THE USE OF DEFECTIVE VERBS IN ENGLISH ESSAYS BY THE STUDENTS OF LEVEL III OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DOBA IN CHAD, ACADEMIC SESSION 2022-2023

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ABSTRACT
This paper investigated the use of defective verbs. The data were collected by the means of written continuous assessment administered to one hundred and fifty EFL learners of English Department of the University of Doba. They were analyzed through Corder’s (1967) Error Analysis (EA) approach. The results of this study revealed that those students encountered a lot of difficulties in using defective verbs in their essays. Five types of errors have been identified. These include the insertion of complete infinitive after defective verbs, the adding of ‘-ed’ at the end of defective verbs, the use of preterit after defective verbs, the adding of ‘s’ at the end of defective verbs and the use of ‘do’ with defective verbs in negative form and interrogative form. The analysis indicated that 37.81% of error regarded the insertion of complete infinitive after defective verbs, 18.48% concerned the adding of ‘-ed’ at the end of defective verbs, 17.64% concerned the use of preterit after defective verbs, 15.96% concerned the adding of ‘s’ at the end of defective verbs and 10.08% regarded the use of ‘do’ with defective verbs. These errors are influenced by the phenomenon of overgeneralization of English grammatical rules on the one hand and the lack of mastery of the use of defective verbs on the other hand.

Keywords: Defective verb, use, EFL, Francophone, learners.

1. INTRODUCTION
It is an incontestable observation that in those recent years, interactions between individuals have multiplied, highlighting the important role communication plays with people who have different first languages (L1) and, therefore, the importance of being able to communicate in different languages. The range of situations requiring communication and the traditional needs of the population have diversified dramatically (Anna, 2020). Professionals working in the linguistic field are no longer the sole persons interested in language proficiency, so too are those who want to communicate at an academic, political, economic, cultural, social, recreational level, or other levels (Tarone 2015, 448). In addition, states and communities increasingly encourage the acquisition of languages other than the first language, as it promotes growth and development (Eurostat 2016).

Therefore, in order to help learners to master different languages more effectively, researchers and practitioners are continually seeking more effective teaching strategies (Anna, 2020). In the frame of the idea of growth and development, our target in this paper is to bring our contribution to support Chadian teachers' decisions in terms of pedagogy and feedback in writing, using linguistic analysis of students’ errors to provide teachers with an overall portrait of their learners.
Reading of available articles about francophone English shows that less has been done on written productions of francophone learners of English. On the contrary, many works have been accomplished in spoken productions, especially in the pronunciation of English by francophone learners. These include among many others Ngaidandi (2020, 2022a and 2022b), Atechi (2015), Capliez (2016), Ilyade (2017), Kouega & Tao (2017), Kouega (2017), Kouega (2008), Safotso (2012), Kouega (2008). These works show that francophone learners of English face many difficulties that are caused by the influence of French as their first language or official language. Another factor for poor performance of francophone learners of English in terms of pronunciation pointed out by the works mentioned above that is the lack of sufficient exposure to English.

It seems that francophone learners of English encounter also problems when writing. Thus, the current work seeks to scrutinize how Level 3 students of English Department of the University of Doba use the defective verbs in written productions. In other words, this paper answers the following question: Do Level 3 students of English Department of the University of Doba correctly use defective verbs in writing? Do they have difficulty in using these verbs when writing? What are the factors that are responsible for the inappropriate use of defective verbs? What should be done in order to improve the use of the defective verbs by those English learners in writing compositions?

1.1 Theoretical approach and previous works

The theory used in this work is Corder’s (1967) Error Analysis. It is relevant in this work as it foresees the identification of errors, description of errors, explanation of errors, and evaluation of the types of errors committed by the learners of English in the domain defective verb use.

In regard to literature review, Didimus & Kom (2023) investigated on the problems Francophone learners face in an attempt to study English as a Foreign Language (EFL). They randomly selected Première (Lower Sixth) and Terminale (Upper Sixth) in the Far North Region of Cameroon. To collect data these, scholars used essays administered to students and those essays were marked by the researchers themselves. The writing test was made up of a single question. Didimus & Kom (2023) realized that students have problems of agreement. This is because they cannot identify primary auxiliaries in sentences. They also have difficulties to differentiate between regular and irregular verbs. Those English learners have also problems of syntax. They do not know how to align words in right order. That is why they have problems of classifying Subject + Verb + Object; Subject + Verb + Complement; Adjective + noun etc. This phenomenon can be illustrated as follows: ‘Men political’ instead of ‘Political men’, denoting thus learners’ incapacity to master sentence structure.

Omission of articles and prepositions is remarkable in students’ sentences, which is viewed as another type of errors.

Finally, Didimus & Kom (2023) discovered that most foreign learners of English language have problems of expression. For them, these problems are due to use of inadequate vocabulary. To overcome these difficulties, most of learners tend to use French lexemes. Eg: ‘I like que, the gestion, I intergrite moral, Create the emploi aux jeunes, Plan d’ action’, that is, they make use of code mixing and code switching.

Apuge & Vagana (2022) examined the errors encountered in the written productions of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the use of articles. They collected data through a written production test administered to sixty respondents drawn from students of Government High School Maroua, in Cameroon. These scholars observed that EFL learners have multiple problems in the use of articles. Errors attested in learners’ written productions are summarized as follows: omission of “the” with of-phrases, the use of “a” instead of “the” with logical use (superlatives), the use of “the” instead of “Ø” with abstract nouns, the use of “the”
instead of "Ø" with idioms, the use of “Ø” instead of “the” with specific count nouns, the use of “the” instead of "Ø” with mass nouns, the use of “a” instead of “the” with immediate situations, the use of “a” instead of “an” with singular nouns, the use of “an” instead of “a” with singular nouns, the use of “Ø” instead of “an” with singular nouns, the use of “the” instead of “Ø” with generic plural nouns, the misuse of articles with familiarity contexts (second mention of nouns), the influence of French, the omission of “the” with global uniques, the use of “the” instead of “Ø” with generic abstract nouns, the use of “the” instead of “Ø” with some institutions like school, prison... to mean their services, the non-ellipsis of articles in compound noun phrases and the omission of “the” with particular nouns in cataphoric and anaphoric contexts (Apuge & Vagana 2022).

Tulldahl (2004) made an investigation concerning errors made by Swedish adolescent learners of English in their written productions. She observed missing and overused plurals of nouns as well as missing and overused definite and indefinite articles by learners. For her, the fact that regular words like brother, meter, name and year do not bear the mark of plurality is probably due to the influence of Swedish. The missing of articles is bound to the influence of the Swedish language.

All types of pronouns have also been investigated (personal, possessive, demonstrative and relative Pronouns). Tulldahl (2004) identified 10 instances of errors in first grade (FG) – where 4 of them concern the Personals, 3 the Possessives, 2 the Demonstratives and 1 the Relatives - and 6 in third grade (TG) out of which 3 concern the Personals,1 the Possessives, and 2 the Demonstratives. Some learners, have mixed up it with it's and their with there's.

In terms of verbs, Tulldahl (2004) pointed out that Swedish learners of English face concord errors concerning the simple present and simple past with be, have and do. Indeed, they confuse am/are/is, have/has, do/does, and was/were. In addition, they do not put the morpheme ‘s’ at the end of verbs in the third person of singular. All these concord errors are influenced by Swedish because that language does not have to deal with the problem of concord within Tenses.

Another domain of error examined by Tulldahl (2004) is the contrast of simple present with present progressive. Swedish learners use progressive form instead of simple form or vice-versa. She notices that those English learners have tendency to us many -ing forms in their written productions because it "looks" and "sounds" very English (Tulldahl, 2004).

Other errors studied by Tulldahl (2004) involve, adjective and adverbs, prepositions, spelling, wrong words and sentence structure.

Even though those works have dealt with written productions of EFL learners, none of them has treated the use defective verbs. Thus, this paper examines the use of defective verbs in writing.

2. METHODOLOGY

There is no scientific work without research methodology. In this respect, this section of our work focuses on the population of the study, the tool of data collection, the procedure adopted, and the analysis method of data collected.

2.1 Population of the study

The population of the study refers to subjects from whom we collected data. In fact, the subjects from whom we collected data bound to the use of defective verbs are Level 3 learners of English Department of the University of Doba of the academic session 2022-2023. They are only students of Level 3, which counted one hundred and fifty (150) students, disregarding old students, i.e. those who resumed the level with one, two or three courses. Out of one hundred...
and fifty students (150) fifty (50) are female, which represents (33.33%) of the total number of students of Level 3.

### 2.2 Tool of data collection
To collect information on the use of defective verbs, which is the subject matter of this investigation, we used students’ continuous assessment scripts of the academic year 2022-2023. The choice of writing stems from the fact that learning a language consists of active and productive skills. Writing is generally considered to be one of the active or productive skills of language usage. It is considered active and productive because learners have to apply many aspects of language, such as: General knowledge, vocabulary, and grammar in this subject. Writing is also considered very important in every curriculum of university because it is believed that this skill can act as a tool for language development, for critical thinking, and for learning in all disciplines (Didimus & Kom, 2023).

### 2.3 Procedure
As mentioned earlier the instrument that we used in order to collect data is students’ continuous assessment scripts American Literature. We chose literature scripts as it is assumed that literature is the domain in which students are expected to make their own sentences and paragraphs. The total number of scripts of was one hundred and fifty (150). We read each copy in view to identifying how many times defective verbs were used. Any defective verb seen in the process of reading was underlined. At the end of reading process, the number of defective verbs used both correctly and wrongly was identified. Some students used defective verbs two times, others used three times and others again used them four times. In average, each student has used various defective verbs three (3) times. Details of use of the defective verbs are presented in the subsequent section of this paper.

### 3. FINDINGS
This section presents the data showing the various errors committed by Level 3- students of English Department of the University of Doba in their British continuous assessment scripts. The data that came from one hundred and fifty (150) respondents are classified in terms of type of errors, frequency of errors and percentage of errors in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of errors</th>
<th>Frequency of errors</th>
<th>Percentage of errors</th>
<th>Total number of ‘can’ used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The adding of ‘s’ at the end of ‘can’</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39.58%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The adding of ‘ed’ at the end of ‘can’</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of complete infinitive after ‘can’</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.41%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of ‘do’ with ‘can’</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of preterit after ‘can’</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These errors are presented separately in the subsequent subsections for an easier understanding.

- **The adding of ‘s’ at the end of the defective verb ‘can’**
  
  Table 1 shows that the respondents used ‘s’ at the end of ‘can’ when it is used in the third person singular as if it were an ordinary verb conjugated in the simple present tense. As a matter of illustration, below are some sentences extracted from students’ scripts. ‘Can’ has been used 80 times in the respondents’ scripts but 48 times wrongly used, which represents (60%). This is illustrated by the examples below with wrong usage put in bold.

  (a). African literature **cans** be defined as literary books that are on America.

  (b). I think that the author **cans** to inform.

  (c). He **cans** talk of the life of the Americans.

- **The adding of ‘ed’ at the end of ‘can’**
  
  From the same table it has been observed that some students add the bound morpheme ‘ed’ at the end of ‘can’ in the past tense as if it were an ordinary verb. As mentioned above ‘can’ has been wrongly used 48 times, i.e. in various types of errors out of 80 usages. The adding of ‘ed’ occurred 18 times, representing (22.5%). This phenomenon is observable in the sentences taken from students’ scripts.

  (a). John Smith **canned** to convince British to arrive in America.

  (b). He **caned** open the way to the other peoples.

  (c). Many of Europeans **caned** to succeed in USA.

- **The use of complete infinitive after ‘can’**
  
  Students use a complete infinitive, i.e. an infinitive preceded by ‘to’. This erroneous use appeared five (5) times, i.e. (6.25%) from 48 out of 80 total occurrences of ‘can’ in students’ scripts. The examples below extracted from students’ scripts confirm this statement.

  (a). John Smith **canned** to convince British to arrive in America.

  (b). The British people **can** to bring their literature style to America.

  (c). British literature style **can** to be also find in American literature.

- **The use of with ‘do’ with ‘can’**
  
  From respondents’ scripts ‘do’ was used with ‘can’ twice, which represents (2.5%) of inappropriate uses of the defective verb ‘can’. This can be illustrated by the following sentences drawn from students’ written productions:

  (a). They **don’t** can realize their dreams.

  (b). **Does** American literature can bring a change for the life of the American people?

- **The use of preterit after ‘can’**
  
  The data from Table 1 indicate that some students used the past tense after ‘can’. This type of error appeared four (4) times out of 80 uses of ‘can’ and it represents (5%). Consider the examples below:

  (a). Those men **worked** for their freedom.

  (b). In what **became** the United States.

  (c). In end, the Americans **got** their independence.

  **Misuse of ‘must’**

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Table 2 presents the frequency of various misuses of the defective verb ‘must’, the total number of occurrences of ‘must’ along with the percentage of errors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of error</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage of errors</th>
<th>Total number of ‘must’ used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The use of complete infinitive after ‘must’</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of preterit after ‘must’</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of ‘do/did’ with ‘must’</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of ‘ed’ at the end of ‘must’</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data from Table 2 shows that the defective verb ‘must’ has been used sixty (60) times out of which it was wrongly used thirty-three (35) times. Indeed, out of 35 wrong uses of ‘must’ twenty (20) times regard the use of complete infinitive after that verb, which represents (57.14%). This means that students confuse the use of ‘must’ with ordinary verbs which are followed by a complete infinitive. This incorrect use of ‘must’ can illustrated by the examples taken from students’ scripts:
(a). Americans must to work hard.
(b). The black Americans must to fight against the racial discrimination.
(c). They must to pray for the end of the racial crimes.

Students used also preterit after ‘must’. This type of error occurred seven (7) times, i.e. (20%) out of 35 erroneous uses of ‘must’. It is difficult to get the factor of this type of error as in English there is no rule that allows the occurrence of preterit after a given verb. That error might be attributed to students’ incapacity. Below are examples extracted from students’ scripts to illustrate this phenomenon:
(a). American literature must contributed for the independence of USA.
(b). Those people must went to the America for many reasons.
(c). It must played an important function in the equality between all the white and black Americans.

The data from Table 2 also show that respondents used ‘do’ and ‘did’ with the defective ‘must’. The use of ‘do’ with ‘must’ occurred five (5) times, i.e. (14.28%) out of 35 wrong uses of ‘must’. This type of error may be regarded as overgeneralization. Indeed, in English there a grammatical that states that ‘do’ and ‘did’ are used in interrogative and negative sentences having ordinary verbs conjugated in the simple present tense and the simple past tense respectively. Students wrongly applied this rule with defective verbs. Here some examples extracted from their scripts:
(a). Black did must to struggle for their rights.
(b). Do they must see USA as the country of their development?
(c). Black Americans do not must cross their arms for the equality in America.
Another type of error committed by the respondents concerns the adding of ‘ed’ in final position of ‘must’. This error appeared three (3) times, representing (8.57%). To illustrate this erroneous use of ‘must’ consider the examples below taken from respondents’ scripts.

(a). They **musted** avowedly to write to explain colonizing opportunities to Englishmen.

(b). These works **musted** be written either by native Americans or people coming from other continents.

(c). American literature includes the books that **musted** be produced by the American writers.

**Misuse of ‘May’**

Just like the other defective verbs, ‘may’ is wrongly used by francophone learners of English. The various types of errors connected to ‘may’ are presented in Table 3 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of error</th>
<th>Frequency of error</th>
<th>Percentage of errors</th>
<th>Total number of ‘may’ used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The use of complete infinitive after ‘may’</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of preterit after ‘may’</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of ‘do’ with ‘may’</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data from Table 3 show the use of complete infinitive after the defective verb ‘may’. In fact, this appeared twenty (20) times, which represents (57.14%) of the total number of ‘may’ wrongly used, i.e. thirty-five (35). This kind of inappropriate use of ‘may’ can be confirmed by the following sentences drawn from students’ scripts:

(a). The black Americans **may** to do all types of functions.

(b). The British settlers may **dominate** the American literature at the beginning.

(c). As far as American literature is concerned, America **may** to have many mothers (Asia, Europe and Africa).

The students used the simple past form of verbs after ‘may’. This wrong use of the defective verb ‘may’ occurred ten (10) times in students’ scripts, representing (28.57%). The examples below illustrate this phenomenon:

(a). They may **regarded** American literature as colonial literature.

(b). The black Americans may **ran** for all the elections.

(c). Those people may **invented** their proper type of literature.

Another type of error bound to the defective verb ‘may’ is the use of ‘do’. In other words, some students used ‘do’ with ‘may’ either in negative form or interrogative form. Out of thirty-five (35) erroneous uses of ‘may’, five (5) concern the occurrence of ‘do’, which represents (14.28%). That assertion can be supported by the following sentences drawn from students’ scripts:

(a). I think that the Americans **don’t** may to copy from the British literature.

(b). **Do** American writers may reflect the British authors?

(c). Such writers **do** not may write exactly as the British authors.

**4. Ranking of errors**
This section presents the students’ errors in defective verbs taken altogether following the descending order. Thus, five (5) types of errors have been identified and they are presented in Table 4 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of error</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage of error</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The insertion of complete infinitive after defective verbs</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37.81</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The adding of ‘-ed’ at the end of defective verbs</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.48</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of preterit after defective verbs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.64</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The adding of ‘s’ at the end of defective verbs</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of ‘do/did’ with defective verbs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.08</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>119</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 clearly shows that the area of the use of defective verbs in which EFL learners of English Department of the University of Doba encounter a lot of difficulty is the use of complete infinitive after *can, must, may* and *must*. Indeed, out of one hundred and nineteen (119) wrong uses of those defective verbs, forty-five (45) concern the use of ‘to + infinitive’ after *can, may* and *must*, i.e. (37.81%), representing thus the first rank of errors. Students used complete infinitive after defective verbs in application of the English grammatical rule that states that after a conjugated verb the form ‘to + infinitive’ is expected. But this rule is applicable only with ordinary verbs. Unfortunately, students generalized the application of that rule, which is referred to as overgeneralization (Corder, 1967).

Then the second rank of errors regards the adding of the morpheme ‘-ed’ in final position of defective verbs. Such an error appeared twenty-two (22) times in students’ scripts and it represents (18.48%) of the total number of erroneous occurrences of defective verbs.

The third position of inappropriate usage of defective verbs is occupied by the use of preterit after defective verbs. This type of error happened twenty-one (21) times, which represents (17.64%). It looks strange to have a verb conjugated in the simple past tense after a defective verb in productions made by Level 3 Students. This type of error reveals that those francophone learners of English have poor performance in English.

The adding of the bound morpheme’s’ at the end of defective verbs occupies the forth rank of errors. It appeared nineteen (19) times, i.e. (15.96%). Here again, it is a case of overgeneralization defined by Corder (1967). Actually, ‘s’ is added only at the end of an ordinary verb conjugated in simple present, third person singular.

Finally, the use of ‘do’ with defective verbs occupies the fifth rank of inappropriate use of *can, may* and *must*. This kind of error occurred twelve (12) times, which represents (10.08%). It is also a case of overgeneralization, which exhibits students’ weakness in terms of the mastery of English grammatical rules.
4. CONCLUSION

This research work was based on the use of basic defective verbs by learners of English as foreign language (EFL). The data were collected from the scripts of one hundred and fifty (150) Students of English Department of the University of Doba, i.e. those of the academic session 2022-2023. The defective verbs of the focus in this study are can, may and must. Types of errors, the frequency of errors along with the rank of errors have been the substances of the current investigation. Five (5) categories of errors have been identified. These various categories of errors include the insertion of complete infinitive after defective verbs, the adding of ‘-ed’ at the end of defective verbs, the use of preterit after defective verbs, the adding of ‘s’ at the end of defective verbs and the use of ‘do/did’ with defective verbs. This identification of the various categories of errors is in connection with Corder (1967). One hundred and ninety (190) defective verbs have been identified in students’ scripts. Out of this number of occurrences of three defective verbs mentioned above, one hundred and nineteen (119) are erroneous, which represents (62.63%). This figure openly shows that those EFL learners have poor performance in spoken productions.

In terms of classification of errors, it has been observed that the insertion of complete infinitive after defective verbs occupies the first rank with 45 occurrences, i.e. (37.81%) out 119 wrong uses of all the defective verbs concerned by this study. The second position is occupied by the use of ‘-ed’ after defective verbs. Indeed, this kind of error happened 22 times, which represents (18.48%) out of 45 wrong uses of defective verbs. As regards the use of preterit after defective verbs, it occurred 21 times, i.e. (17.64%) out of 45 inappropriate uses of defective verbs. This error is odd as it does not have another explanation than incapacity of English learners in terms of the use of English verbs in general. After that, there are the adding of ‘s’ at the end of defective verbs and the use of ‘do/did’ with those verbs, occupying the 4th and 5th ranks respectively with 19, i.e. (15.96%) and 12 (10.08%) erroneous occurrences each.

The insertion of complete infinitive after defective verbs, the adding of ‘-ed’ at the end of defective verbs, the adding of ‘s’ at the end of defective verbs and the use of ‘do’ with defective verbs are influenced by English grammatical rules that concern ordinary verbs. The students have overused those rules with defective verbs, which Corder (1967) qualifies as overgeneralization.

It is recommended to those students to read more about the use of defective verbs in order to yield grammatical productions.

REFERENCES


