

## **THE CONCEPT OF ERROR AND GRAMMAR MISTAKES IN The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**

by Evandro Carlos Braggio  
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Reading Mark Twain's most famous book called *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* a fact strikes our attention: the high incidence of grammar mistakes made by the characters. First of all, we need to understand the concept of error itself.

According to grammarians a mistake is made when you do not follow the rules related to Phonetics, Morphology, Syntax or Semantics. These rules are an agreement established by the grammar writers who intended to standardize the language. It is called educated rule or standard rule and it is used as an instrument to achieve a high social position or respect from the others.

On the other hand, there is another group of language scientists who disagree with these ideas. They are known as linguists and according to them these mistakes are not related to grammar but to where, when and how the language is used. Let's take some transcriptions of the book as examples:

- (1) ..., and I couldn't do nothing but sweat and sweat,... (Chapter I)
- (2) They talked it over, and they was going to rule me out,... (Chapter II)
- (3) "Say, who is you? (Chapter II)
- (4) "It's a most amaz'n' good idea,... (Chapter XXIV)
- (5) "Why, TOM! Where you been all this time, you rascal?" (Chapter XLI)
- (6) "No, it come yesterday;... (Chapter XLII)

Based on grammar rules, we can notice the following mistakes: (1) we do not use two negative words in the same sentence, so the proper pronoun should be anything; (2) the appropriate form of the verb to be for the third person of plural is were; (3) Again, there is a mistake of subject-verb agreement in this sentence and the correct agreement must be are; (4) in order to write a correct superlative sentence, you must use the definite article the; (5) interrogative sentences require the auxiliary have/has when you are working with the Present Perfect Tense and (6) the correct form of the verb to come in the Simple Past Tense is came.

However, for some linguists there is no error if we consider that the speakers have the same level of culture or social position. In their opinion the most important thing is the message itself because they work with the idea of adequate and inadequate language. It means that the grammar mistakes could be well received in a group of speakers with the same linguistic features.

Considering this second point-of-view, we can analyze and understand the mistakes that appear in Mark Twain's novel. Most of the time, the grammar mistakes are made by a little boy or people who did not attend school or did not have the proper education to produce a speech in which the language is used in a formal way. There are also occasions in the story when the characters are speaking English as their second language, which they have learned only by oral communication. So, errors are expected, but we know that by written practice people can decrease their incidence of mistakes.

We can conclude that the southerner dialect registered by Twain do not interrupt or even hinder the dialogues between the speakers in the novel, but reveal their social background and contribution to the English language.

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