially, with a way to overcome most of his/her errors. It was made clear from the beginning by the author that the textbook is a reference manual to be used as guide in the class. It was also made clear that not all could be used due to time limits. The Grid tool was made by dividing an A4 page into 15 columns coded with the letters of the alphabet from A to O. The top register was the grammatical identification zone where elements from a traditional grammar were used to describe each column's function and the form expected. A virtual sentence was divided into composite parts or elements and each grammatical element was given an allocated column. A was to be the sequencers or transition phrases listed all from Finch 2013: 144-150. Column B is dealing with time "yesterday"; "this morning" etc. Column C is the definite or indefinite article (a / the). Column D is the pronominal elements (my, your etc.). Column E are nouns which are either referring to a person or a thing and which functions in the sentence as the subject in a SVO string, typical in simple English. Column F is the action or auxiliary that functions as a potential and helps making reality not real or delayed or distant but not in the present. Column G is the preposition "to" that usually goes with F "wanted to". Column H is the tenses which are future, potential and which can be optative "may" (less probable) or subjunctive "should" (more probable). Column I is the action or verb in the SVO string and it can be Indicative which functions as reality of an action or emotion. Column J is the past tense –ed of any of these verbs or actions in Column I. Column K are all the possibilities one can get as far as prepositions are concerned and this is not from Finch 2013 but from a traditional Classical Greek Grammar. [20] Column L is again the pronouns "my" etc. The reason is that one is getting to the Object of the sentence in the SVO string and normally pronouns go before these nouns just like they also are found before the Subject in the sentence. Column M is again an article (definite "the" or indefinite "a") that is necessary to precede the noun in the Object function of the syntax. Column N has nouns that can be either a person or a thing and that functions as object of the SVO string simple syntax of English. Column O is a quality added to the verb in the sentence and functions as an adverb "how the action was done" as one can see in "he jumps far".[21]

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[17]A. Finch, *Freshman English 1 Second Edition Revised* (Daegu, Korea: Kyungpook National University Press, 20 December 2013, 2nd edition revised). Written by a salted ELS teacher, Andrew Finch, Head of the program for teaching English to Freshmen at the Department of Liberal Education at Kyungpook National University, Taegu Campus, South Korea.

[18] The Textbook provided at the back conveniently all the possible *sequencers* or *transition phrases* that could be used in these types of paragraphs (Finch 2013: 144-150).

[19] A number of types are expected from the Freshmen English students: Listing paragraph (13-24); Description paragraph (25-36); Order of importance paragraph (37-48); Compare/contrast paragraph (49-60); Time order paragraph (61-72); How to paragraph (73-84); Process paragraph (85-96); Advantage and Disadvantage paragraph (97-108); Cause and effect paragraph (109-120).

[20] Goodwin, W. W. (1978). *A Greek Grammar*. London: Macmillan and Co.

[21] With the help of Mrs. Mi-hwa Park of the Administration of Kyungpook National University at Sangju Campus South Korea, the Grid was put together to fit an A4 page so that a handout could be provided to students in class. Designing such a Grid does require years of studies in linguistics and language theory and a familiarity with the trends in the history of the grammar.

Limitations of the Grid

The Grid was designed for very low beginners and their errors in syntax.[22] Much of this information is part of the mental lexicon and mental grammar of the high level ESL Freshmen in the class but it is not *ipso facto* a guarantee that there will not be error slips in M or K or word-order here and there sometimes.

The other limitation was that the grid did not deal with aspects like numerals or adjectives. These elements are better to be considered in a grid for pre-intermediate students.

Big Dog Boston Dynamics Video

Online at *Youtube* is this video of an amazing "donkey-like" robot designed by Boston Dynamics. The video is a short clip of the total of actions the robot can do but the video was long enough for a short entertainment to the students about future designs. The video was played twice to the students so that they could see the various things the robot can do: climbing a mountain, walking in snow, balancing on ice, walking over cement bricks. Image is used to reinforce for the ESL student whether low level or high level proficiency, exactly what is expected from them in a very short time. "A picture speaks a thousand words" my father use to say. That is not a plea to go overboard with image as opposed to text.[23]

Starting to write

A handout was given to the students with a hand-drawn picture by the teacher of the various actions the donkey can perform, almost a cartoon with four actions. The link is added. In the right margin of all pages are lists of words serving as a vocabulary tank from which they can choose words for their paragraph. To start them moving and not just motioning on one spot a few questions were asked: What they saw? Who made it? How tall it is? How wide? How high? What is the color? Simple questions in which there is no definite answer but their own guesses. Then came the actions of the donkey: It can climb the mountain; it can walk in snow. The superfluous and overuse of "it" as a sentence starter is comfortable for the low beginner but annoying to the good reader. To prevent this monotonous repetition of "it" and again "it" and furthermore "it" the Syntax Grid was used by supplying in the right margin an extract of column A from which they could choose to attach a sequencer phrase in front of the it. At the back of the handout was a repetition of their first try but an open space left so that they can add the sequencers chosen from the list in the right margin. Lastly, they were expected to go to the right margin and from a list of almost 50 words select adverbs to be added at the end of the sentence telling us how the donkey climb or walk, "magnificently". The word was only listed as *magnificent* but they were to add –ly.

Grid practice

The next step was to ask them to select five sentences from the donkey and write it on another grid with block for the sentences but nothing written in them. They were to cut their own sentences into pieces virtually and park them in the blocks provided for the five sentences. Underneath each block was a line on which they were to search on the Syntax Grid the appropriate code: A, B, D, E, I, K, M, N, O. The teacher then walked through the class to see if they are correct. The short exercise was appropriate since they could learn how to use the Grid and how the Grid functions. They also could see their own errors. Mostly, almost 75% of them had a capital letter after the comma of the sequencer; left out an article (C) for the first noun or an article (M) for the second noun or did not use a preposition (K). The greatest struggle of these students is really the SVO order since their mother-tongue is using SOV order.

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[22] It was suggested by prof. A. Chung that one should later think of designing a similar Grid for *Pre-Intermediate* students and also for even a higher level, namely, *Advance* students.

[23] See the warnings of making too much about *image* in contrast to *text* explained in K. van Wyk, (2015). Critical Evaluation of a Smartphone Movie Project for University Students. *The Society for Teaching English through Media Journal*, 16 (1), 191-216, especially page 206-207. Most of the mass-killings in recent times stems from murderers who exposed themselves to violent games and an overdosis of image-based content with minimal text content. See the book Nina B. Huntemann, Matthew Thomas Payne, Ian Bogost (2010), *Joystick Soldiers: The Politics of Play in Military Video Games*. New York and Londen: Routledge. She explains that one needs to think critically of the imagery and narratives of videogames and what they try to portray and their role as a soft-core militancy for future violence and war, strengthened and encouraged for entertainment in homes and cultures across the globe.

Grid application

Another handout was given later also with blocks for sentences but this time the whole paragraph describing the Video was to be written in the blocks. The Grid was used once more to identify each element. Early discovery of errors were made and rectified. Students realized that they are prone to make consistently the same errors whenever they are writing. Discovering this error and realizing it, helps them to maybe improve their skills next time.

Typing the paragraph

The final task for the students were to type the paragraph with the title centered, indent used for the first line and writing the paragraph continuously, to enter in their computers the information from the Grid application with ten sentences.

They were to use the upgraded versions of computer programs that would show them with a red line that there are spelling errors and a green/blue line for grammar errors. The font format was to be *new courier* and could be size 10 or 12. This product is the final crowning of their hard labor. It is this product that is analyzed in this research as ten specimens for 2014 without using the grid and then specimens for 2015 using the grid.

Comparison of results of errors for 2014 and 2015

Selecting ten paragraphs from the first semester 2014 and comparing it with ten paragraphs randomly selected from the first semester 2015 we are able to see certain results:

4. Results and Discussion

Characteristics of the Students

Code	TOEIC Listening test 6 photos and four statements	Symbol	Major	Gender	Performance score in team and ranking
2014-01	2 out of 6 as perfect score	B+	Fusion System Science	M	0.864 out of 1 as perfect score Other Team members 0.941 0.987 0.9853
2014-02	4 out of 6 as perfect score	B+	Eco-Disaster Prevention Science	F	0.8731 out of 1 as perfect score Other Team members 0.980 0.852 0.94
2014-03	3 out of 6 as perfect score	B0	Fashion Design	M	0.841 out of 1 as perfect score Other Team members 0.872 0.753 0.7532
2014-04	3 out of 6 as perfect score	A-	Precision Mechanics	M	0.999 out of 1 as perfect score Other Team members 0.91 0.831 0.731
2014-05	4 out of 6 as perfect score	B0	Computer Science	M	0.641 out of 1 as perfect score Other Team members 0.9752 0.97 0.652
2014-06	4 out of 6 as perfect score	A0	Eco-Disaster Prevention Science	F	0.87632 out of 1 as perfect score Other Team members 0.92

0.93

Code	TOEIC Listening test 6 photos and four statements	Symbol	Major	Gender	Performance score in team and ranking
2014-07	5 out of 6 as perfect score	B+	Eco-Disaster Prevention Science	M	0.92 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.93 0.93 0.87632
2014-08	3 out of 6 as perfect score	B+	Fashion Design Science	M	0.764 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.98741 0.865
2014-09	3 out of 6 as perfect score	B-	Eco-Environment Science	M	0.852 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.831 0.852 0.999
2014-10	4 out of 6 as perfect score	B0	Eco-Environment Science	M	0.999 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.999 0.999 0.981

Characteristics of the Students

Code	TOEIC Listening test 6 photos and four statements	Symbol	Major	Gender	Performance score in team and ranking
2015-01	3 out of 6 as perfect score	B+	Leisure Sports	F	0.987 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.984 0.9876 0.9876
2015-02	4 out of 6 as perfect score	B+	Leisure Sports	M	0.9875 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.9876 0.976 0.975
2015-03	5 out of 6 as perfect score	A-	Leisure Sports	M	0.901 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.876 0.999
2015-04	4 out of 6 as perfect score	B+	Food Science	M	0.9754 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.9764 0.987 0.954
2015-05	2 out of 6 as perfect score	A-	Food Science	M	0.9765 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.9752 0.97643 0.9763
2015-06	2 out of 6 as perfect score	A-	Food Science		0.987654 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.98762 0.98763 0.987

2015-07	4 out of 6 as perfect score	A-	Food Science	M	0.9764 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.987 0.9754 0.954
2015-08	3 out of 6 as perfect score	B-	Leisure Sports	M	0.876 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.999 0.901
2015-09	4 out of 6 as perfect score	A+	Leisure Sports	M	0.999 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.876 0.901
2015-10	4 out of 6 as perfect score	B+	Leisure Sports	F	0.985 out of 1 as perfect score
				Other Team members	0.9876 0.987 0.9872

To get a better sense of the two tables above regarding students' characteristics between 2014 and 2015, we have compiled the data in the following manner:

Table 1: Characteristics of Students 2014

			Specimen	Grade	Ranking	**TOEIC**	**2014**
Male	8						
Female	2	M	2014-01	B+	0.864	1 of 6	0
		F	2014-02	B+	0.8731	2 of 6	1
Majors:		M	2014-03	B0	0.841	3 of 6	4
Fusion System		M	2014-04	A-	0.999	4 of 6	4
ECO Disaster Prevention		M	2014-05	B0	0.641	5 of 6	1
Fashion Design		F	2014-06	A0	0.87632	6 of 6	0
Precision Mechanics		M	2014-07	B+	0.92		
Computer Science		M	2014-08	B+	0.764		
ECO Environment		M	2014-09	B-	0.852		
		M	2014-10	B0	0.999		

In TABLE 1 above, we are looking at individual rankings within a group of fours. We see that there are two individuals, both males, (2014-04 and 2014-10) have the same ranking of 0.999, but their overall grade for the semester reflects differently (i.e. A- and B0 respectively). There are other factors involved in their final grade. When looking at their TOEIC scores, we see that the majority of the students are in the 'average' or 'above average' category. *Average* here would be in the 3 of 6 categories and *above average* would be in the 4 of 6. However, since these students are low-level, our interpretation can mean that those in the 3 of 6 category can be seen as above average and intermediate respectively.

Table 2: Characteristics of Students 2015

			Specimen	Grade	Ranking	**TOEIC**	**2015**
Male	7						
Female	3	F	2015-01	B+	0.987	1 of 6	0
		M	2015-02	B+	0.9875	2 of 6	2
		M	2015-03	A-	0.901	3 of 6	2
Majors:		M	2015-04	B+	0.9754	4 of 6	5
Leisure Sports		M	2015-05	A-	0.9765	5 of 6	1
Food Science		F	2015-06	A-	0.987654	6 of 6	0
		M	2015-07	A-	0.9764		
		M	2015-08	B-	0.876		
		M	2015-09	A+	0.999		
		F	2015-10	B+	0.985		

TABLE 2 also shows that a male student (2015-09) ranked in the 0.999 percentile with an A+ for his final grade. A couple of questions come to mind when comparing 2014 and 2015 is that; does ranking have an effect on the final grade? Or do male students outperform female students? In our opinion based on limited data, we do not believe that this is the case because of varying final semester grades of A-, B0, and A+ among the three highest rankings. While the 2014 group has higher primary ranking (i.e. 0.999) than the 2015, the 2015 group has much higher secondary rankings (i.e. 0.97 or above) as compare to those of the 2014 (i.e. 0.85 or above). On the other hand, TOEIC scores in comparison to 2014 shows that this particular group has a wider variety of scores; 2 of 6, 3 of 6, and 4 of 6; with the most concentration in the 4 of 6 category. This could be an indication that 2015 group is somewhat more proficient in their English abilities as compared to the 2014 group, especially when we look at secondary rankings between the two groups. A side-by-side comparison in TABLE 3 gives a more precise look between the differences in TOEIC scores between the two groups. While high rankings can be found in both groups and because of the varying final grades, this is not a solid determination of students' overall success with using the Grid. Further investigation is needed with a larger sample size.

Table 3: Side by Side Comparisons

TOEIC	2014	2015
1 of 6	0	0
2 of 6	1	2
3 of 6	4	2
4 of 6	4	5
5 of 6	1	1
6 of 6	0	0

Specimens for analysis from 2014 all on the Big Dog or Donkey Robot paragraph

The following specimens were randomly selected from a total of 63 for the analysis. They are all from the first semester 2014 utilizing the same book and the same level as well as the same class material handed out to the students. Instructions and goals of the teacher was also consistently the same with all students. Requirements to reach the goal were also the same with all students. Like an artist using a palette with various colors of paint in his one hand, so the teacher wished to supply the students with a "verbal palette" with many options of vocabulary and sequencers to choose from. This goal was consistently applied in both 2014 and 2015. The handout page was designed for this purpose. The intention was to teach students a simple descriptive sentence, describing the actions of the robot and then raising the level of description by adding on accessories to beautify the description by using sequencers, adjectives and adverbs.

Grid-less Specimens

The following 10 specimens were selected from 63 available for 2014:

2014-01   *Problems:* K, C, C, C, J, tense ~~is~~/was
              Positive: interactive, good adjectives "astonishing"
2014-02   *Problems:* Spelling, capitals, B, M,[24] K, M

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[24] Lee and Chen, 2009: 292 pointed out that "Among some of the postgraduate students we have worked with, for example, the accuracy of use of the definite article often shows a natural improvement over the years of study, with or without teaching." What one can perceive in the results of Freshmen English at University level analysis, is that the definite article can be a yardstick of placing students in a level range: many definite article problems (Beginner); less (Pre-intermediate); almost invisible (Intermediate); no problems (Advanced and Native speakers). Lee and Chen, 2009: 286-287, especially 286 pointed out about the definite article problem in a Chinese EFL educational setting: "The difficulty Chinese learners have with the English article system has long been noted (Cai & Wu, 2006), with both over-specification (e.g., *the* for *alan* or Ø) and under-specification (e.g., *alan* or Ø for *the*) errors reported (Chuang &Nesi, 2006; Díez-Bedmar & Papp, 2008; Master, 1995). Various frameworks have also been proposed for teaching articles (e.g., Master, 1990)." For the full references: J-T. Cai & Y-A. Wu (2006). Zhongguo daxuesheng yingyu guanci shiyong yanjiu (A study of Chinese university students' use of English articles). *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 38(4), 243–250; F-Y. Chuang & H. Nesi (2006). An analysis of formal errors in a corpus of L2 English produced by Chinese students. *Corpora*, 1, 251–271; M. B. Díez -Bedmar & S. Papp (2008). The use of the English article system by Chinese and Spanish learners. In G. Gilquin, S. Papp & M. B. Díez -Bedmar (Eds.), *links up contrastive and learner corpus research* (pp. 147–175). Amsterdam: Rodopi; Master, P. (1990). Teaching the English articles as a binary system.

	Positive: good adjectives "uneven ice"
2014-03	*Problems:* M, M, M, M, capitals, M, M
	Positive: creative "I believe he has a heart".
2014-04	*Problems:* wrong auxiliary, M, M, B, M, M, M, M, M, K, K
	Positive: good verbs "can't crawl over ice"
2014-05	*Problems:* M unnecessary, M, wrong auxiliary, M, wrong auxiliary, M, M, M, participle from "jump~~ing~~"
	Positive: good adverbs in form but adjectives in function thus should add the –ly.
2014-06	*Problems:* M, M, M, M
2014-07	*Problems:* M wrong order in syntax "I saw competent a robot", capital letters, M, capitals, capitals.
2014-08	*Problems:* K, K, M, M
	Positive: made the topic personal "Let me introduce my friend Donkey"
2014-09	*Problems:* M (n), capitals, M, M, M, M, M
	Positive: very good expressions "can carefully climb the mountain".
2014-10	*Problems:* M
	Positive: free inventive style "It can do many things."

Grid Specimens

The following 10 specimens were randomly selected from 63 available for 2015:

2015-01	*Problems*: space, capital, space, space, space, space, space, space
2015-02	*Problems:* capital, space, space, singular, space, wrong word
2015-03	*Problems:* space, space, space, small letter, space deletion, wrong verb *"cloud"* instead of *"climb,"* omitted "a ditch", spelling *"acctually"* **[slip of the hand]**
2015-04	*Problems:* capital, spelling, M, M, omitted "a ditch".
2015-05	*Problems:* indent, omitted "a ditch", wrong noun **[slip of the eye]** *"can jump over like a ditch"* instead of *"like a horse"*.
2015-06	*Problems:* spelling error *"claim"* instead of *"climb"*, omitted "a ditch", spelling error *"claim"* instead of *"climb"*.
2015-07	*Problems:* singular
2015-08	*Problems:* capital, capital, space, capital, space, spelling *"com"* instead of *"cm"*, omitted –aly.
2015-09	*Problems:* comma omission
2015-10	*Problems:* omitted noun, space, wrong verb, wrong noun *"12 hours long"* instead of *"12 meters long"*, wrong verb *"clime"* instead of *"climb"*.

Conclusions:

1. Errors[25] are different between 2014 and 2015.
2. There are less M-errors in 2015.
3. While there are 6 problems with prepositions (K) in 2014, the 10 specimens for 2015 did not indicate this problem.
4. In 2015 wrong spacing is a problem as opposed to 2014.
5. Indent was no problem in 2014 but in 2015 there is one case out of ten specimens.
6. Spelling in 2015 is chronic as compared to spelling in 2014 or the ability or will to find out the correct spelling.
7. An A- student (specimen 2014-04) who had a high score for his oral presentation and a TOEIC score of 50%

TESOL Quarterly, 24, 461–478. Master, P. (1995). Consciousness raising and article pedagogy. In D. Belcher & G. Braine (Eds.), *Academic writing in a second language: Essays on research and pedagogy* (pp. 183–204). Norwood, N J: Ablex. This is relevant also in the Korean setting.

[25] S. M. María Fernández, The Relationship of Lexical Error and their Types to the Quality of ESL Compositions: an Empirical Study. *Porta Linguarum* 3 2005, 45-57, indicated that "lexical errors and lack of lexical knowledge have a great influence on communication, as far as they are accounted for as the most distracting"; "lexical errors will distort written communication, and this will have bad consequences on the quality rating of written essays"; and that "lexical errors are judged most severely as communication distracters because they have a negative effect on the intelligibility of the message."

correct listening accuracy had many problems in the syntax of his writing a descriptive paragraph. See the Grid-less specimens analyzed where his problems were listed. What this means is that when a student appear to the teacher to be of an A- level, come over as a high level oral performer, that he/she in fact can be severely struggling with syntax in writing.

8. The best student with an A0 score in 2014 in these specimens, 2014-06 had a high TOEIC score of 66.6% for listening compared to the others in the class and an average performance for oral. This female still had some problems in the paragraph writing, namely some missing M's or definite articles.

9. A very good student was specimen 2014-10 with a good TOEIC score of 66.6% for listening, an excellent performance for oral (0.999 out of a perfect score of 1) but still one finds in the paragraph writing the missing definite article (M). A very good student was also specimen 2015-03 with a high TOEIC score of 88.3% for listening who had an A- eventually but his paragraph performance had many problems.

10. The student as specimen 2015-02 had a high score for listening TOIEC namely, 66.6% but many problems in the paragraph like spaces, capital, singular and using of a wrong word.

Post Questionnaire Analysis

Of the 150 participants, a total of 109 freshman students from 6 different majors participated in the post-survey questionnaire (65 males and 42 females with 2 unanswered). The majority of the students either live on or near campus (98 students) while the rest travel daily to and from their homes. The post-survey is design to get the students' feedback after the Grid trial period concluded. Below are the results of our findings.

Table 4

Question 1	What do you think of the "Robot Donkey" paragraph composition?			
1. Strongly dislike	2. Dislike	3. Neutral	4. Like	5. Like very much

	1. Strongly dislike	2. Dislike	3. Neutral	4. Like	5. Like very much
Nano	0	1	12	5	1
Auto	1	3	8	7	4
ECO	1		4	3	2
Leisure	1	3	8	3	3
Food	1	2	7	7	2
Fusion	2	4	8	4	2
TOTAL	**6**	**13**	**47**	**29**	**14**
PERCENTAGES	**5.50**	**11.93**	**43.12**	**26.61**	**12.84**

In TABLE 4 above we can see that of the 109 students who participated in the survey, nearly half (43.12%) were "Neutral" in their answers, meaning they neither "Dislike" nor "Like" the paragraph composition exercise. This could be due to their lack of motivation or understanding of the processes involved. While 5.5% or 6 participants "Strongly disliked" the paragraph composition along with some 12% "Disliked" them; the results of the survey, however, shows that nearly 27% of the students either "Liked" or "Liked very much" (12.84%) the paragraph composition.

Table 5

Question 2	Did this page help you to design the sentences better?			
1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree

	1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree
Nano	1	1	6	8	3
Auto	2	5	4	8	4
ECO	0	1	2	4	3
Leisure	0	1	8	5	4
Food	2	1	5	7	4
Fusion	1	2	9	6	2
TOTAL	**6**	**11**	**34**	**38**	**20**
PERCENTAGES	**5.50**	**10.09**	**31.19**	**34.86**	**18.35**

TABLE 5 shows that 17 students or approximately 16% of the 109 students surveyed didn't agree with this question, while 34 students were impartial. On the other hand, 58 students or 53% "Agree" or "Strongly agree" with this particular question. It is important to point out that over half of the participants found this page to be useful in helping them to design better sentences. In this sense, we can interpret that the page was useful for these low-level students.

Table 6

Question 5	Do you think the Grid helped you design your sentences better?				
	1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree
Nano	0	2	6	8	2
Auto	1	2	4	11	5
ECO	1	2	0	4	3
Leisure	0	2	7	4	5
Food	1	3	7	4	4
Fusion	2	1	11	4	2
TOTAL	**5**	**12**	**35**	**35**	**21**
PERCENTAGES	**4.63**	**11.11**	**32.41**	**32.41**	**19.44**

Before moving on to TABLE 6, we would like to mention that of the 109 participants in the survey, one student did not answer this particular question. Question 5 in TABLE 6 is somewhat similar to Question 2 in TABLE 5; however, the question is designed to target the usage of the Grid more precisely. The result shows that over half (56 students or 52%) of the participants found the Grid to be useful in their sentence formulations. It is also interesting to point out that those in the "Neutral" category had the exact same percentages as those in the "Agree" category. The other interesting fact is that in both TABLES 5 and 6, the number of "Strongly disagree" and those of "Disagree" are almost the same: 5.50% vs. 4.63%, and 10.90% vs. 11.11%, respectively Included in the short survey, we had one open-ended question so that students can freely give us their feedback about the Grid exercise. While many students gave "thanks" for the opportunity to learn from the Grid, others had more constructive feedback. Among some of the comments included, that the Grid was "complicated" or "difficult". One student in particular mentioned that simple error checking such as "comas" or "capital letters" was sufficient for their English level and that this exercise "does not help students to speak better English". While this Grid design was to help students to improve their English writing ability, we are open to students' comments and suggestions and will take all matters into considerations.

For those that either "Strongly disagree" or "Disagree", it is something that we need to further investigate, especially when these particular participants are low-level English students. It could be something as simple as they didn't understand the exercise thoroughly in the beginning. Other aspects to consider are certain social habits of depending on a navigator student in the surrounding to "aid" them in their task but this performance called for self-application more than co-application. Overall and based on the results from the post-survey and comments from students, we feel that the Grid has significant impact on aiding students in their quest to write better sentences in English. We will endeavor to continue on with this process and continue to make changes in order to improve the current Grid even further.

6. Conclusions and Implications

This exercise is not "water-tight" since the main teacher involved in the instructions and analysis of the results is identical. Teacher turned into researcher is not the ideal scientific analysis needed although another colleague is assisting the analysis. The ideal situation is to have some other teacher applying the task to a group and then the analysis will not be subjective but more objective. Despite this limitation it was nevertheless clear that the Grid did help some students to solve some of their syntactical hazards caused by their mother-tongue which requires a SOV set-up as compared to the target-language, English that employs a SVO language. There are many languages in the world that suffers from this problem. What Lee and Chen 2009 experienced about academic writers one can also expect for beginner students, namely, that what is missing is fine-tuning of lexical and syntactic subtleties, particularly in terms of their strategic and rhetorical implications.[26]

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[26] Lee and Chen, 2009: 292. They echo the remark of Lee and Swales (2006, p. 57) who said "what [apprentice writers] may be mostly missing is fine-tuning of lexical and syntactic subtleties, particularly in terms of their strategic and rhetorical implications" (Lee, D. Y. W., & Swales, J. M. (2006). A corpus-based EAP course for NNS doctoral students: Moving from available specialized corpora to selfcompiled corpora. *English for Specific Purposes*, 25, 56–75).They (Lee and Chen, 2009: 292) further warned for the Chinese educational system audience that the English language teachers of their postgraduate students "are mostly not native speakers and thus have unreliable intuitions, especially when it comes to subtle, pragmatic, and stylistic issues." The other side of the coin is that not all students learning English from teachers in the lower grades of the educational chain are going to be postgraduate writers. Their tool suggestion is well taken here as solution to this problem.

As far as future ESL education is concerned, memorizing phrases may help a person to some degree but a better result can be achieved if the language "glasses" through which the student looks at things and people are more clear with the help of a syntactical grid so that the students' own grammar in his/her mind that dictates to him/herself, will be able to correspond more to standard good English. The model was kept as simple as possible and that worked fine for students and their limited vocabulary abilities. More similar studies are needed to take care also of Beginners and pre-Intermediate and Advance students.

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일찌기 초급 ESL 단계 대학 신입생들의 작문 수준 개선을 목적으로 하는 도구를 디자인한 바 있다. 이 도구는 문장을 만들 때 구문의 정확성을 기해 실수를 피하도록 돕는 것을 목적으로 하였다. 그러나 일전의 연구에는 이러한 도구의 효율성을 시험해보지 못한 아쉬움이 있었다. 본 연구에서는 그 도구를 수업 현장에 적용하여 나타난 결과를 제시하였다. 초보자들이 ESL을 수강할 때 문법과 관련하여 경험하는 어려움에 초점을 맞추어 이 도구가 그들에게 도움을 주는지 살폈다. 보스톤다이나믹스(Boston Dynamics)라는 회사가 제작한 로봇 당나귀 ("Donkey"동키)를 촬영한 짧은 인터넷 동영상을 학생들에게 시청하게 한 후 교사의 지도를 따라 이 문법 그리드를 사용하여 학생들 각자가 그 로봇의 특성과 행동을 묘사하도록 하였다. 이 구문 도구를 사용하지 않은 2014년 1 학기의 학생들이 지은 문장 중 10 개와 2015년 1학기 이 도구를 사용한 학생들의 문장 중 10 개를 임의로 추출하여 비교하였다. 두 해 모두 동키를 묘사하고, 동키의 움직임을 순차적으로 기술하여 작문하도록 지도하였다. 학습자들의 성(性), 전공, 최종 성적, 그들의 발표 그룹 안에서의 순위, 그리고 TOEIC 점수 등의 특징을 기재하였다. 표본과 관련된 이러한 특성들을 함께 고려한 것은 각각의 표본들을 더 잘 판단하고 보다 합당한 해석을 하기 위해서였다. 그들의 실수를 열거하고 결과를 분석하여 2014년도보다 2015년도에 구문적 실수가 적었음을 알 수 있었다. 그러나 공동 연구자 모두 차후에 더 큰 표본 규모의 조사가 필요함을 공감하였다. 학습자들에게 설문 조사를 실시하여 그리드 사용에 대한 그들의 느낌을 나타내도록 하였으며 그 결과도 분석하였다. 연구자들은 아직 유보할 점은 있으나 이 그리드가 학생들을 도움에 있어 의미있는 영향을 미치는 것으로 감지하였으며 현재의 그리드를 개선함은 물론 중급과 고급 학습자들을 위한 그리드를 계발하는 노력도 계속해야 할 것으로 보았다.

[Patchwriting, paragraph writing, procedural knowledge, syntax grid for beginners]

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