

**Common Errors Committed By Freshman Education
Students in their Written English Compositions and their
Relationship to some Selected Variables**

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Abstract--This study was conducted with the aim of determining the common errors of freshman education students in writing and their relationship to some selected variables. It attempted to examine the errors in the written compositions of the respondents. Findings revealed that specific writing errors of freshman education students were obviously encountered by the respondents in their three sets of written compositions which were also categorized as grammatical such as tense of verbs, use of prepositions, form of verb, agreement of subject with predicate, and wrong use of article, pronoun, adverb, nouns, adjective, voice of verb, conjunction, and interjection. However, there were errors found to be different from the first set, hence, they were categorized as structural, these are wordiness, wrong choice of words, undue break-up of words, use of double subject, dependent clause used as sentence, joined words, and omission of word or expression; and in the third category, named mechanical, these were the discovered errors: inaccurate punctuation marks, spelling, capitalization and non-capitalization, abbreviation, indention of margins, repetition of words, paragraphing and non-paragraphing. Out of these specific errors committed, only wrong use of preposition, inaccurate use of punctuation marks, wrong tense of verb, form of verb, wrong use of article, agreement of subject with predicate, capitalization and non-capitalization, and spelling, were considered and grouped to be common errors.

Keywords-common errors

I. INTRODUCTION

A fundamental fact about English is that what is acceptable in speech is not always acceptable in writing. When we speak, our listeners understand that we are composing our sentences on the spur of the moment, and they are fairly tolerant of derivations from Standard English. Unfair as it may seem, readers often judge the value of what we have to say by the grammar we use in expressing it; and if you like to consider a more immediate need, there is no honest way through college without being able to write. One can't simply hope to get into law, or medical school, engineering, education, or any professional field- without a thorough knowledge of English--you will have to write – memos, letters, summaries, etc.

In today's trend of Philippine educational system, our students must be given the chance to display their hidden talents or express their ideas so that self-confidence will be developed in them. This is an indication that man should realize that whatever field of endeavor he chooses, effective writing will be invaluable. Any moment an individual will be called upon to communicate or write effectively. In whatever area of endeavor one is engaged in, he will surely find himself having to write something as a part of his job. Therefore, one should consider writing as an extremely important tool in communication, for incompetency along this line would mean greater probability to fail. It blocks any approaching bright news for an individual.

Writing, specifically compositions, tends to bring out an effective use of language. It is through this means that one can effectively express himself, an expression that is accompanied by fulfillment and satisfaction. In every university, courses in composition have always taken part in Education and this process continues even today. Composition writing helps the student to learn to use his language effectively, it is a practice exercise in the process of learning to write accurately and orderly. Writing through compositions offers the techniques of saying something in a very simple way-that is, when you want your readers to get what you mean. The problem is, students' compositions are always weak in correct usage in vocabulary, and use of grammar.

Written English compositions need to be more precise in its grammatical form, in its sentence construction, and in its mechanical forms. It was along these three aspects of grammar that errors in writing were identified. Thus, errors in the composition writing of the students were categorized as grammatical, structural, and mechanical. This paper further reiterates that it should be the concern of every language teacher educator to help minimize writing difficulties, for if errors in writing will not have a chance to be corrected, students will find additional difficulties in coping with school works, and with any activity in which writing finds its place.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study sought answers to the following specific problems, namely:

1. What are the specific errors committed in composition writing by the students as revealed in three required composition papers?
2. What are the categories of these errors and what errors recur most?
3. What is the relationship between the common errors and the following selected demographic variables?
 - a. Frequency of writing letter
 - b. Type of education courses
 - c. High school of origin
 - d. Type of reading materials
4. What measures may be instituted to overcome or eliminate the errors discovered from the research study?
5. What are the educational implications of the findings and how may a knowledge of them contribute to the improvement of English Instruction?

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

Null hypotheses: There is no significant agreement in the rankings of the common errors as committed by students classified according to their:

- a. Frequency of writing letters
- b. Type of education courses
- c. High schools of origin
- d. Type of reading materials

III. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive – correlational research method of investigation was utilized in this study. The principal tool used by the researcher consisted of three sets of compositions of 136 education freshman students who enrolled English 1. These compositions were used to determine the common errors encountered by the students in writing.

Every student was required to scribe three class compositions. The first composition was written on the first month of the first semester with the objective of discovering the students' capability to write, having been recently graduated from high school. The second composition was written at the middle of the term to know the extent of development after a certain period of drills and lessons in English 1, and the last about the end of the semester

Compositions were checked and criticized, errors committed were tallied and categorized. The common errors committed by 50% and above of the total respondents were tallied, evaluated and ranked, and these were finally called “common errors” in composition writing. The corrections and evaluations of the compositions were aided by guide sheets based from various types of errors which were grouped as grammatical, structural, and mechanical.

Another data gathering tool was the questionnaire, which was solely for the students’ profile. Registration forms and informal interview were also used to counter check gathered data.

To give objective answers to the problems posed in this study, frequency counts and corresponding percentage were utilized. Ranking was also used. To determine significance of relationship between common errors and the students’ data, the spearman rank order correlation and the corresponding t-test of significance was used for variables which were classified into two. In this study, the only variable which made use of this statistical tool was high school of origin. Those variables which have been categorized into three or more were treated by the kendall coefficient of concordance and were also tested at the .05 level of significance.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The principal tool used by the researcher consisted of three sets of compositions of 136 freshman education students who enrolled English 1. These compositions were used to determine the common errors encountered by the students in writing. Every student was required to scribble three class compositions. The first composition written was entitled “My Autobiography” from which some of the personal data were obtained by the researcher. For the second composition, the students were given a list of topics from which to choose from, and the third or last set of composition, the students themselves thought of a subject matter they wish to develop. The cited measures were used for the last two compositions because the writer presumed that students can already produce quality compositions in case they will be authorized to do so. Compositions were checked and criticized, errors committed were tallied, categorized, and computed.

Findings revealed the following:

1. Students’ Profile

1.1 Frequency of Writing Letter. Among the 136 students, 98 or 65.44% sometimes write letters, 41 or 31.15% write letters at least once a week and 6 or 4.41 % never wrote.

1.2 Type of Education Courses. Findings showed that 40 or 29.41% were BSHT, 34 or 25% BSIE, and 62 or 49.59% were Tech.

1.3 High Schools of Origin. There were 96 or 70.59% who came from public schools and 40 or 29.41% were from private schools.

1.4 Type of Reading Materials. The type of reading materials were looked into, and it was found that 65 or 47.80 % read comics; 31 or 22.79 % favored magazines; 27 or 19.87 % preferred books and 13 or 9.56 % chose newspapers as their reading materials.

2. Relationship Between Common Errors and Students' Profile

2.1 Frequency of Writing Letter

Among those students who write letter at least once a week, their first three ranking errors were preposition/ inaccurate punctuation marks, form of verbs, and spelling/ tense of verbs. Those who sometimes write letter had inaccurate punctuation marks/ preposition, tense of verbs, and form of verbs. For students who never wrote, had their three ranking errors as tense of verb/ form of verbs/ inaccurate punctuation marks/ capitalization/ article, agreement of subject with predicate, and spelling.

The rankings are significantly different between the students' common errors and the students' frequency of writing letter.

2.2 Type of Education Courses

Students who belong to the BSHT group had inaccurate punctuation marks/preposition, form of verb, and tense of verb as their three ranking errors. For BSIE students, they had tense of verbs/ inaccurate punctuation marks/preposition, form of verb, and article. Tech students had tense of verb/ inaccurate punctuation marks/ preposition/ form of verb, article, and agreement of subject with predicate as their three ranking errors. The rankings were significantly different from the students' common errors in writing.

2.3 High School of Origin

Public school students had tense of verbs/ inaccurate punctuation marks/preposition, form of verbs, and capitalization as their ranking errors. Private school students had inaccurate punctuation marks/ preposition/ form of verbs, article, and agreement of subject with predicate, the rankings were not significantly different.

2.4 Type of Reading Materials

Those who favored comics and tense of verbs/ inaccurate punctuation marks/ preposition/ form of verbs, capitalization, and agreement of subject with predicate. Those who read books had inaccurate punctuation marks/ preposition, form of verb, and tense of verb as their three ranking errors. Magazine readers had inaccurate punctuation marks/ preposition, form of verb/ tense of verb, and spelling. Students who read newspapers had inaccurate punctuation marks/ preposition, tense of verbs and article tied with agreement of subject and predicate. These rankings were significantly different.

3. Common errors committed by freshman education students in writing composition

3.1 Specific writing errors of freshman education students were obviously encountered by the respondents in their three sets of written compositions under the grammatical category such as tense of verbs, use of prepositions, form of verb, agreement of subject with predicate and wrong use of article, pronoun, adverb, nouns, adjective, voice of verb, conjunction, and interjection. The second set of errors were found different from the first set of errors, hence, they were categorized as structural such as wordiness, wrong choice of words, undue break-up of words, use of double subject, dependent clause used as sentence, joined words, and omission of word or expression; and for the third category, mechanical, these were the discovered errors: inaccurate punctuation marks, spelling, capitalization and non-capitalization, abbreviation, indention of margins, repetition of words, paragraphing and non-paragraphing. And from the specific errors, the following were considered common, these are wrong use of preposition, inaccurate use of punctuation marks, wrong tense of verb, form of verb, wrong use of article, agreement of subject with predicate, capitalization, and non-capitalization and spelling.

4. Measures were instituted to overcome errors in written compositions

4.1 Socialized corrections, corrective work areas applied at the point of errors.

4.2 The common errors noted in the first composition were brought up and segregated for additional discussion in class.

4.3 The rest of the errors (not considered common) were also taken up following the procedure of corrective work applied at the point of errors.

4.4 To discover further pupils' difficulties in composition writing, the second composition was written with an objective at the same time to know if the method was effective.

4.5 The same procedure was followed in the last set of compositions, and findings revealed great improvement.

5. Educational Implications

The findings have some important implications related to the administration and supervision of the English language. The varying errors encountered by the students on the area of grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure will be given adequate attention by the language teachers, through the corrective ways presented and recommendation cited by the researcher. The provision of adequate facilities for Communication arts must be given recognition by the school administrators on the ground that, the constant occurrence of these errors will certainly create impregnable road-blocks to academic development of the students, especially in the English language.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The freshman education students at Tarlac state University encountered errors in writing compositions. Compositions were effective means to detect students' errors in writing. Four hundred eight compositions written by 136 students were the main sources of data. The kind of errors committed from the first set of compositions to the last were almost the same. The most common error noted in this study was wrong use of preposition. Inaccurate use of punctuation marks abound but they are the quickest to be corrected. The greatest number of errors along this particular difficulty were wrong use of comma, period, and apostrophe. The students similarly committed (in rank) wrong use of prepositions, inaccurate use of punctuation marks, wrong tense of verbs, form of verb, wrong use of article, agreement with subject with verb, capitalization and non-capitalization, and spelling. Structural errors were not considered "common errors". Errors in verbs and prepositions are hard to eliminate. Students improved a lot as revealed by the results in their second and third sets of compositions. Letters are helpful in developing the writing performance of students. Students who do not practice letter-writing committed more errors. Errors in writing were dependent on the frequency of writing letter. Letter-writing informally trains the students' mind, hand and eyes. It helps a lot. Tech students committed more errors than the BSHT and BSIE students. Errors in writing were dependent on type of

education courses. BSIE and BSHT classes had better results than the Tech group. Errors in writing were not dependent on high school origin. Comics' readers suffered more writing errors than those who read books, magazines, and newspapers. And finally errors in writing were dependent on type of reading materials. Students who read printed materials which are apt to give information help them a lot.

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