ANALYSIS OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS’ ERRORS IN COMPOSITION WRITING: BASIS FOR THE PROPOSED ENGLISH REMEDIAL PROGRAM IN HIGHER INSTITUTION

Marites Q. Catabay

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aimed to examine the students’ errors in composition writing.

Theoretical Framework: This study is anchored to Corder’s (1974) model of error analysis in order to identify errors of the learners in their composition writing. The errors were discussed in five stages: collection of data containing errors, classification of errors, identification of errors, disclosure and evaluation of errors.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The descriptive approach was used using qualitative and quantitative data since the study analyzed the errors committed by the students in composition writing. Moreover, descriptive design was used since the profile of the respondents in terms of sex was described. Lastly, error analysis was used in identifying the errors committed by the students in the writing of their autobiography.

Findings: The study found that the Second Language Learners have committed numerous errors under mechanical, grammatical and structural categories such as: misspelling, lack of punctuation marks, errors in capitalization, wrong tense of verb, wrong subject and verb agreement, missing prepositions, fragments, faulty parallelism and comma splice.

Research, Practical & Social Implications: This study has implications to language teaching and learning. Language professors should always incorporate lessons in grammar in all language courses. Further, the language learners should be more exposed to multiple writing tasks to enhance their writing skills.

Originality/Value: Development of an evidence-based English remedial program to improve the English proficiency and academic writing skills of second language learners in higher institutions.

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ANÁLISE DOS ERROS DOS ALUNOS DE SEGUNDO IDIOMA NA REDAÇÃO: BASE PARA O PROGRAMA CORRETIVO DE INGLÊS PROPOSTO EM UMA INSTITUIÇÃO SUPERIOR

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo teve como objetivo examinar os erros dos alunos na redação.

Estrutura teórica: Este estudo está ancorado no modelo de análise de erros de Corder (1974) para identificar os erros dos alunos em suas redações. Os erros foram discutidos em cinco etapas: coleta de dados contendo erros, classificação de erros, identificação de erros, divulgação e avaliação de erros.

Projeto/Metodologia/Abordagem: A abordagem descritiva foi usada com dados qualitativos e quantitativos, pois o estudo analisou os erros cometidos pelos alunos na redação. Além disso, foi usado um projeto descritivo, pois o perfil dos entrevistados em termos de sexo foi descrito. Por fim, a análise de erros foi usada para identificar os erros cometidos pelos alunos na redação de sua autobiografia.

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Conclusões: O estudo constatou que os alunos que estão aprendendo um segundo idioma cometem vários erros em categorias mecânicas, gramaticais e estruturais, tais como: erros de ortografia, falta de sinais de pontuação, erros de capitalização, tempo verbal errado, concordância incorreta entre sujeito e verbo, preposições ausentes, fragmentos, paralelismo defeituoso e junção de vírgulas.

Implicações sociais, práticas e de pesquisa: Este estudo tem implicações para o ensino e o aprendizado de idiomas. Os professores de idiomas devem sempre incorporar lições de gramática em todos os cursos de idiomas. Além disso, os alunos de idiomas devem ser mais expostos a várias tarefas de redação para aprimorar suas habilidades de redação.

Originalidade/valor: Desenvolvimento de um programa corretivo de inglês baseado em evidências para melhorar a proficiência em inglês e as habilidades de redação acadêmica de alunos de segundo idioma em instituições de ensino superior.

Palavras-chave: Análise de Erros, Categoria Mecânica, Categoria Estrutural, Categoria Gramatical.

ANÁLISIS DE LOS ERRORES DE ESCRITURA DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE SEGUNDAS LENGUAS: BASE PARA EL PROGRAMA DE INGLÉS DE RECUPERACIÓN PROPUESTO EN UNA INSTITUCIÓN SUPERIOR

RESUMEN
Propósito: Este estudio tiene como objetivo examinar los errores de los estudiantes en la escritura.
Marco teórico: Este estudio se basa en el modelo de análisis de errores de Corder (1974) para identificar los errores de los estudiantes en sus redacciones. Los errores se analizaron en cinco pasos: recogida de datos que contienen errores, clasificación de errores, identificación de errores, revelación de errores y evaluación de errores.
Diseño/metodología/enfoque: Se utilizó un enfoque descriptivo con datos tanto cualitativos como cuantitativos, ya que el estudio analizaba los errores cometidos por los alumnos en la redacción. Además, se utilizó un diseño descriptivo ya que se describió el perfil de los encuestados en términos de género. Por último, se utilizó el análisis de errores para identificar los errores cometidos por los estudiantes al escribir su autobiografía.
Hallazgos: El estudio reveló que los estudiantes que aprenden una segunda lengua cometen varios errores en categorías mecánicas, gramaticales y estructurales como: errores ortográficos, falta de signos de puntuación, errores de capitalización, tiempo verbal incorrecto, concordancia sujeto-verbo incorrecta, falta de preposiciones, fragmentos, paralelismo defectuoso y empalmes de coma.
Implicaciones sociales, prácticas y de investigación: Este estudio tiene implicaciones para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de idiomas. Los profesores de idiomas deberían incorporar siempre lecciones de gramática en todos los cursos de idiomas. Asimismo, los estudiantes de idiomas deberían estar más expuestos a diversas tareas de escritura para mejorar sus destrezas de redacción.
Originalidad/valor: Desarrollo de un programa de inglés de recuperación basado en pruebas para mejorar el dominio del inglés y las destrezas de escritura académica de estudiantes de segundas lenguas en instituciones de enseñanza superior.

Palabras clave: Análisis de Errores, Categoría Mecánica, Categoría Estructural, Categoría Gramatical.

INTRODUCTION
The use of English is seen to be crucial for communication. It is the language use by people from all over the world. In order to communicate internationally, understanding and using the language accurately is essential. To be competent in using the language, one must be able to master the four macro-skills that play a key role in language proficiency- a crucial part of any language learning endeavor. Among these skills, writing is said to be the most difficult skill to develop and developing this skill to the learners is challenging.

In second language acquisition, writing effectively and accurately is vital. Writing competence of students is considered an important skill needed to accomplish all educational
Catabay, M. Q. (2023)  
Analysis of Second Language Learners’ Errors in Composition Writing: Basis for the Proposed English Remedial Program in Higher Institution

...endeavors. Therefore, students must polish their writing proficiency. Proficiency in the use of English language means being at ease in its use leading them to write sentences and eventually compositions free from any grammatical flaws. However, enhancing students’ competence in writing requires a challenging task. Students in the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy are expected not only to be fluent in oral but most especially in written communication for it is a skill needed in the preparation of business letters. This idea is in accordance with the study of Mohamad, A. (2023) titled, “Developing Entrepreneurial Skills among University Students: A Case of Students Entrepreneurial Attachment Project”, which stated that good communication skills which involved the ability to interact with other people is very important in business.

Good mastery of English writing skills is deemed pivotal and helpful due to the nature of written form in mastering English Language, according to Rozimela (2010). Similarly, Leki (2009) asserts that having strong writing abilities makes it much simpler for readers to understand concepts. From this, it is clear that writing abilities are essential for assisting students in communicating their thoughts. Moreover, Talosa et al. (2018) claimed that it is impossible for second language learners to write properly using the target language without linguistic knowledge on grammar and vocabulary.

It is widely acknowledged that one of the most significant activities in school program is writing. Both the individual and the society at large become more intellectually developed as a result. Due to its growing significance in today’s social structure, it is necessary to learn more quickly, effectively and broadly in order to keep up with the times. However, writing has developed into a major issue since it has been discovered that most of the students are unable to write brief and correct compositions. If they do, their written outputs are rife with mistakes. They do not clearly articulate their thoughts and ideas, nor they are arranged well. This idea is supported by the following studies.

Shatz and Wilkinson (2010) contend that learners of second language (L2) often cannot express complex thoughts because of their inability to construct correct sentences. They also highlight some of the common grammatical difficulties of learners in their English classes such as the misuse of prepositions, articles, past tense, and the third-person singular. Hence, it is necessary for students to master grammar in order to be competent in the four macro skills because incorrect use or lack of understanding of grammar may hinder communication in the learning process. Additionally, Pablo (2018), posited that teachers of English in the senior high school complain about the poor quality of written compositions of students as reflected in their
submitted outputs. The students’ writing skills remain to be deficient, particularly on grammar. In his study, he found major problems on students’ written outputs, which include: poor sentence structure; frequent errors on grammar; incomplete or awkward sentences; obscured meaning of sentences; and major problems with sentence structures. Wang (2004) found out in his study that students’ compositions remain non-idiomatic, poorly organized, and grammatically awkward. Further, their compositions are devoid of sentence variety and poor in sentence structure.

The present study is similar to the research done by Suryani, et al. (2014) who adhered that writers of research articles are expected to present research information in a structured manner by adhering to specific rhetorical patterns determined by the discourse community. However, Suryani’s paper is different from the present study in terms of instrument. The former analyzed research articles, while the present study analyzed the composition writing of the students. Errors in writing is widely observed among university students despite having several language subjects offered in Junior and Senior High School. As such, an action must be taken to address this major linguistic issue.

This research was conducted with the aim to examine the students’ errors in composition writing. Specifically, it investigated the errors committed by the students in mechanical, grammatical and structural category.

Paradigm of the Study

Figure 1: Research Paradigm

Source: Prepared by the author (2023)
The model shows that the composition writing of the first-year students in the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy are assessed in order to identify the common errors committed under mechanical, grammatical and structural category. In that way, appropriate solutions or measures be instituted to correct the errors and to attain the quality of writing compositions as a step to develop the writing skills of students especially in composition writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Error Analysis (EA)

According to Richards (2010; 5), error analysis is a task that aims to uncover mistakes present in both written and spoken language. It specifically focuses on the errors made by individuals who are learning a second or foreign language. Conducting error analysis serves several purposes, such as (a) assessing an individual's language proficiency, (b) understanding their language learning process, and (c) obtaining insights into common challenges encountered during language acquisition. Brown presents another perspective on error analysis, defining it as a procedure that involves observing, analyzing, and categorizing deviations from the rules of a second language, with the aim of revealing the underlying systems employed by learners. By combining these definitions, we can conclude that error analysis is an activity that involves identifying, categorizing, and interpreting or describing the errors made by individuals in their spoken or written communication. Its primary objective is to gain information about the common difficulties faced by individuals when expressing themselves in English, thereby assisting in teaching and preparing instructional materials.

When learning and using a foreign language, one of the biggest obstacles is the fear of making mistakes. Making errors indicates that students have not yet mastered the language rules they are learning. To address this challenge, linguists employ a strategy called error analysis. According to Mahmoodzadeh (2012) cited in Al-Khresheh (2016), error analysis (EA) is a method used to identify, categorize, and explain the errors made by second language (L2) learners. It is considered the most suitable approach for analyzing learner errors. Error analysis is also seen as a procedure utilized by researchers and teachers alike, which involves gathering language samples from learners, identifying errors, classifying them based on their nature and causes, and evaluating their severity (Keshavarz, 1999, p.168 in Ahmed et al.).
Types of Errors

According to Kuntjara (2013; 2-5) referencing Dulay, errors can be categorized into five distinct types: Omission, Addition, Misformation, Misordering, and Blends. First, omission, which refers to the act of leaving out essential elements in sentences. It is characterized by the absence of required items that should be present in a sentence. Omission commonly occurs during the initial phases of second language acquisition. Second, addition, denotes the inclusion of unnecessary items in sentences. It is identified by the presence of an "unwanted" item that does not belong in a grammatically correct utterance. This tendency to add extra elements often arises when learners excessively apply certain grammatical rules of the target language. Third, misformation, pertains to the incorrect usage of specific morphemes or structures. It is identified by the utilization of incorrect forms of certain morphemes or structures within a sentence. Fourth, misordering mentions the incorrect arrangement or placement of specific morphemes within sentences. It occurs when there is a deviation from the appropriate or expected order of morphemes in a sentence. Lastly, blends occur when two or more morphemes that have the same function appear in a sentence.

According to Johnstone, Ashbaugh, & Warfield (2002) in Javed et al., writing is one of the basic skills of English language. It is generally considered one of the most difficult skills to develop by foreign language students. Writing is a complex skill and even considered by many linguists as the most difficult of all four skills (Corder & Allen, 1974 in Adam et al).

Other types of errors fall on articles, tenses, preposition, capitalization, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, word order, and word choice.

Steps in Conducting Error Analysis

According to Kuntjara (2013; 2) referencing Corder, there are five steps involved in conducting error analysis. The steps involved typically include the following:

1. Collecting data: Gather a sufficient sample of language production or written texts from the learners. This can be in the form of spoken conversations, written compositions, or other language tasks. In this step, the researcher may control the data by narrowly specifying the samples the researcher intends to collect.
2. Identify the errors. The identification of errors involves a comparison between learners’ sentences and native speakers’ sentences in the same context. Then, the researcher can identify which part of learners’ sentences is different from the “reconstructed version.”
3. Describe the errors. The description of errors usually employs either linguistic
taxonomy or surface structure taxonomy to describe the differences between learner’s
sentences and native speakers’ sentences.
4. Explain the errors. Explaining errors involves determining their sources in
order to account for why they were made.
5. Evaluate the errors. Error evaluation is a supplementary stage in error analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The descriptive approach was used using qualitative and quantitative
data since the study analyzed the errors committed by the students in composition writing. Moreover,
descriptive design was used since the profile of the respondents in terms of sex was described.
Lastly, error analysis was used in identifying the errors committed by the students in the
writing of their autobiography.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and
Accountancy of Cagayan State University -Andrews Campus, Tuguegarao City, Cagayan for
the First Semester 2021-2022.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were the seventy first year college students under the
program, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in marketing Management.
They were chosen using purposive sampling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSBA-MM</td>
<td>1A</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSBA-MM</td>
<td>1B</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by the author (2023)

As gleaned from the table, the respondents of the study were the 70 first-year students
from the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, major in marketing Management
students in the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy for the first semester,
Research Instrument

To obtain the needed information for the study, a questionnaire was used to gather the needed information on the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex. A writing prompt was used to guide students in the writing of their autobiography. The participants’ outputs were used in analyzing errors committed in composition writing.

Data Gathering Procedure

The respondents were asked to respond to the following written prompts: “Write an autobiographical essay about a significant event, phase or person in your life. Pick a topic that interests your audience. Write about your subject in a dramatic and vivid manner, making it obvious what the event means to you.” After the writing process, the output of the students was analyzed. The written sentences were gathered and analyzed as error detection was the first stage of the analysis (James, 1998.) The errors in their composition writing were detected by the researcher and two other language teachers in the college who are PhD holders. They worked independently to determine the types of errors and categorized the errors into classifications namely; mechanical, grammatical and structural categories. Under mechanical category, errors included misspelling, lack of punctuation marks and errors in capitalization. Grammatical category included wrong tense/form of verb, wrong subject-verb agreement, and wrong or missing preposition. Lastly, structural category included fragments, faulty parallelism, wrong choice of word and misplaced modifier.

Analysis of Data

Frequency count and percentage distribution were used to interpret the personal profile of the respondents. The formula is stated below:

\[ \% = \frac{F}{N} \times 100 \]

Where:

- \( F \) = frequency
- \( N \) = total population
- \( \% \) = percent

Frequency, percentage and rank distribution were also utilized to describe the errors committed by the respondents as regards mechanics, grammar and structural categories.
Error analysis was used to analyze the errors committed by the respondents in terms of mechanical, grammatical and structural categories. Errors committed by the respondents were categorized according to the above-mentioned types of errors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents according to Personal Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year and Section</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSBA-MM1A</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSBA-MM1B</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by the author (2023)

Table 2 shows the summary of the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to personal profile. As shown 34 or 49% of the respondents belong to BSBA-MM 1A and 36 or 51% are BSBA-MM1 B. The data indicate that students of the College of Business, Entrepreneurship and Accountancy are assigned to class sections randomly based on a substantial portion of class size. As to sex, majority of the respondents are female with 55 or 79% and male with 15 or 79%. This implies that female students dominate their male counterpart.

Table 3. Frequency, Percentage and Rank Distribution of Errors in Mechanical Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanical Errors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Misspelling</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Punctuation Marks</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errors in Capitalization</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by the author (2023)

Table 3 shows the frequency, percentage and rank distribution of errors committed by the respondents in mechanical category. It is revealed that misspelling rank first with 84 or 51%, followed by lack of punctuation marks with 52 or 32% and lastly, 28 or 17% fall on errors in capitalization. This implies that students are generally weak in spelling.

The following excerpts from the respondents’ writing manifest these errors:

1. *I receive so much love and care from my parents, relatives and friends.*
2. *I love to stay in a quiet and unspoiled abode where I can find peace and serenity in the midst of a world filled with uncertainty.*

The sentences written by the respondents show their errors in spelling. In the given sentences, the students failed to observe the fundamental rule in spelling which states, “I before E after C.” As such, the sentences should be written this way: *I receive so much love and care from my parents, relatives and friends and I love to stay in a quiet and unspoiled abode where I can find peace and serenity in the midst of a world filled with uncertainty.*

Lack of punctuation marks ranked second under mechanical category. The following sentences are samples lifted.

1. *Today I am religiously adhering to my parents’ rules believing these are vital instruments I need to attain success.*

In the first sentence, the punctuation mark, comma (,) is omitted. Comma must be placed to set off introductory adverb clauses. Hence, the sentence must have been written this way. *Today, I am religiously adhering to my parents’ rules believing these are vital instruments I need to attain success.*

In the second sentence, the use of apostrophe was not observed. Apostrophe must be used in place of letters omitted in contractions. Thus, the sentence should be, “Letting someone maneuvers my decision isn’t even my choice.

Errors in capitalization ranked third under mechanical category. Samples of the respondents’ sentences are as follows:

1. *During my sophomore years, I studied at camalaniugan national High School.*

In the first sentence, the proper noun was written with a small letter in contrast to the rule that in writing proper nouns, it should start with a capital letter. In the second sentence, the first letter of the first word is written using a small letter. In writing sentences, it should always start with a capital letter. Henceforth, the sentences should be: *During my sophomore years, I studied at Camalaniugan National High School.* The second sentence should be: *Embracing all my flaws paved me to love more myself.*

The result reveals that the respondents are generally weak in spelling, not adept in the proper use of punctuation marks and confused when to use capital letters. This implies that students must be given more writing tasks in order to enrich their knowledge on correct spelling of words, use of punctuation and capitalization.
This finding is in consonance with the study of Tamayo, Ria et al., titled “Syntactical and Structural Analysis of EFL Learners’ Narrative Reports: Basis for the Proposed Business English Subject in Higher Institution” which exposed that EFL learners have committed numerous errors such as punctuation errors.

Table 4. Frequency, Percentage and Rank Distribution of Errors in Grammatical Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatical Error</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wrong tense/form of verb</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong Subject-Verb Agreement</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong or missing prepositions</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by the author (2023)

Table 4 shows the frequency, percentage and rank distribution of errors in grammatical category. It can be gleaned from the table that the greatest number of errors fall under wrong tense/form of verb with 94 or 40%; wrong subject-verb agreement with 92 or 39%; lastly, wrong or missing prepositions with 51 or 21%.

The following excerpts taken from the respondents’ writing manifest these errors. Along verb tense/form of verb, the respondents wrote the following sentences:

1. I am so excited when I got in and started buying school supplies.
2. I am very obedient and I was even awarded as the most obedient kid back then.
3. Yesterday, I play with my classmates.
4. I will becoming the best version of myself.

In the first and second sentence, it can be observed that the students failed to write the correct form of the be-verb. The present form of the be- verb was used instead of its past form. So, the first and second sentence should have been written this way. I was so excited when I got in and started buying school supplies and I was very obedient and I was even awarded as the most obedient kid back then. The third sentence failed to use the correct form of the verb specifically the form of simple past. The sentence shows an action done in the past; hence, the sentence should be written this way. Yesterday, I played with my classmates. On the other hand, the fourth sentence failed to conjugate correctly the verb in the future tense. The use of will/shall should be followed by the base form of the verb. So, the sentence should be written this way. I will become the best person of myself.

Along wrong subject-verb agreement, the students wrote the following sentences.

1. My parents has the purest intention to let me finish my studies and become who I want to be.
2. My mom and dad argue persistently.

3. My mother walk down the aisle stunningly wearing her elegant white wedding gown.

It can be viewed that the respondents failed to apply the rules in subject-verb agreement which states that the subject and the verb must agree in number. When the subject is singular, the verb must also be singular. Hence, the sentences must be written as follows:

1. My parents have the purest intention to let me finish my studies and become who I want to be.

2. My mom and dad argue persistently.

3. My mother walks down the aisle stunningly wearing her elegant white wedding gown.

Regarding the use of preposition, the following are excerpts of the students writing:

1. I was alarmed by the constant heated arguments of my mom and dad. It might ruin the serenity to the family.

2. The unending criticisms and condemnations have become an instrument to daughters like me to be more resilient.

3. I wanted to lead, so I walked to the front door but my brother stayed in the porch.

Given these examples, it can be detected that the preposition “to” in the first sentence is erroneously used. Preposition “to” is used to indicate the place someone or something is going to or toward. It is also use to indicate the place where someone participates in the activity and is use to indicate the direction of something. So, instead of using the preposition “to” in the first sentence, it should be “of” since it indicates relating to, or belonging to. Hence, the sentence must be written this way. I was alarmed by the constant heated arguments of my mom and dad. It might ruin the serenity of the family. The preposition “to” in the second sentence is incorrectly used. As replacement, “for” should be used as it indicates the reason. Thus, the sentence should be: The unending criticisms and condemnations have become an instrument for daughters like me to be more resilient. In the third sentence, the preposition “in” was inaccurately used. This preposition is used to indicate a location, opinion, belief, feeling etc. It is also used to specify day, month, season and year. Also, it indicates color, shape and size. To correct the sentence, preposition “at” must be used since it indicates a place as gleaned from the sentence. Hence, the sentence be: I wanted to lead, so I walked to the front door but my brother stayed at the porch.
The result shows that the respondents have not yet developed fully their grammatical competence as evidenced by the errors committed under grammatical category along wrong tense/form of verb, wrong agreement of the subject and verb and wrong use of preposition. It can be deduced that the respondents have limited knowledge in grammar rules. This implies that the respondents have not yet improved their linguistic competence.

This finding is similar to the study of Tamayo, Ria et al., in their study “Syntactical and Structural Analysis of EFL Learners’ Narrative Reports: Basis for the Proposed Business English Subject in Higher Institution” which exposed that EFL learners have committed numerous errors such as incorrect preposition used and error in subject-verb agreement.

Table 5. Frequency, Percentage and Rank Distribution of Errors in Structural Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Errors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fragments</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faulty Parallelism</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comma Splice</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>192</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by the author (2023)

Table 5 shows the frequency, percentage and rank distribution of errors in structural category. It reveals that the most committed error is the use of fragments with 110 (32%), followed by faulty parallelism with 84 (25%); third, is the occurrence of comma splice with 78(23%), respectively.

The use of fragments by the respondents ranked first. This error is apparent in the given sentences.

1. *Because we have to face different challenges in life.*
2. *But it is alright because I have friends.*
3. *In a world full of problems.*
4. *When my brother has a problem.*
5. *Though I did not disobey my parents.*

Fragments is one of the errors mostly committed by students in writing sentences. A fragment is just a part of the sentence. It does not convey a complete thought. To make the fragment a sentence, add a subject or a predicate. In that way, the group of words carries a complete idea. Hence, it is a sentence. To transform the given phrases into sentences, they must be written this way.

1. *Because we have to face different challenges in life, we have to be resilient.*
2. *My parents are away from me, but it is alright because I have friends.*
3. In a world full of problems, let us remain steadfast in order to survive.
4. When my brother has a problem, I usually tell him I am always at his side.
5. Though I did not disobey my parents, I was still grounded.

Faulty parallelism ranked second under structural category. The following are the lifted sentences from the respondents writing.

1. I love and enjoy to eat, watching movies, playing with my pets and hanging out with my family.
2. I take a bath, brush my teeth, put my school uniform and ready myself going to school.
3. My favorite past time are to read pocket books, dancing, writing poems and to eat.

As gleaned from the sample sentences, students’ ideas were not presented in the same grammatical structure which leads to an incorrect sentence construction. This only means they were not cognizant in the presentation of the different parts of the sentence in balance or in parallel structure. This signals an urgent attention to be given to students so they can minimize committing flaws in parallelism. Hence, the sentences must have been presented this way.

1. I love and enjoy eating, watching movies, playing with my pets and hanging out with my family.
2. I take a bath, brush my teeth, put my school uniform and go to school.
3. My favorite past time are; to read pocket books, to dance, to write poems and to eat.

An error on comma splice ranked third. It involves writing two independent clauses separated by comma. Committing this kind of error detracts the clarity of the writing because it creates faulty sentences that contain more than one idea. The following are extracts from students’ writing.

1. When I was in preschool I always cry, there was a time my class was over and my uncle was late because of that I cried, while walking on my way home, I only stopped crying when my uncle was already in front of me.
2. Life is full of twists and turns, I never really thought about that.
3. Representing my school and my hometown in a contest made me very happy, it’s an eye opener for me to strive for the best, and to build my confidence, as well.
4. I stood up to face the board with trembling hands, I solved the equation, I looked at the teacher, with stern face, she told me to sit down and said “You got it wrong because you were not listening.”

In order to avoid such error, there is a need to replace the comma with terminal punctuation. Because the clauses on either side of a comma splice are independent, the error
can be fixed by replacing the comma with a period or a semicolon. The sentences must have been written in this manner.

1. *When I was in pre-school, I always cry. There was a time my class was over and my uncle was late, because of that I cried. While walking on my way home, I only stopped crying when my uncle was already in front of me.*

2. *Life is full of twists and turns. I never really thought about that.*

3. *Representing my school and my hometown in a contest made me very happy. It’s an eye opener for me to strive for the best and to build my confidence, as well.*

4. *I stood up to face the board with trembling hands. I solved the equation. I looked at the teacher with stern face. She told me to sit down and said, “You got it wrong because you were not listening.”*

This result implies that respondents have limited knowledge in sentence writing. Moreover, it also suggests that the respondents have difficulty punctuating sentences correctly. Hence, they must be given more exercises on sentence writing and punctuating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Error</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>593</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Summary of the frequency, percentage and rank distribution of common errors committed by the respondents in Mechanical, Grammatical and Structural Category.

Source: Prepared by the author (2023)

The table shows the summary of the frequency, percentage and rank distribution of common errors committed by the respondents in mechanical, grammatical and structural category. It discloses that among the three categories of errors, grammatical category ranked first, with 237 or 40%, followed by structural category with 192 or 32%, lastly, mechanical category with 164 or 28%. The result implies that the respondents are generally weak in constructing sentences that are grammatically correct. This means that there is a need to have remedial measures to minimize students’ errors in composition writing.

This finding is similar to the study titled, “Students’ Errors in Writing,” by Na Phuket, P.R (2015), which identified the three English linguistic levels. Majority of the respondents’ faults were in linguistic grammar. Moreover, in the study, “Evaluation of Second Language Learners’ Syntactic Errors,” by Talosa et al. (2018), revealed that the most common mistake in students’ written discourse is verb tense which falls under grammatical category.
CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were drawn based on the above findings. First, that the respondents have inadequate knowledge in spelling words correctly; that the respondents lack knowledge in the application of the principles governing the consistency in the use of verb tenses, and lastly, that the respondents are weak in sentence construction. Moreover, the study concluded that the respondents are not yet proficient in writing using the target language.

Henceforth, the researchers recommend the following: First, language teachers should emphasize lessons in improving students’ linguistic competence. Second, language teachers should expose students to activities which will develop their communication skills. Third, teachers must conduct remedial measures to address students’ difficulty especially under grammatical category.

REFERENCES


