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Common Written Error Analysis Committed by EFL Graders at a Secondary School in Vietnam

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Abstract

This study investigated common written errors and the causes that language learners frequently commit. A descriptive qualitative approach was conducted with the participation of 57 eleventh-graders at a high school in Hung Yen province during the second term of the academic year 2021-2022. The respondents were requested to participate in five writing tests in three successive months to generate their morphological, lexical, syntactical, and mechanical written errors basing on Ferris' (2014) model of Error Analysis. The results reveal that the respondents are not good at English writing due to both the negligence of the testing and assessment format, which concentrates on multiple-choice tests and the demotivation and discouragement of learner autonomy in improving writing skills. The finding of this research would help the educational policy-makers adjust English teaching curriculum to give a priority to promote writing skills. Simultaneously, teachers of English should change their pedagogical practices to raise their learners' awareness of the key role of error correction in writing skills. For English language learners, they could recognize the importance of corrective feedbacks from their teachers, peer correction on their written errors that they committed while learning to write effectively in English. Lastly, future studies might confer the findings of this research for the reference to serve as the resourceful enrichment of their research liability.

Keywords: Error analysis, Mixed-methods approach, committed, testing and assessment format, Learner autonomy

Introduction

English language teaching and learning (ELT) basically develops four micro-language skills, namely reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In fact, methodological approaches have been reshaped and reformed continuously with the aim to gain the most fruitful teaching and learning outcomes. In addition, the role of teachers in class sessions has been shifted from teacher-centered to learner-centered approach, which focuses more on the learners' academic achievements (Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014). Therefore, teachers' pedagogical practices have to be renovated to address challenges and requirements of current ELT expectations. It can be said that teaching is an art, not science. As such, language learners are unavoidable when language learners try to acquire not only a second language (L2) but also their mother tongue (L1). It is evidently undeniable that writing plays an important role in ELT among four micro-skills in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). It is also considered writing as one of the most challenging and difficult skills to be developed because the ability to produce good writing pieces does not come from the inborn aptitude or innate skills, which has to be learnt and experienced by intensive teaching and learning practices. Basically, writing comprises accurate and meaningful components intertwined to yield a well-written output, requiring a developed scheme for word choice to represent the writer's communicative ideas coherently and clearly. The principal objective of writing is to convey messages to readers successfully. In particular, the conveyance of information to the audience in such a convincible and understandable way requires a writer to consider seriously rhetorical organizations, appropriate language use, or relevant lexicon which makes up appropriate and purposeful writing pieces. In other words, effective writing demands not only generating and organizing ideas coherently as well as cohesively but also expressing the ideas into readable texts meaningfully and accurately.

The current situation of ELT in EFL classes in Vietnam, especially at general education level, has reformed continuously to provide the most effectiveness for language learners to achieve expectant degrees. Presently, the learning outcomes set for the end of the secondary level are to enable school-leavers to use English as a means of communication at a certain level of proficiency in four macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing to meet basic and practical communication needs on familiar topics relating to school, recreational activities, or future career paths. ELT at the secondary level continues forming and developing basic knowledge of English, including word pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar.

Secondary graders are supposed to apply different learning methods to manage learning time, to use information technology in learning and self-study, to strengthen self-study methods and self-assessment, to take responsibility for learning results, and to form lifelong learning habits (Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), p. 7).[1] Assessing the aforementioned objectives, the core principles are to require secondary graders to acquire English for cross-communication purposes. As a result, writing skill seems to be inferior to other micro-skills.

Actually, writing skill is very different from the others in that a good or proficient writing piece demand the writer to be knowledgeable on the morphological, lexical, syntactical and mechanical components of grammar. If these errors are not considered, they may affect the development of language competency on the part of the learners. The realization that the L2 learners' errors are potentially important for the understanding of the process of second language acquisition (SLA). Thus, knowing how to handle errors are very necessary for ELT. Brown (2014) emphasizes that the importance of errors should not be neglected in the teaching process of language. Conducting error analysis gives a basis for identifying grammatical strengths and weaknesses of language learners. According to Corder (1975), error analysis is a part of the investigation of the process of language learning resembling methodologically the study of the acquisition of the mother tongue to provide a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and to give indications as to the learning process. As error analysis is expected to uncover innumerable problem areas in the ELT of writing, it can be made use of to monitor and analyze the learners' language. It dictates the missing element that can complete the development of their competence. In addition, written error analysis can affirm the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the teaching procedures employed inside the classroom by the teacher; thus, it should be adopted as a ground for the improvement of educational curricula as well as ELT materials. Although the importance of written error analysis is very remarkable, not many studies have conducted at the general educational level, which seems to be popular at higher education level. This research was conducted to fill in the missing piece of the overall pictures of ELT. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are common written errors committed by eleventh-graders in English writing?
2. What are causes of common types of errors committed by eleventh-graders in English writing?

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1   General Education English Language Curriculum (Issued with the Circular No. 32/2018/TT-BGDDT dated 26 December 2018 of the Minister of Education and Training). https://data.moet.gov.vn/index.php/s/CXTqAkDQNTwyEPt#pdfviewer

This study would be functioned as a resourceful reference to benefit directly or indirectly those who are involved in ELT, and also as a strong ground for the crafting of an improved and enriched curriculum meeting the requirements of EFL to reform and renovate the ELT policies. In addition, the research findings could provide the bases for constructing teacher training materials in any workshops to hone deeper their teaching capability relating to writing error correction. As far as teachers are concerned, they should consult the study findings to adjust their pedagogical practices during classroom sessions relating to writing periods. They could change the ways to prepare the lesson plans, implement the methodological approach, and deliver their instructions. Furthermore, the findings of the research could substantiate and supplement practical knowledge and understanding of error correction in writing in an effective and efficient way. They would carefully scrutinize the teaching methodologies and materials they plan to use in writing lessons. For the future researchers, the results of the study would serve as useful reference source in conducting similar studies.

Literature review

Perspectives on Error and Written Corrective Feedback in SLA

The concerns about the extent to which errors should be regarded as negative or positive have been central debates among SLA researchers recently. The reason why this matter is focal stems from two currents of opinions: firstly, many SLA theorists (e.g., VanPatten & Williams, 2020; James, 1998; Ferris, 2014) suppose that errors are treated as linguistic acts which need to be prevented from their emergence. Secondly, many SLA scholars (e.g., Corder, 1975; Richards, 1975; Jobeen et al., 2015) argue that errors should be seen as positive linguistic acts they highlight a learner's present level of acquisition and the role they can play in the development of the target language. Generally, perspectives on error and written corrective feedback in SLA principally cover two aspects, particularly cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives. Concerning cognitive perspective, it includes three representative models. First, information processing model reflects the view that information can be manipulated in either a controlled or automatic manner, and that learning involves a shift from controlled towards automatic processing. In this regard, error and corrective feedback are ignored because this model concentrates on the controlled-to-automated process in SLA (e.g., VanPatten & Williams, 2020; Doff, 1995; Harmer, 2018). Second, the role of written corrective feedback, the specific contribution of corrective feedback is seen as less explicit than the role of instruction (Ferris, 2014). Lastly, interactionist perspectives have highlighted the role of oral interaction between learners and their interlocutors. Although written

corrective feedback, especially the advent of focus on language form and structure, contributes greatly to achieve fluent oral objectives or meaning-focused interaction, attention is not only paid to writing but also to the development of listening, speaking and reading skills in ELT classrooms (VanPatten & Williams, 2020). However, the efficiency and role of writing corrective feedback in L2 development are still exciting and dynamic areas of investigation, and possibly keeps engaging the energy and insights of established and emerging scholars.

Approaches to Teach Writing

Many writing approaches have been put forward by different scholars (e.g., Badger, 2002; Onozawa, 2010; Rashtchi et al., 2019; Juraboyeva & Siddikova, 2021) to date. In general, four techniques to writing are widely accepted and commonly cited in the field of research within EFL and English for academic purposes (EAP) specially, product, process, genre, and process-genre approaches. Firstly, process-based writing refers to an approach of teaching writing in which teachers collaborate with their learners to produce a text together. Ngadiman (2012) states that final outputs of learners' writing are greatly influenced by the principle relative to teachers' formative feedbacks during the process writing. The role of teachers is shifted from being a marker to a facilitator, a mentor, or a reader. Similarly, Sun and Feng (2009) believe that feedback is more useful between drafts, which conversely results in demotivating the creativity of learners' writing self-efficacy. Secondly, product-based approach refers to an approach concentrating on learners' final production. This strategy pivots the writing outcome of learners for the sake of making use of theories to the final product. By the time, learners accumulate enough knowledge to become more proficient and independent writers (Arimbawa, 2012; Rashtchi et al., 2019; Kadmiry, 2021). When adopting this strategy, learners just imitate the sample text provided and produce the stereotype basing on what requires them to fulfil (Badger, 2002; Arimbawa, 2012; Juraboyeva & Siddikova, 2021). Thirdly, genre-based approach denotes an approach to the teaching of writing which bases a writing curriculum on the different types of text structures (Badger, 2002). Proponents of a genre approach argue that control over specific types of writing are necessary for full participation in social processes (Thuy, 2017). Haerazi (2017) asserts that this approach tries to equip learners with the thorough understanding of the lexical and grammatical features of different rhetoric contexts for the purpose of communicative purposes, and social interactions. However, Badger (2002) argues that genre approaches down play the skills needed to produce a text and see learners as largely passive, so they are likely to become demotivated and unable to use the language creatively, which also reflects in other studies (e.g., Thuy, 2017; Haerazi 2017; Rashtchi et al., 2019). Finally, the term of process-genre approach mentions the actual combination of three approaches; that is, process, product, and genre approach (Badger, 2002). Practically, the genre-process approach can develop students' skill in writing, involve students about knowledge of language, and context knowledge (Agesta, 2016). In its essence, a process-genre approach starts with the situation which gives rise to a particular genre of writing (Ghina, 2016; Alabere & Shapii, 2019). Actually, the characteristic of this approach is the implementation of recursive writing process such as prewriting, drafting, revision and editing (Ghufron, 2016; Abate, 2019; Ghina, 2016). Basing on the genre-based approach, the ideas such as knowledge of the context, the purpose of writing and certain text features are adopted.

Major Components in Academic Writing

Cohesion and coherence are two essential characteristics of well-written paragraphs. Cohesion refers to the way vocabulary and grammatical structures are used logically and purposefully to make connections between the ideas within a text. It provides flow and sequence to improve the readers' comprehension of any pieces of writing. Cohesion focuses on the grammatical and/or lexical relationships between the different elements of a text. This may be the relationship between different sentences or between different parts of a sentence. Halliday and Hasan (2013, p. 299) claim that cohesion provides the reader or listener with all the missing pieces and the components of the picture which are not present in the text. Bailey (2011, p. 115) defines cohesion as the logical connections of a text at sentence level. This term involves grammatical and lexical relationships between the elements of written production, the use of connectives and conjunctions. Likewise, coherence refers to the condition when the ideas are arranged smoothly and clearly from one sentence to the next and all the parts of the text logically and intentionally relate to one another (Zahra et al., 2020). Coherence deals with the way a text conveys the logical and simple conveyance of sense to the readers through the organization of its content, and the relevance and clarity of its concepts and ideas (Leli, 2020; Gunas et al., 2020; Zahra et al., 2020). Thus, a paragraph is coherent when the sentences are interrelated with one another mentioning one single idea as an integrated piece of writing, rather than a series of separate sentences (Bailey, 2011).

Errors in Language Learning Process

When conveying a piece of information in written or spoken language, it is hard for L1 and L2 learners to avoid making errors while using a language because they can create incorrect language samples and with the feedback receiving from the interlocutors, they can process the new language rules (Péry-Woodley, 1991; Yang, 2010; Wood, 2017). What teacher should do about errors is to find the sources and take measures.

The benefits of conducting error analysis are considered as a good alternative to describe and explain errors made by ESL/EFL learners since the errors could rebind the sources of the errors, which help teachers better treat and overcome errors (Lastres-López & Manalastas, 2017; Wood, 2017; Atmaca, 2016). In this sense, error committing is an observable and common phenomenon occurring among L1 and L2 speakers. The following errors are commonly reported in this research field (Yang, 2010).

(i) The omission of grammatical morphemes: she go; cat go there…
(ii) The double marking of a given semantic feature: Joe doesn't likes; I didn't spilled it…
(iii) The over generalized application of irregular rules: I falled; he gots a flower…
(iv) The use of one form for the other man no go there; no eating that; have a pants…
(v) The wrong word order: what that is? I know what that is…

Error Versus Mistake

It is necessary to make a distinction between mistakes and errors in language learning to find out technically two very different phenomena. "A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a "slip" in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly" (Brown, 2014, p. 257). Generally, speakers are likely to make mistakes naturally when using L1 and L2 languages. Native speakers are able to recognize and correct mistakes because they neglect to follow the perfection in the process of producing speech, not the deficiency in language competence. Thus, when mistakes occur, the speakers are capable of self-correcting to the right state of correct language usage. On the contrary, the term "error" is popularly used to refer to a form of structure that a native speaker deems unacceptable because of the lack of language competence. Hence, an error results from incomplete knowledge. In language learning, error involves any systematic deviations from the rules of the target language system. Moreover, errors are caused by lack of knowledge about the target language or by incorrect hypothesis about it. Error and mistake could be contrasted by the corrective chances; that is, an error cannot be self-corrected whereas mistakes can be self-corrected if the deviation is pointed out to the speaker. However, the distinction of mistake or error seems to be vague from time to time if basing on a learner's self-correction ability. Amara (2015) argues that a large number of errors of performance might indicate the lack of habit in using language skills, therefore, lack of L2 competence on the part of learners. He asserts that in spite of being able to repair their errors, they still repeat them in actual performance due to the FL learner's ignorance of the target language.

Error Analysis

The primary core of the study and analysis of the errors made by second language learners is the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language.

The need to carry out the study of error analysis may be conducted in order to:

a. Clarify strategies which learners use in language learning
b. Identify the causes of learners' errors
c. Obtain information on common difficulties in language learning, which would be served as an aid to teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials.

Approximately, error analysis developed as a branch of applied linguistics in the 1960s (Brown, 2014), and set out to demonstrate that many learner errors are not blamed for the learner's mother tongue but reflecting universal learning strategies. In this case, error analysis is consequently offered as an alternative to contrastive analysis. Many researchers' attempts (e.g., Brown, 2014; Corder, 1975; James, 1998; Amara, 2015) have been made to develop classifications for different types of errors on the basis of the different processes that have been assumed to account for them.

The following common types of errors might be categorized such as:

a) Lexical errors

The lexical category includes errors in the use of noun, verb, adjective, adverb, modal, and copula. Noun, verb, adjective, and adverb are all parts of speech where noun is referred to as the name of a person, place, thing, event, or idea; verb is a word that expresses the state of being or action; adjective and adverb are modifiers describing nouns and pronouns and adjectives, adverbs, or verbs respectively. A modal on one hand is a type of auxilliary verb that is used to express permission, ability or obligation. Lastly, among the copula in English grammar, the verb "to be" is the most common.

b) Syntactic Errors

In this regard, the syntactic category may be dominated by article error. This happens due to the fact that English language learners may sometimes forget to use articles owning to the interference from their first language. Moreover, article omission is a proof of the direct transfer of L1 rules to L2. because English has both definite and indefinite articles, whereas L1 like Vietnamese has no word for the definite article.

In terms of word order is also a big problem when discussing syntactical errors. Many studies (e.g., Atmaca, 2016; Bailey, 2011; Ferris, 2014) have claimed that learners tend to unconsciously commit a tremendous number of syntactic interlingual errors pertaining to word order within simple

sentence structure and they assert that these errors occur as results of L1 habit transfer.

c) Morphological Errors

In practice, morphological errors can be interchanged by another term, namely grammatical errors. These are basically concerned with violations in subject-verb agreement, tense, plural, singular, and negative markers, participle ending, and comparative and superlative forms. When investigating this category, three of the most commonly committed are errors in tense marker, plural and singular markers, and subject-verb agreement. Regarding tense markers, sentence structures and wrong verb forms account for the huge differences between L1 and L2 (Péry-Woodley, 1991; Ferris, 2014; James, 1998; Lastres-López, & Manalastas, 2017). Thus, subject-verb agreement errors are proclaimed as the most frequent errors that L1 language learners often commit when acquiring another language. Besides, lack of plurality is connected to the incompetence of the learners in using English morphology and to the negative transfer from the native language. However, plurality indicators are not spontaneously noticed by learners even if there is a certain trend of erroneously omitting the plural morpheme 's' even with the presence of obvious plural quantifiers.

d) Orthographical Errors

Orthographical errors are also termed as mechanical errors because they are mainly associated to spelling, capitalization, and pronunciation. Specifically, two important characteristics of orthographical errors denote that they generally result in a string which is phonologically identical or very similar to the correct strings, and that proper names, infrequent words (uncommon words) and borrowed words are particularly prone to orthographical errors. In its nature, spelling errors can be seen as cognitive errors consisting of the substitution of a deviant spelling for a correct one in case of being unknown about the correct spelling of a particular word or forgetting it or misconceiving it. Similarly, Amara (2015) stresses that knowledge about the orthographic structure of words is mainly implicit for the native speakers of any language. Being native speakers, they are generally expected to correctly spell or say words without rooting the rule behind that spelling or pronunciation.

Causes of Errors in Foreign Language Learning

By trying to identify erroneous sources, this facilitates educators to understand how the learner's cognitive and affective processes relate to the linguistic system and to formulate an integrated understanding of the process of second language acquisition, in particular, written error correction (James, 1998; Brown, 2014). In reality, there are two primary sources of errors, specially between intralingual and interlingual errors. First, intralingual errors could be classified as overgeneralizations (errors caused by extension of target language rules to inappropriate contexts), simplifications (errors resulting from learners producing simpler linguistic rules than those found in the target language), developmental errors (those reflecting natural stages of development), communication-based errors (errors resulting from strategies of communication), induced errors (those resulting from transfer of training), errors of avoidance (resulting from failure to use certain target language structures because they are thought to be too difficult), or errors of overproduction (structures being used too frequently). Attempts to apply such categories have been problematic however, due to the difficulty of determining the cause of errors (Richards, 1975; Brown, 2014; Wood, 2017). Secondly, interlingual transfer is a significant source of error for all learners. The influence or interference of the L1 language of has great impact on the acquisition of the L2 language at the beginning stage of learning a second language. The reason is that L1 learners is the only previous linguistic system upon which they can employ to get to know L2 language. It is not rational to affirm that an error is the result of transfer from L1 language, many such errors are detectable in learner speech due to the linguistic and cultural relatedness of the languages and the context of learning under the view of degrees of interlingual interference (Corder, 1975; James, 1998; Ferris, 2014).

Brown (2014, pp. 263-266) classifies the source of error into four factors:

a) *Interlingual transfer*: refers to a system presenting a structurally intermediate status between the native and target language. Interlingual takes place when L1 learners make structure derivation of L2 by the effect of their mother tongue. This is called language transfer, so errors occur because of the differences in the features of source language and target one.

b) *Intralingual transfer*: indicates the incorrect generalization of rules within the target language. Intralingual derives when learners make ungrammatical structure due to the lack of knowledge of their target language. Compared with interlanguage transfer, intralingual errors result from faulty or lack knowledge of the target language.

c) *Context of Learning*: external factors such as teachers' explanation, materials, or social situations might cause learners to faulty hypotheses about the language.

d) *Communication strategy*: Learners' learning styles determine the source of errors in case learners use production strategies in effort to get the messages across. During this process, communication techniques might have something erroneous.

METHOD

Research Design

The research was basically designed to investigate from a cross-section of 57 eleventh-graders at Pham Ngu Lao high school. Specifically, the qualitative method classified and described the linguistic errors in written discourse of the respondents using Ferris's (2014) model of Error Analysis, identifying written errors into four categories, namely morphological, lexical, syntactical, and mechanical factors thanks to longitudinal studies which are useful to collect factual information on a continuing basis. In this study, five writing tests were conducted from March to May. The research design of this study was also categorized under the analytic and deductive approaches. The collected data were used Nvivo v.12 application to analyze and produce the final results.

Respondents and Sampling Procedure

The population of the study consists of 66 eleventh-graders coming from two classes 11A1 and 11A8 at Pham Ngu Lao secondary school. In order to select the participants of the present study, a simple random sampling method was used to obtain a representative sample during the academic year of 2021-2022, the total number of two classes was 66. According to Slovin's formula ($n = N \div (1 + N*e^2)$) with 5% margin of error, the respondents of the study was 57 eleventh-graders. In terms of time length of learning, learners had learnt English since the third form.[2] As for competence, they had generally covered most basic grammatical categories and developed basic skills in reading, speaking, listening and writing. In general, the whole group was homogeneous in terms of age, cultural experience, and knowledge of both the mother tongue and English competency. In particular, 32 male eleventh-graders participated in the study, accounting for 56.1%, while 25 female learners were willing to serve as respondents of the study, making up for 43.9%. Overall, their English ability approximately fell at pre-intermediate level.

Research Instrument

Research instruments play an important part in research methodology, which influences the accurate data from the respondents constructed. In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative approach with five writing tests as a feasible method to gain insights into the problems of the study. Specifically, the writing tests include five paragraph writing tests which were designed by the researcher, asking the respondents to write in a period of 45-minute session. The first test focuses on the present tenses, the second concentrates on the past tenses, the third asked about the future tenses,

2 Ibid., 3

the other two tests synchronized all the writing styles and grammar tenses they had learned.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher gathered 57 participants in a big room to explain the purpose of the writing test as the progress test as usual so as to ascertain that the respondents would seriously take the writing tests. As the longitudinal studies, the writing tests consisted of five 45-minute writing tests to compare if learners' common written errors varied or not. The first writing test concentrated on the present tenses, it was conducted on the first week of March, then the second writing test was done on the first week of April, focusing on the past tenses. Next, the third writing test was implemented on the third week of April, specializing on the future tenses. Finally, the last two writing tests were conducted in the middle and end of May. The researcher used the Nvivo v.12 application to categorize their written errors according to the criteria set in the checklist in encoding written error analysis.

- *Lexical Errors:* Errors in the use of noun, verb, adjective, adverb, modal and copula;
- *Syntactic Errors:* Errors in the use of conjunction, word order, pronoun, relative clause, tense;
- *Mechanical Errors:* Error in spelling, in the use of comma, capitalization;
- *Morphological Errors:* Errors in subject-verb agreement, tense markers, singular markers, plural markers.

Data Analysis

To be able to analyze the information gathered from the five performance writing tests, the researcher used frequency counts and percentage to describe errors committed by the respondents. In calculating the frequency of each error, the following percentage error formula was employed to produce the results:

$$P = \frac{nl}{\sum N} \times 100\%$$

(P = *percentage of each error*, nl = *total number of errors per type of errors*, ΣN= *total errors*)

In addition, ANOVA was correlate the relationship between the writing performance and the number of writing errors of the respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Representation of Morphological Errors of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the morphological errors of the respondents basing on the frequency count of the three written tests. The results present that the participants mostly had problems with

the use of verbs, particularly they had difficulties conjugating verb tenses ($nl = 117$; $p = 24.9\%$), following with the difference between single verb with plural verb and vice versa ($nl = 87$; $p = 18.6\%$), then the third place occurred with incorrect form of verb phrase ($nl = 69$; $p = 14.7\%$), adjacently the participants had troubles with use of noun and article, especially the use of singular noun for plural and vice versa ($nl = 62$; $p = 13.2\%$). Table 1 indicates that eleventh-graders seemed not to have problems with the use of pronoun, typically 2 participants committed 7 confused errors of "its" and "it's", accounting for 1.5%. As glimpsed from Table 2, the contrast between the number of participants' committed errors with total numbers of errors had been revealed that one participant had committed the same written errors for many times. This phenomenon was also consistent with other studies (e.g., Atmaca, 2016; Dinh, 2019; Lastres-López & Manalastas, 2017), exclaiming similar types of errors. Overall, the participants need significantly addressing how to use verbs correctly when conjugating the time and tenses.

The Representation of Lexical Errors of the Respondents

As seen in Table 2, the participants had commonly committed errors with the choice of adjectives, nouns, verbs, and omission of auxiliary verbs, linking verbs, and nouns. These types of errors were also reported in the studies (e.g., Wood, 2017; Pham & Do, 2019; Kaweera, 2013; Halliday & Hasan, 2013), their findings claimed to figure out many errors of choosing the wrong lexical errors their respondents had declared in their findings. Remarkably, the insertion of verb, and omission of nouns as well as adjectives had also accounted for a high frequency in this study. Table 2 indicates that the number of participants' committed errors had the similar errors at least two errors and above. In general, the confusing choice of lexical errors was remarkable among the participants.

The Representation of Syntactical Errors of the Respondents

Table 3 illustrates the syntactical errors committed in the students' writing performance which include errors

Table 1: Morphological errors of the respondents

Errors	No of participants' committed errors	Total Number of Errors	Percentage
Use of verb			
MO1: wrong verb tense	47	117	24.9
MO2: singular verb with plural verb and vice versa	31	87	18.6
MO3: incorrect form of verb phrase	59	69	14.7
Use of pronoun			
MO4: wrong use of pronoun	6	25	5.3
MO5: confusion of "its" and "it's"	2	7	1.5
Use of noun and article			
MO6: use of singular noun for plural and vice versa	28	62	13.2
MO7: omission of article	9	23	4.9
MO8: wrong use of article	7	21	4.5
Use of preposition			
MO9: omission of preposition	6	19	4.1
MO10: wrong use of preposition	12	39	8.3
Sum		469	100%

Table 2: Lexical errors of the respondents

Errors	No of participants' committed errors	Total Number of Errors	Percentage
Adjective error			
LEX1: Omission of adjective	5	21	6.2
LEX2: Wrong choice of adjective	7	39	11.5
Noun error			
LEX3: Omission of noun	6	38	11.2
LEX4: Wrong choice of noun	15	47	13.9
Verb error			
LEX5: Insertion of verb	7	28	8.3
LEX6: Omission of auxiliary verb	16	45	13.3
LEX7: Omission of linking verb	9	42	12.4
LEX8: Omission of main verb	11	32	9.5
LEX9: Wrong choice of verb	19	46	13.6
Sum		338	100%

in incompleteness, arrangement of parts, wordiness and ambiguity, parallel structure. It is shown clearly in Table 3 that wrong word order engendered the biggest obstacle for the participants ($nl = 89$; $p = 16.5\%$), then the missing words, subject and verb were also ranked the second ($nl = 85$; $p = 15.8\%$). Besides, the respondents had a high degree of run-on sentences in writing English paragraphs ($nl = 71$; $p = 13.2\%$), which resulted in the ambiguity of cohesion and coherence in a paragraph. This feature was in line with other studies (e.g., Briesmaster & Etchegaray, 2017; Gunas et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2020), which demonstrated that learners were weak at pivoting the unity in one paragraph. Surprisingly, the participants did not commonly commit dangling modifiers ($nl = 27$; $p = 5.0\%$), succeeding different parts of speech in series ($nl = 30$; $p = 5.6\%$). In the previous studies (e.g., Dan et al., 2018; Jobeen et al., 2015; Pham & Truong, 2021), their results have affirmed that their students have done badly in using dangling modifiers because of difficulties in understanding the word usage. Like the aforementioned parts, syntactical errors

occurred with some participants as the number of participants' committed errors was inferior in number with the total number of errors. In other words, a few respondents had problems with same written errors for a certain repeated frequency.

The Representation of Mechanical Errors of the Respondents

The mechanical errors refer to punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. The most common stylistic errors of the respondents blame for errors in spelling as clearly shown in Table 4.

However, eleventh-graders had experienced problems in how to put punctuation, particularly they found it hard to use correctly apostrophe ($nl = 54$; $p = 11.7\%$), comma ($nl = 51$; $p = 11\%$), and period ($nl = 48$; $p = 10.4\%$). The results disclosed that punctuation relates to the coherence and cohesion of a paragraph, in case of misuse of punctuation, this leads to the ambiguity of the paragraph unity and meaning. Many studies (e.g., Leli, 2020; Gunas et al., 2020; Zahra et al., 2020; Briesmaster & Etchegaray, 2017) have stressed the role of

Table 3: Syntactical errors of the respondents

Errors	No of participants' committed errors	Total Number of Errors	Percentage
Incompleteness			
S1: Subordinate clause for sentence	7	56	10.4
S2: Phrase for sentence	11	41	7.6
S3: Missing words, subject and verb	17	85	15.8
Arrangement of parts			
S4: Wrong word order	15	89	16.5
S5: Dangling modifier	7	27	5.0
Wordiness and ambiguity			
S6: Run-on sentences	18	71	13.2
S7: Redundancy	10	43	8.0
S8: Ambiguous reference	15	41	7.6
Parallel structure			
S9: Different parts of speech in series	18	30	5.6
S10: Lack of unity	13	46	8.5
Sum		539	100%

Table 4: Mechanical errors of the respondents

Errors	No of participants' committed errors	Total Number of Errors	Percentage
Errors in punctuation			
M1: Omission or improper use of period	11	48	10.4
M2: Omission or wrong use of comma	16	51	11.0
M3: Omission or wrong use of apostrophe	13	54	11.7
Errors in capitalization			
M4: At the beginning of the sentence	9	32	6.9
M5: In the title	11	39	8.4
M6: In the proper noun and pronoun	13	44	9.5
Errors in spelling			
M7: Wrong vowel and consonant	15	42	9.1
M8: Missing letters	13	56	12.1
M9: Confusion of similar words	17	50	10.8
M10: Incorrect repeated consonants	12	47	10.2
Sum		463	100%

mechanical errors in determining the effectiveness of cohesive and coherent paragraph organization. They also assert that improper use of mechanical errors leads to the ambiguity of the paragraph transparency. Halliday and Hasan (2013) state that "Errors in spelling result in the misunderstanding of what a tentative meaning of a paragraph wants to convey to the reader (p. 45)". Similarly, the results in Table 4 expose that the respondents had troubles with English spelling. On the whole, errors made by mechanics concentrated on some participants as demonstrated in the number of participants' committed errors in comparison with total number of errors.

Table 5: Performance of the respondents in the writing tests

Aspects/Dimensions	Frequency (n = 57)	Percent
Main Idea Score		
1.0	7	12.3
2.0	21	36.8
3.0	16	28.1
4.0	13	22.8
Mean = 2.61 SD = 0.98		
Supporting Details		
1.0	14	24.6
2.0	21	36.8
3.0	16	28.1
4.0	6	10.5
Mean = 2.25 SD = 0.95		
Elaborating Details		
1.0	25	43.9
2.0	22	38.6
3.0	17	29.8
4.0	3	5.3
Mean = 1.98 SD = 0.88		
Legibility		
1.0	12	21.1
2.0	19	33.3
3.0	19	33.3
4.0	7	12.3
Mean = 2.37 SD = 0.96		
Mechanics and Grammar		
1.0	2	3.5
2.0	22	38.6
3.0	27	47.4
4.0	6	10.5
Mean = 1.65 SD = 0.72		

The Representation of Performance of the Respondents in the Writing Tests

Notably, Table 5 presents the average scores of the respondents in the participants' performance of the three writing tests. As the requirement at the pre-intermediate level in accordance with the Circular No. 32,[3] learners are able to write effectively the paragraph structure such as a topic sentence, supporting ideas, a concluding sentence, unity, and coherence and cohesion. Besides, they use a variety of lexical and grammatical capabilities in expressing their thoughts. Table 5 shows that the performance of eleventh-graders in writing English paragraphs was not very good in that learners could moderately identify the main ideas of the paragraphs ($M = 2.61$; $SD = 0.98$). Regarding supporting details, the participants had low abilities to write English paragraphs by consulting the mean (2.25) and the standard deviation (0.95%). Furthermore, learners also performed low when elaborating details in writing English paragraphs ($M = 1.98$; $SD = 0.88\%$). Similarly, the legibility of the respondents' writing English paragraphs was low as the outcomes showed that the mean was 2.37, and the standard deviation was 0.96%. On the same track, the mechanics and grammar gained the lowest score ($M = 1.65$; $SD = 0.72\%$). On average, the writing performance of the eleventh-graders at Pham Ngu Lao secondary school did not meet the learning outcome of foreign language capacity, which is clearly set by the objectives in the Circular No. 32.[4]

Relationship between the Writing Performance and the Number of Writing Errors of the Respondents

The research hypothesized that there was no relationship between the writing performance of the respondents and the number of writing errors committed per type. Correlation analysis in Table 6indicates that all coefficients had associated probabilities lower than .05 level of significance; that is, the null hypothesis was rejected.

As all the coefficients (ranging from -0.709 to -0.80, $p = 0.000$) are negative for all the writing skills, which denotes that those participants with fewer number of morphological, lexical, syntactic, and mechanical errors had gained better writing skills of expressing the main idea, providing supporting details, elaborating details, writing more legibly, and observing rules in mechanics and grammar.

The outcomes conclude that when eleventh-graders recognize the awareness of the morphological, lexical, syntactic, and mechanical rules, they tended to apply these rules to organize their ideas while they were writing an English paragraph. Awareness of these rules together with the teachers' corrective feedback made their writing skills better (Zahra et al., 2020; Amara, 2015).

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3   Ibid., 3
4   Ibid., 3

Table 6: Relationship between the writing performance and the number of writing errors of the respondents

Writing Skills	Types of Writing Errors			
	Morphological	Lexical	Syntactic	Mechanical
Main Idea				
r-value	-0.793**	-0.808**	-0.742**	-0.760**
Prob.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Supporting Detail				
r-value	-0.709**	-0.764**	-0.797**	-0.721**
Prob.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Elaborating Detail				
r-value	-0.758**	-0.795**	-0.783**	-0.787**
Prob.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Legibility				
r-value	-0.740**	-0.756**	-0.789**	-0.736**
Prob.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Mechanics and Grammar				
r-value	-0.726**	-0.713**	-0.769**	-0.737**
Prob.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

CONCLUSION

Based on the overall findings of the study, it can be concluded that secondary graders are not good at writing English paragraphs because they are not specially trained how to write English paragraphs. Four categories of written errors, namely lexical errors, syntactic errors, Mechanical Errors, and Morphological Errors are greatly ignored and committed by the respondents. For the simple errors such as errors in subject-verb agreement, errors in the use of noun, verb, adjective, adverb, modal and copula, and even errors in spelling are also common among the respondents. Moreover, the respondents do not know well how to write English paragraphs by analyzing five writing tests. They are unable to comprehend basic structure and organization of paragraphs, which leads to the failure in cohesion, coherence, and unity. These weaknesses might spring from the orientation of educational policies, particularly change in testing and assessment format, which concentrates on multiple-choice tests. To some extent, it cannot deny the advantages of multiple-choice tests in covering a vast of knowledge and cognitive influences, learners have problems and difficulties conveying their ideas into academic presentation in verbal communication or in written communication. The limitation of regular training to write and writing practices results in learners' demotivation and restriction of creativity as well as fluency in expressing ideas in wording.

Implications

In the light of the findings and the conclusions mentioned above, three main factors, namely learners, teachers, and foreign language teaching and learning orientation should formulate the following implication to possibly handle these problems.

- Although the curriculum is fixed, it should be adjusted and revised to prioritize to improve learners' writing skills. It is necessary to consider spelling and grammatical concerns as integral and mandatory parts which require to be thoughtfully and intensively addressed to help learners progress in their writing performance. By being given more hours and attention to writing skills, learners can be guided to write with correct grammar, mechanics and structure of English language.
- The school could organize some writing contests to motivate learners to improve their writing skills. Furthermore, workshops or trainings to strengthen and enrich teachers' English writing pedagogical practices should be carried out regularly so that they could apply in their professional implementation to make writing skills more effectively for their learners.
- Teachers of English should renovate their practical teaching English writing by giving topics revolving around learners' interests and concerns, involving learners in writing activities such as self-editing, peer-blind correction, or reviewing classmates' paragraph writing. Teachers' follow-up written corrective feedbacks are of great importance to arouse learners' awareness in dealing with their persistent and recurrent of common written errors.
- Process writing approach should be utilized by high school teachers of English with the aim to improve among

learners the process of writing that results in the successful development of writing skills. Although the process entails a lot of practice and efforts, learners eventually master writing abilities when they become used to the process writing approach.

- To encourage learner autonomy of writing skills, high school students should be informed about the international or national exams which require learners to achieve a certain level of writing capability. They should be encouraged to expose authentic English materials to understand and acquire new approaches on what to write and how to write.

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