



Grammar Gaps: An Error Analysis of Grammar Difficulties in Academic Writing among Senior High School Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the most frequent grammatical errors in narrative essays written by senior high school students at UM Peñaplata College. Employing a quantitative-descriptive research design, the researchers utilized Corder’s Error Analysis Framework to categorize grammatical issues related to substitution, omission, addition, permutation, and mechanics. Fifty-four narrative essays were purposively sampled and analyzed for grammatical faults using frequency and percentage analysis. The results revealed that errors in capitalization were the most prevalent, followed by lexical substitution and punctuation issues. These findings indicated that students commonly struggled with basic grammatical conventions, particularly in the proper use of capital letters and word choice. The study concluded that these persistent errors were rooted in inadequate grammar instruction, first language interference, and limited vocabulary knowledge. It recommended targeted instructional interventions, including explicit grammar teaching and writing-focused programs to address these issues. The study contributed to the field of language education by offering empirical data on the grammatical challenges senior high school students face in narrative writing. Its implications emphasized the need for tailored pedagogical strategies to improve students’ grammar proficiency and better prepare them for academic writing demands in higher education.

Keywords: Academic writing, Error analysis, Grammar errors, Senior high school students.

1. Introduction

In the realm of academic writing, one of the most persistent challenges faced by students is the proper use of grammar, especially in constructing narrative essays. Grammar gaps—defined as recurring difficulties in applying grammar rules correctly—pose a significant barrier to students’ academic performance (Myhill, 2005). These gaps hinder their ability to articulate complex ideas with clarity and coherence, which are essential skills in academic writing. According to Meyers (2005), writing is a way to produce language, much like speaking, and it requires both structural accuracy and expressive ability. However, many students lack consistent practice and a solid understanding of grammar rules, leading to frequent grammatical errors in their writing. Understanding these grammar gaps and errors is critical to improving students’ writing skills, particularly among Senior High School learners. In this research, analyzing the grammar gaps and errors committed by Senior High School students in academic writing specifically in narrative essays can be the source to improve student’s writing skills. Garner (2012) defines a grammatical error in prescriptive grammar as faulty or disputed usage, like misplaced modifier or wrong verb tense. Similarly, Hernandez (2021) states that grammatical errors involve faulty structures, including wrong verbal tense, incorrect verbal forms, and syntax problems. It is also referred to as error usage. Grammatical errors are usually a serious challenge to second language learners. On the other hand, in the study of Baay et al. (2021), they revealed that freshmen students committed errors in writing; thus, it is urgent to study the writing errors of senior high school before they proceed to tertiary education, which demands more from students in terms of writing.

This issue is particularly pronounced in narrative essays, which require not only grammatical correctness but also creativity and personal expression. In the senior high school curriculum, narrative writing is emphasized as a means of enhancing students’ expressive and writing skills (Gonzalez, 2018). As Galupo (2024) stated, including narrative essays in academic writing helps students improve their writing proficiency and address common grammatical errors. Galupo further emphasized that integrating error analysis into writing allows students to “show not tell” in their essays, enabling them to express their ideas more effectively and produce more compelling

narratives by recognizing and correcting their mistakes. Yet, without a strong grasp of grammar, students continue to struggle in clearly communicating their thoughts, which results in reduced quality and impact of their written work. These persistent grammar challenges underscore the need to develop targeted pedagogical strategies and interventions to enhance students' grammar proficiency and overall performance in narrative writing.

As stated in the study of Dewi et. Al (2020), sufficient language competence serves students to transmit effectively as they consistently use writing accuracy when using the language. Several language conventions must be considered in writing an academically sound English essay, including considerations on morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Bauer, 2007; Gayo & Widodo, 2018). However, students still commit errors in their writing of academic essays (Dewi et al., 2020), e.g., erroneous use of singular/plural forms of words and noun phrases (Gayo & Widodo, 2018). If students possess an English language deficiency and lack a strong command of vocabulary and grammar, they most likely experience difficulties in writing (Alghazo et al., 2020). Hence, student face challenges in producing well-organized papers with quality content, language accuracy in diction and sentence construction, and good use of mechanics (Quibol-Catabay, 2016).

Several studies found various errors in the English composition writing of students at various levels (Kusumawardhani, 2017; Iqbal et al., 2021; Ekanjume-Ilongo et al., 2020; Othman, 2018). Most of the errors were made because the students had difficulty fully understanding the target language and had gotten confused with the L2 standards, resulting in students frequently applying their L1 rules instead (Calderon, 2021). Kusumawardhani (2017) also argued that it is possible that the teachers' disengaging teaching methods caused the errors made by the students. Writing and grammar cannot be separated, seeing as grammatical proficiency is one of the factors that students should master before writing anything effectively and of quality (Royani & Sadiyah, 2019). However, although people analyze grammar so that they can speak and write more clearly and effectively (Haryudin & Argawati, 2018), substitution errors are still evident in a wide range of syntactic elements that are inaccurately used by the learners in their speech, including the inappropriate usage of prepositions, pronouns, verb tenses, adverbs and adjectives, and articles (Alahmadi & Lahlali, 2019). Prior research has contributed significantly to understanding general writing difficulties, but a more focused inquiry into grammatical struggles of senior high school students remains necessary. Kumala et al, 2018 noted that students often make grammar errors due to limited exposure to English. Calderon (2021) found that confusion between L1 and L2 rules contributes to these mistakes, while Hyland (2016) highlighted how cultural differences in writing norms add further complexity in multilingual contexts. Islam and Mufidah (2022), in a study on Indonesian students, categorized common grammar errors but recommended further research targeting second-grade students—prompting this study's focus on senior high school learners. Locally, Gildore et al. (2023) analyzed essays from online learners in Davao City and found mechanical errors—such as grammar and punctuation—to be most common, suggesting a lack of mastery in basic writing conventions. The study by Graham et al. (2018) emphasized that without explicit grammar instruction, students remain unprepared for higher-level writing tasks. These findings collectively point to a gap in targeted grammar instruction for senior high school students, forming the basis for the current study, which aims to identify and quantify the common grammar difficulties encountered by senior high school students in their academic writing.

Empirical studies show that students in Senior High School, who are expected to engage in interdisciplinary learning, face challenges in grammar, which affect their overall academic competence (Braßler, 2020). However, studies by Flores and Bautista (2014) and Santos (1969) highlight ongoing challenges faced by Filipino college students in mastering the English language. These challenges include difficulties with grammar and syntax due to the complex rules, limited exposure to English outside the classroom, and low confidence resulting from the fear of making mistakes.

This study is anchored on Corder's (1967) Error Analysis Theory, which views learner errors as indicators of the language acquisition process rather than mere mistakes. Errors reflect how learners apply or transfer their first language rules when learning a second language offering insights for teachers and learners to address grammar gaps. Corder's theory involves five key stages in error analysis: collection of a sample of learner language, identification of errors in the samples, description which involves categorizing errors based on linguistic features, explanation of the reasons behind errors, such as first language interference, and evaluation of the impact of errors on communication and learning. Furthermore, the theory will cover the linguistic features, specifically the lexical, morphological, and syntactic, using the four headings of error analysis: substitution, omission, addition, permutation, and, based on demands, including errors in mechanics.

Supporting this, Chomsky's (1965) Theory of Grammatical Competence defines grammar knowledge as the internalized rules enabling learners to construct correct sentences. Deficiencies in grammatical competence often led to errors that affect students' writing accuracy. Langacker's Cognitive Grammar theory (as cited in Fodor, 2010) highlights the link between grammar and meaning, suggesting that difficulties in understanding this connection can cause errors in narrative writing. Additionally, Communicative Competence Theory (as cited in Sun, 2020) emphasizes the importance of using language effectively and appropriately, underscoring that improved grammar skills enhance overall communicating in writing.

The gap in the study emerges from the need to differentiate the specific issues faced at University of Mindanao (UM) Main from those at the UM Branch, specifically in UM Peñaplata Senior High School, as the challenges at UM Main serve as the foundational basis for this research. Previous research mainly focuses on freshmen in tertiary education, leaving a gap in understanding how grammar errors manifest in narrative essays written by senior high school students in this specific context. The researchers also considered the need to differentiate the results of analyzing errors in the first academic writing output of senior high school students from UM Main, and one of the last academic writing outputs of senior high school students from UM Peñaplata College. By addressing these distinctions, the researchers aim to highlight the unique obstacles that may exist in the two contexts, such as diverse linguistic influences or first language interference thereby providing a clearer understanding of how the problems manifest differently across these institutions. This differentiation is crucial for developing targeted solutions and recommendations tailored to the setting.

Research into grammar gaps is essential for multiple reasons. First, understanding these gaps can help educators devise strategies that address specific grammar difficulties and enhance student learning outcomes. This targeted approach can lead to more effective teaching methods and remediations that resonate with learners. Second, by focusing on identified weaknesses in grammatical proficiency, educators can implement initiatives and support systems that directly improve student performance in language skills. This can lead to better academic results and a more profound confidence in students' language abilities.

This research identifies specific grammar issues, explore their causes, and provide recommendations for improving grammar proficiency in academic writing. According to C.F Asdang (Online Communication, December 13, 2024), one of the SHS teachers of UM Peñaplata Senior High School, the SHS students clearly have difficulties in writing narrative essays. Specific grammar issues such as spelling error in basic words, inability to identify the plurality and singularity inability to identify the plurality and singularity of nouns and verbs, of nouns and verbs, as well as the inability to recognize specific parts of speech that words belong to are the reasons why SHS students experience difficulties with language. Additionally, such SHS may be unfamiliar with word functions, limiting their understanding and utilization of language in different contexts. These issues collectively hinder their language proficiency and overall comprehension. Determining the grammar gaps in constructing narrative essays of a student's academic writing is important in order to lessen the grammar errors or as much as possible to avoid grammar errors in academic writing. The result can identify what grammar errors most students commit and also recommend effective instructional strategies and interventions that could enhance students' grammar proficiency and improve them narrative writing skills.

The primary objective of this study is to quantify the most frequently occurring grammar errors in narrative essays written by senior high school students. As emphasized by Pongsiriwet (2001), learners' errors should be identified, categorized, and analyzed to investigate their causes and develop strategies for reducing them. In line with this, the study aims to answer the research question: What types of grammar errors do students commit most frequently when writing narrative essays?

This research will contribute to the global body of literature on grammar acquisition and academic writing by providing valuable insights into the common grammar difficulties faced by senior high school students, the frequent errors they commit, and the pedagogical measures needed to enhance their narrative writing skills. The findings will primarily benefit educational institutions by informing revisions, improvements, and the creation of policies aimed at helping students improve their grammar proficiency in narrative essay construction. English language teachers can also benefit, as the study may guide the development of new teaching strategies and structured, learner-centered curricula to address grammar-related challenges in academic writing. For students, the research will support the identification of grammar gaps., enabling the development of programs to strengthen their grammar competency in both narrative and academic contexts. Lastly, the study will aid future researchers by serving as a reference for further exploration of related variables and contributing to a broader understanding of academic fields but also in a global context.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Data Set

The dataset for this study comprises 54 narrative essays written by Senior High School students as part of an academic writing activity. The essays were collected to identify and analyze grammatical errors commonly made by students.

Each essay adhered to the following conditions: a.) written within a one-hour period b.) composed of three paragraphs c.) focus on the theme "Life." The students were given the same prompt and no external assistance or tools (e.g., phones, laptops, grammar checkers) were allowed during the writing process. The essays were then compiled and prepared for grammatical analysis.

This study utilized a purposive sampling technique specifically homogenous sampling. It employs purposive sampling to select the scientific articles to be analyzed (Kuantitatif, 2016). Purposive sampling was chosen because the researcher aims to focus on articles that meet specific criteria related to the research objectives (Deriyanto & Qorib, 2019).

The researchers also considered budget, time, and resources that may affect sample size considerations (Barlett et al., 2001). It is often challenging for researchers to physically approach a population due to limited financial resources (Memon et al., 2020). Aside from that, the accessibility of the subjects is another challenge that can hinder researchers' efforts for a larger sample. This is why students who propose large samples often cannot meet their obligation later during data collection in the field (Memon et al., 2020). Smaller sample size like 30 can be done most likely with the limitation of budget, time, and resources.

The data were analyzed using error analysis techniques. This method is suitable for investigating linguistic errors in scientific writing, as it allows for the systematic categorization of mistakes, each of which can significantly impact the overall quality of the written work (Ginting & Azis, 2023). Through error analysis, these 54 participants will provide a sample of their narrative essay. With this, the researchers can identify and categorize what specific grammatical features are present in the essay and can assess the frequency and types of grammar errors present in a given essay.

The inclusion criteria ensure the selection of respondents. The respondents were Bonafide Senior High School students of UM Peñaplata are exposed to a broad range of subjects. The curriculum emphasizes the development of reading, writing, and speaking skills, making them a fit for this research. The student-respondents had ensured their informed consents and assents to take part in the research and allowed the utilization of their narrative essays for analysis.

For the criteria of exclusion, students from Grade 7 to 10 were unaddressed. In addition, students who do not have sufficient proficiency in the language of the study, students with irregular attendance or those who are frequently absent and students who do not provide informed consent or whose parents/guardians do not provide consent were also excluded from the study.

The study was conducted in UM Peñaplata SHS during the school year of 2024- 2025. The school is located in

Obenza St., Peñaplata Island Garden City of Samal Davao del Norte. The researchers selected UM Peñaplata College since it is the only private higher education institution that has Senior High School (SHS).

2.2. Materials and Instrument

The English subject teacher assigned the respondents a narrative essay to complete in order to gauge the SHS students' proficiency with proper grammatical usage in academic writing. According to Hyland (2002), the writing competence includes the learner's ability in grammar, organizing ideas, and punctuation. For English students, the process provided two-step as first: asked students to write an English essay and second: analyzed writing essays by employing an analysis framework adapted Corder's (1967) error analysis. Sucipto (2018) studied common grammatical errors in writing narrative essays of English students at Jambi University, Indonesia. This study aimed to reveal common grammatical errors in writing essays. The data was collected by asking students to write English essays based on the theme: life experiences. Then, the researchers used format error identification to analyze data.

2.3. Design and Procedure

This study employed a quantitative research approach. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research is an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true. Through the use of a quantitative approach, participants' grammatical gaps and error types were thoroughly evaluated and understood. This design was realized through error analysis that can be used on all types of written texts no matter where the material comes from that was anchored to the theory of Corder. As stated in the study Karim et al. (2018), Corder defines error analysis as a process of collection, classification, identification, disclosure, and evaluation of errors. It is a tool that aims to analyze and evaluate learners' errors. Respondents completed orientation, which included providing background data and consent. Researchers assessed the frequency of grammatical faults in academic writing using the quantitative method.

2.3.1. Data Collection

The data collection process began with formal communications, including letters addressed to the College Dean, SHS Principal, and SHS Advisers. An orientation was conducted to inform participants about the study, followed by the distribution and retrieval of assent and consent forms. The study was then conducted by collecting narrative essays from SHS students. Grammar error types were identified by the researchers through Corder's criteria and the essays were validated by the UM Peñaplata English language teachers. The results were interpreted by a statistician, and a final analysis of the finding was completed.

2.3.2. Data Analysis.

To analyze the data, the researchers followed Corder's (1967) five stage error analysis procedure: data collection, classification, identification, explanation, and evaluation. This framework was applied to 54 student narrative essays, focusing on errors in lexical, morphological, and syntactic structures under the categories of substitution, omission, addition, and permutation. Additionally, following Gildore et al. (2023), mechanical errors—specifically in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling— were also included in the analysis, as they contribute to a more comprehensive evaluation of student's writing accuracy.

2.3.3. Statistical Tools.

Frequency and percentage serve as fundamental statistical tools for counting occurrences of errors and assessing their relative significance within a total framework. This combination of frequency and percentage analysis organized the assessment process and supported the reliability of research conclusions drawn from the data collected.

2.3.4. Ethical Consideration

The researchers systematically adhered to the guidelines throughout the study. Additionally, they ensured compliance with the study protocols, which included assessments and standardized criteria for managing the population and handling data.

Table 1. Types of Grammar Errors Students Commit Frequently when Writing Narrative Essays (f = 1093)

Types of Errors	f	%
Substitution		
Lexical	151	13.8
Syntactic	82	7.5
Morphological	74	6.8
Omission		
Syntactic	80	7.3
Morphological	42	3.8
Addition		
Syntactic	44	4.0
Lexical	32	2.9
Morphological	14	1.3
Permutation		
Syntactic	61	5.6
Mechanics		
Spelling	81	7.4
Capitalization	302	27.6
Punctuation	130	11.9

3. Result and Discussion

Table 1 present the frequency and percentage distribution of grammar errors commonly committed by students in writing narrative essays, based on a total of 1,093 identified errors. The data categories the errors into five main types: substitution, omission, addition, permutation, and mechanics. Among these, mechanical errors, particularly capitalization, were the most frequent, accounting for 27.6% of the total errors. Substitution errors followed, with lexical substitution errors followed, with lexical substitution being the most prevalent at 13.8%. This classification highlights specific areas where students struggle with grammar, providing a clearer understanding of the linguistic challenges they face in narrative writing.

3.1. Errors in Substitution

The most committed errors under substitution are at the lexical level (13.8%), followed by syntactic (7.5%), and the least problematic is the morphological level (6.8%).

3.1.1. Lexical Level

Errors in Substitution occur when a word was substituted in a clause or sentence. Below is an example of errors in Substitution under lexical level committed by the students.

When I was a kid, I used to *depend everything* to my mother. (NRE-ABM12#2)

As observed in the first excerpt, the student committed an error by using the wrong word entirely, often a word that exists but doesn't fit the meaning or context. It uses the correct verb "depend," but it uses the wrong preposition ("to") and an incorrect direct object ("everything"). The verb "depend" usually takes the preposition "on" and the thing being depended upon as the object. In this sense, "to" is being *substituted* for "on."

Students might not know the exact word to use in a certain situation, the reason why they replace it with a more familiar but wrong word. Thus, this requires vocabulary development, increased exposure to formal texts, and explicit instruction in academic word use.

3.1.2. Syntactic Level

It describes how words and phrases are put together to make precise sentences. Below is an example of errors in Substitution under syntactic level committed by the students.

As I look back, I *remembered* the countless moments that have made me laugh, cry, and grow. (NRE-ABM12#1)

As observed in the sentences above, the phrase "As I look back" indicates a present action or a habitual action of reflecting on the past. To maintain consistency in tense and to logically connect the act of looking back with the recalling of memories, the present tense form "remember" should be used. The past tense "remembered" implies the act of remembering happened at a specific point in the past, separate from the ongoing act of looking back. The present tense "remember" fits better with the continuous nature of recalling memories while reflecting.

Students have limited exposure to correct sentence structures. Without regularly reading or hearing proper sentence patterns, they struggle to internalize correct syntax. Gradually teaching sentence patterns, clause types, and common structures through clear examples can help improve students' ability to construct proper sentence structures.

3.1.3. Morphological Level

The morphological level examines how morphemes, or the constituents of words, combine or stand alone to convey various meanings. Below is an example of errors in Substitution under syntactic level committed by the students.

I am currently living my life to the fullest. As a student of UMPen, I am *greatful* that I've enrolled in this school. (NRE-HUMSS11#8).

As presented in the sentence above, the student committed an error at the morphological level. The suffix "-ful" is correctly used to form adjectives indicating a quality (e.g., helpful, joyful, careful). However, the base word is "grate," and when the "-ful" suffix is added, the 'e' is retained, resulting in "grateful." In "greatful," the 'e' has been substituted with nothing, leading to an incorrect morphological form of the word.

Students may not fully understand how to form correct words using prefixes, suffixes, or root words. As a result, they often confuse verb and adjective forms. Teaching word forms and affixes clearly can help them use the correct word in sentences.

As stated by Sarfraz (2011), most of the errors the students committed were the product of the interlingual activity of the learners, and other errors were the consequence of influence from the mother tongue. The results reveal that students committed errors in substitution due to the interference of their first language as they apply grammar rules and vocabulary from their native language. Second, they have limited vocabulary that they tend to substitute unfamiliar words with more familiar words, but often incorrect. Grammatical overgeneralization is a phenomenon that students may overapply grammar rules. This caused students to construct a sentence with the incorrect order of the words.

3.2. Errors in Omission

The problematic categories under Omission are the syntactic level (7.3%) and the morphological level (3.8%).

3.2.1 Syntactic Level

The syntactic level includes an error in omitting words in sentences, mostly articles and other necessary words or phrases. For example:

My mom and my dad are separated but they (*are*) still providing my needs (NRE-ABM11#7).

As shown in the examples above, the omitted error on the syntactic level is the auxiliary verb "are" is missing before "providing". The error is the omission of the auxiliary verb needed for the present continuous tense. The verb "providing" requires a form of "to be" (*am, is, are*) before it to be grammatically correct in this context.

Students sometimes leave out important parts of a sentence, making it incomplete or grammatically incorrect. Leaving out an auxiliary verb can break the sentence structure and change its meaning. Consistent guided practice helps students internalize the need for complete sentence structure.

3.2.2. Morphological Level

The morphological level includes the inclusion of morphemes affecting the form of the word. For example:

I tried to *playing* different kind of video games and I never get bored finding one. (NRE-ABM11#6)

As shown in the examples above, the student committed errors in the “-ing” suffix in “*playing*” indicates a present participle or gerund form, which is not correct after “to” in an infinitive.

Students are often confused about how endings like -s, -ed, or -ing change a word’s meaning. As a result, they focus on expressing their ideas and sometimes forget to use the correct word endings.

Gulö and Rahmawelly (2018) posit that errors in writing happen because of inappropriate knowledge or false knowledge of the target language. Their study discussed the common omissions, and it shows that verb tense markers are detrimental to students’ writing. The results show that 95 cases were identified in dealing with -s and -es. It is apparent that the students have a problem with the basic rule of subject-verb agreement. The researchers found that around 20% of occurrences in the data have an error in -ing. Using the wrong verb form will result in incorrect writing structure. The results reveal that students committed errors in omission due to incomplete grammatical knowledge in using articles, helping verbs, subject-verb agreement, and pronouns. Thus, they have processing limitations on content and omit function words such as articles and preposition. Lack of attention to accuracy prioritizing fluency or finishing the task over grammatical accuracy, leading to omitted elements.

3.3. Errors in Addition

The most committed categories under Addition are syntactic (4.0%), followed by lexical (2.9%), and the least problematic is morphological (1.3%).

3.3.1. Syntactic Level

Syntactic errors disrupt sentence structure and meaning by affecting elements like articles, prepositions, and phrases. This leads to sentences that are grammatically incorrect or difficult to comprehend due to flawed word arrangement. Examples of these syntactic errors can be found within their essays.

My liFe is Full oF stress about my academic pressure but i need to *Focus my journey* For my Family and my self I’m not a better person , but i want to be a perfect person i want to travel everywhere and leave this country someday. (NRE-ABM11#9)

The provided examples demonstrate instances where students incorporated superfluous components into their sentences. Specifically, the initial example presents a run-on sentence, which the phrase “Full oF stress about my academic pressure” contains the unnecessary preposition “about,” which should be removed as it is redundant after “stress.” Additionally, the phrase “focus my journey” lacks a clear object to complete its meaning, requiring further clarification. Capitalization errors, such as in “Focus” and “Family,” need correction. The comma following “person” is superfluous and should be omitted. The conjunction “and” is added without establishing a clear connection between the ideas, so it should be removed to improve sentence flow. Furthermore, the relationship between “travel everywhere” and “leave this country” is not well-defined, and it would be beneficial to specify the contrast or connection between these two concepts for greater clarity.

Students sometimes use grammar rules too broadly and add extra words, making the sentence sound awkward or wrong. Some also add unnecessary words to make their writing sound formal, which can lead to grammar mistakes.

3.3.2. Lexical Level

Lexical words are essential for providing context and indicating the subject matter of a sentence. For example:

My life is having some problems in my studies, but *I needed to finish my study* because I want to *graduate earn some money so can travel* anywhere and help my family. (NRE-ABM11#10)

The phrase “My life is having” is an incorrect word choice and construction; it should be “I am having.” The word “needed” is in the past tense, but since the sentence refers to a current or ongoing goal, it should be in the present tense. The verb “graduate” requires a connector to create a coherent sentence, such as “and,” or the sentence needs rephrasing. Additionally, “So can travel” is missing a subject; the pronoun “I” should be explicitly included.

Students sometimes add extra words because they are not sure which word to use. They may also not fully understand how words fit together, so they combine words that don’t belong in the same sentence.

3.3.3. Morphological Level

The morphological level focuses on how morphemes, the building blocks of words, are combined or used independently to create different meanings. Below are specific instances of these errors found in their writing:

My Life is better with my beloved family because they always help with my studies and *they give me what i needed in my life*. (NRE-ABM11#10)

The word “needed” is in the past tense, which doesn’t match the present tense context of the sentence. Therefore, the verb form should be adjusted to align with the present tense. Also, the pronoun “i” should always be capitalized.

Students use wrong word forms that are not needed in the sentence, which makes the sentence grammatically incorrect. Confusion about the verb forms and tenses leading them to add affixes incorrectly.

Unlike omission, where writers leave out necessary information, addition is a mistake where writers add unnecessary parts to their writing. When unsure, writers might include something because it seems right, but it leads to unnecessary additions as stated in the study of Yilmaz and Demir (2020). According to their study, which

is similar study to the researchers, it identified omission (22.71%), addition (13.56%), substitution (58.46%), and permutation (5.25%) errors. With addition being the third most frequent error, it significantly contributes to students' writing difficulties. Their research shows this problem mainly occurs in sentence structure (38.95%), then in word choice (32.10%), and finally in word forms (28.95%). Students struggle with using articles (a, an, the) and adding extra phrases in their essays. Their word choice errors include adding incorrect prepositions. In terms of word forms, they misuse verb tenses (adding -s, -ed, or -ing incorrectly) and form plurals incorrectly. Yilmaz and Demir (2020) attributed these errors to differences between students' native language and English, which vary greatly in vocabulary and structure. They also emphasized that strong writing skills require proficiency in other language skills. The result reveals that due to transfer of first language (L1), student's first language uses more markers, auxiliaries, or word repetitions, they may add similar structures into English even when not needed. Then, lack of understanding of English syntax, students who are unsure may insert words as placeholder or to "sound right".

3.4. Error in Mechanics

The most problematic categories under Mechanics are capitalization (27.6%), which is the dominant error committed by the students, followed by punctuation (11.9%), and spelling (7.4%).

3.4.1. Capitalization.

Capitalization must be followed when we start a sentence. It is the most basic grammar rule there is. Next is the capitalization of proper nouns and first-person singular pronoun "I", the name of a person, place, event, date, brand, title, or thing. In the essay of the students, the errors are mainly at the beginning of the sentence and the improper capitalization of "I". For example:

Maybe in another life *i* can be what *i* want, I can be part of any airlines, it maybe not now but *i* hope soon. (NRE-HUMSS12#8)

Therefore, "maybe" should be "Maybe", and "if" should be "If". Also, the first-person singular pronoun "I" (and its contractions like "I'm" and "I'll") is always capitalized, regardless of its position in the sentence.

Many students don't fully know when to capitalize proper nouns such as names, titles, the word "I", days of the week. Thus, texting and social media often ignore capitalization, which may carry over into academic writing.

3.4.2. Spelling

Spelling errors are committed due to confusion of syllables, sounds, repetition of letters, and difficult pronunciations. Below is an example of errors in spelling committed by students:

Life as a student is a crucial phase of life, filled with excitement, *challenges*, and opportunities for grow. (NRE-HUMSS12#11)

Spelling errors occurred in the next sample sentence is the word "challenges". *Challenges* should be *challenges*. The confusion of the repetition of letters is most likely causing it. Since the word's double letter "l" functions as a single sound, incorrect spelling will most likely be committed.

Students may not be familiar with English spelling patterns. Since many English words are not spelled the way they sound, it can be hard to spell them correctly. If a student's first language has regular spelling rules, they might mistakenly apply those rules to English.

3.4.3. Punctuation

Punctuation marks are a set of symbols used to separate sentences, clauses, phrases, list items, etc. These symbols are imperative as they help to organize, clarify, and emphasize ideas in a text or sentence. A punctuation error committed primarily by students is the error in Commas. Below is an example of errors committed by the students:

However student life is not without its challenges. (NRE-HUMSS12#11)

As shown in the sentences above, both contain punctuation errors, specifically commas. The first sample sentence 'However student life without its challenges' is now strictly a grammatical error that would make the sentence incoherent and the absence of a comma after the introductory adverb "However" is a punctuation issue that affects the readability and flow. It's conventional to use a comma after introductory adverbs or adverbial phrases.

Students often do not understand how to use punctuation marks like commas, periods, apostrophes, and quotation marks. As a result, they make punctuation errors because of limited knowledge, habits from their first language, or lack of writing practice.

Language teachers would assert that errors in mechanics are a significant issue in writing. Even experienced authors are not immune to making such mistakes. This highlights the challenges of mastering mechanics, as it is not based on rigid usage but rather follows specific rules and conventions. Ahmed (2019) described writing as a vital yet challenging language skill to master, particularly when compared to listening, speaking, and reading. The core purpose of writing is to effectively express ideas and communicate messages to the reader. Writers must therefore pay close attention to formal elements, especially mechanics. The findings of Ahmed's study reveal that students face several difficulties in essay writing, particularly with word order (12.63%), tense (16.42%), spelling (12.94%), capitalization (12.08%), punctuation (15.31%), prepositions (7.73%), coherence of ideas (8.84%), and vocabulary (14.05%). Among these, three aspects - spelling, capitalization, and punctuation - are directly related to the current study, reinforcing the claim that mechanical errors significantly hinder students' writing competency.

The study reveals that the most common error under mechanics is Capitalization (27.6%) in the students' essays. An in-depth analysis and discussion of the data revealed that the most frequent mechanical errors stem from the failure to capitalize the first letter of the word from a sentence and the consistent misuse of the first-person singular pronoun "I" in lowercase. It is followed by punctuation (11.9%) and spelling (7.4%) as the least problematic errors. The results indicate that students struggle to identify words that require capitalization and often neglect to capitalize the initial word in sentences within their essays.

3.5. Errors in Permutation

It is the type of error in writing where the parts of the sentence were not properly organized in the correct order. For example:

Even though I am so maldito but on the other side I work so hard to make my amily so proud of me, and someday my dream job will come true then i'll buy anything what I want. (NRE-HUMSS12#13)

As observed in the sample sentences above, it presents errors in Permutation, specifically under the syntactic level. The student's simultaneous use of "even though" and "but" is grammatically incorrect, as both serve the same function of indicating contrast, leading to redundancy and an awkward sentence. Also, the phrase "anything what I want" contains an error in word order and the wrong relative pronoun; "that" should be used instead of "what," or the pronoun can be omitted entirely. Moreover, the sentence suffers from excessive length, confusing clause placement, particularly with "then I'll buy anything what I want," and a lack of clear punctuation or connecting phrases to delineate separate ideas. Additionally, the clause "then I'll buy..." requires a linking phrase like "and" or a restructuring of the sentence to improve its coherence and flow. The original wording is grammatically correct, but simplifying it enhances clarity and conciseness.

Permutation is an error that exists only for syntax. It can neither be morphological nor lexical. In a sentence, elements may not be in order, and this creates an incorrect structure, hence, it only exists at the syntactic level. To discuss further, the result shows the least error in the syntactic level, which connotes the disordering of words and incorrect structure of phrases and sentences. According to Sarfraz (2011), many student errors result from interlingual transfer, with the influence of their native language being a significant factor. This leads to sentences with incorrect word order. Sermsook, Liamnimitr, and Pochakorn's 2017 study further corroborates this, finding that interlingual variation is the primary cause of problematic errors, including those related to word order, within a sample of 296 errors. The students create errors with the order of words, especially interchanging nouns in sentences, confusing them. The students are more likely not aware of the rule in sentence structure, which makes the writing style incompetent. Moreover, their writing constituted the failure of identifying and applying parts of speech properly in their essay writing.

The data presented in this study aligns closely with Corder's (1967) Error Analysis Theory, which emphasizes learners' errors as meaningful reflections of language acquisition rather than random mistakes. According to the theory, analyzing errors through identification, classification, and explanation that helps reveal underlying linguistic challenges. The table of results categorizes students' narrative writing errors (substitution, omission, addition, permutation, and mechanics), mirroring Corder's descriptive stage. For instance, lexical substitution (13.8%) and capitalization errors (27.6%) dominate the findings, suggesting that learners transfer first language habits or lack sufficient exposure to English grammar norms. These quantitative patterns provide insight into areas where instructional intervention is most needed, thereby fulfilling Corder's final step of evaluation, which aims to inform pedagogical decisions to improve communication and learning outcomes.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

4.1. Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to determine and examine the most common grammar mistakes committed in the narrative essays of Senior High School students in UM Peñaplata. According to data gathered, the results show that mechanics errors—capitalization were the most frequent. These involved improper use of capital letters on proper nouns and the first-person singular pronoun "I" and, on non-proper nouns, capitalizing random ordinary words. This indicates that learners are likely to neglect the basic capitalization rules despite trying to emphasize key points in writing. After capitalization, lexical substitution mistakes were the second most frequent. They consisted of errors in inappropriate or wrong word use within sentences or clauses, tending to interfere with the meaning and clarity of the text. Furthermore, punctuation errors, also under mechanics mistakes were also the case. These consisted of misuse or omission of punctuation marks employed to delimit sentences, phrases, or lists—the fluency and cohesion of students' writing being affected.

The theoretical underpinnings of this study reveal that a limited number of grammatical rules allow for the generation of an unlimited number of correct sentences. On the other hand, grammatical errors may be committed due to faulty structures, such as: wrong verb tense, incorrect verb forms, syntax problems, and errors of usage. Hence, this supports the results of the study wherein Senior High School (SHS) students committed grammar errors in narrative essays, specifically in terms of unconventional or controversial usage, such as misplaced modifiers, inappropriate verb tenses, punctuation, and capitalization.

All of these errors were observed to occur mainly due to the students' difficulty in properly using grammar in academic writing, especially in narrative essays. Furthermore, a lack of knowledge in basic grammar as a foundation for writing was also observed.

4.2. Recommendation

The researchers recommended that schools implement targeted writing interventions focusing on capitalization, lexical substitution, and punctuation to enhance students' foundational writing skills. Schools should allocate time and resources for remedial programs such as STREAM and STAR in Senior High School and integrate writing-focused workshops into. Teachers are encouraged to employ explicit instruction, scaffolded practice, and continuous feedback to address specific writing issues. Students should actively participate in writing exercises and peer reviews to develop self-awareness and responsibility for their writing accuracy. Future researchers are advised to explore the effectiveness of various instructional strategies and digital tools in improving students' writing conventions to further inform evidence-based practices.

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