



## A Corpus-Based Analysis of Learners' Morpho-Syntactic and Spelling Errors in Writing: Case Study of PEGAFI Senior High School Students

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### Abstract:

This paper makes an effort to analyze the morphosyntax and spelling error in the written compositions of PEGAFI Senior High School students. The aim of the study is to identify and analyze logical explanation for the numerous morphosyntactic and spelling errors that the students produced. To obtain accurate results, the researchers collected data using copies of SHS students in grade 11. Additionally, the researchers used the descriptive analytical approach and Corder's errors analysis theory to identify and study the various types of errors and mistakes made in writing (EA). The results indicate that interlingual errors are most made numerous by SHS students at the level of selection (morphological and grammatical errors) and of syntax (misordering of words). The study offers some recommendations for teaching methods and strategies that teachers can use to help SHS students become better writers.

*Keywords:* corpus-based analysis, error analysis, linguistic taxonomy, morpho-syntactic

### Introduction:

Writing is an essential skill in every field of study. Everyone uses writing in their personal and professional lives. Students often write essays, reports and letters in school. Teachers also put student writings on the classroom walls to help their students improve their writing. However, many of the student writings are difficult to understand due to poor morpho-syntactic and spelling choices. Therefore, teachers need to provide helpful advice to help students improve their writing skills (Sasan & Baritua, 2022).

English is becoming increasingly popular in the Philippines as the economy continues to expand (Lazaro & Medalla, 2004). Several international companies now consider the Philippines one of their leading markets. Therefore, schools emphasize English because it is important to the country's economy. Doing so ensures that their students are well-equipped for job opportunities after graduation. Additionally, this helps attract new foreign investors into the country.

On the other hand, not all students are able to attend English-speaking schools due to limited resources. Many schools cannot afford to hire enough English teachers to accommodate all students. Even teachers who are willing to work for low pay may be unable to find work under these circumstances. Low wages make it difficult for schools to attract and keep qualified staff members (Britton & Propper, 2016). Furthermore, low wages give teachers little incentive to help students with their English lessons. If they did, the school's attendance would increase dramatically.

Low student motivation is another issue limiting school English instruction. Many students may not feel like they're getting enough out of attending English classes. Teachers may not explain concepts thoroughly enough or provide enough material for study sessions. This prevents students from understanding what they're learning and motivating them to improve. Low student motivation makes it difficult to improve language proficiency in any language (Sasan & Rabillas, 2022).

According to Mangada (2015), motivation plays a significant role in attaining English language proficiency, thus, demotivating factors impede learners' learning motivation and this led to the unsuccessful mastery of English language proficiency. Thus, this study aims to describe the types of errors and mistakes learners most frequently commit in their written productions and account for their causes; and to suggest to teachers some effective techniques and strategies to help learners improve their writing skills.

### Literature Review

The issue of "initial word disturbance" has taken an odd history in second language acquisition research and knowledge. For some years, it had been assumed that the single major source of grammar errors in adult second-word presentation was the performer's initial words (Paratore, 1959), and a good deal of materials planning was made with the hypothesis in mind (Wardhaugh, 1970). Later empirical reports of mistakes created by second language students led to the insight, however, that some mistakes are not attributed to the composition of the initial words, but are common to second language performers of different linguistic backgrounds (Wardhaugh, 1970). These findings have led some students to question the worth of contrastive reasoning and to debate rather for error analysis. The first word, it is preserved, is but one of different sources of failure, and different references need to be considered.





In the previous sections, the researchers attempted to state the following hypothesis: simple codes such as teacher-talk, interlingua talk, and foreigner talk aid and second language acquisition for adults in much the same way that caretaker speech aids child language acquisition. If this is the case, and if the hypothesis is supported by subsequent research, it can be then asked how classroom exercises to the insight, however, that some mistakes are not attributable to the composition of the initial words, but are common to second language performers of different linguistic backgrounds. These findings have led some students to question the worth of contrastive reasoning and to debate rather for error analysis. The first word, it is preserved, is but one of different sources of failure, and different references need to be considered (Paratore, 1959).

### Errors and mistakes in the teaching and learning process

The researcher offers several points of view while discussing errors and mistakes in the teaching and learning process. James (1998, p. 78) states:

It is presumed that the form the student chose was not the one he or she meant, and we will claim that the error is a mistake, if the learner is willing and able to fix a mistake in their output. On the other hand, it can be inferred that the learner employed the incorrect form and is making an error if they are unable or otherwise unable to make the change.

Otherwise, the mistake is improper use of a well-known language system. Error, on the other hand, is a systematic deviation made by a student who has not yet mastered the usage of the target language norms and may come from a loss of focus when speaking or writing but may be corrected when attention is called. But Corder (1973) goes a step further. He makes a distinction between "lapses," "mistakes," and "errors."

The term "lapses" refers to any slips of the tongue, false starts, or misunderstanding of structures. Errors are divided into two categories: the first is the competence category, which consists of "errors," and the second is the performance category, which consists of "lapses" and mistakes.

Then, Corder clarifies that errors are distinct from lapses and mistakes in that they are violations of the grammar rules. In other words, mistakes lead to ungrammatical and improper statements that violate the grammatical norms of the target language.

Errors are significant in three different ways, according to Corder (1973, p. 265), who is speaking of their significance. They first demonstrate to teachers how far along the learners are in reaching their goals and, subsequently, what is still left for them to learn. And it continued: Errors offer feedback; they let the teacher know how well his teaching methods and materials are working.

In the same vein, Ringbom (1987, p. 69) stated: "Learners' errors are, in fact, quite essential since they reveal how much further a learner still needs to go in understanding a language." Second, errors give academics evidence of how language is learned or acquired, revealing the methods that language learners use to learn the language. Thirdly, they serve as a crucial tool for the students themselves to develop their speaking and writing skills.

One can see that there is a distinction between error and mistake from the perspectives of the abovementioned researchers. An error is a deliberate departure that a student makes when he is unfamiliar with the proper usage of the target language. It demonstrates a learner's lack of language proficiency and their present level of growth. Thus, a student finds it difficult to repair their own errors. When a mistake is pointed out, a learner can repair it on their own. In the real world of language acquisition, especially in senior high school, it might be difficult to distinguish between mistakes and errors. They are both seen as being similar words or interchangeable concepts.

### Error taxonomies

Richards (1971) used students from a variety of language backgrounds (Japanese, Chinese, Burmese, French, Czech, Polish, Tagalog, Maori, Maltese, and Indian and West African Languages) in his study on learners' errors and demonstrated the various types of errors relating to the production and distribution of verb groups, prepositions, articles, and the use of questions. He identified three sources of error based on this:

1. Interference errors - occur when a speaker or writer uses words or phrases from one language while speaking or writing in another. When it comes to learning English, Hamer (2002, p.99) claims that "when L1 and English come into touch with each other, there are often confusions that trigger errors in a learner's usage of English." This may occur at the level of verb tenses, grammatical constructions, and word choice, particularly where there are parallels;
2. Intralingual errors- These indicate general flaws in how learners apply rules, generalize them incorrectly, and fail to understand the circumstances in which they are to be used. Native languages have an impact on these mistakes and interfere with the target language;
3. Developmental errors - are made when learners try to form theories about the target language based on scant knowledge.

### Research Methodology

The current paper employs a descriptive analytical approach in an effort to characterize and quantify errors and mistakes made by learners for statistical analysis. In Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines, at PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., the researchers looked at the writing errors and mistakes made by students. 150 SHS make up the target population.

#### Participants

The researchers chose purposively 150 students in grade 11 to participate. English is a foreign language and Cebuano is their first language (L1).

#### Instrument for collecting data

The researchers used a writing composition test to get real data for the research study. The researchers gave the participants the assignment to compose an essay on the subject of "On the Road by Jack Kerouac" that was no longer than 300 words. One hundred fifty (150) copies for students were gathered in total. All students took the same test on the same topic.

#### Validity of the test





To ensure the validity of the writing test sample and to check the nature of the question and the usefulness of the test, the researchers distributed the content to all teachers of 21st century literature. The test was carried out on September 25, 2022.

#### Data collection and analysis

The primary research samples were copies of written compositions that were gathered from PEGAFI students in grade 11. To determine the types of errors and mistakes caused by the two different language systems of L1 and L2, the researchers collected the written works of learners and analyzed them. To determine the types of errors and mistakes the participants regularly committed, the researchers tagged, classified, and statistically tallied them and following the steps outlined by Corder (1974) for error analysis, which are: (1) gathering a sample; (2) identifying errors; (3) describing errors; (4) explaining errors; and (5) evaluating errors. Additionally, the researchers employed Corder's (1967) taxonomy model, which covers mechanical, grammatical, lexical, and semantic errors.

### Result and Discussion

The researchers categorized the data into four main categories of errors based on Corder's errors analysis (EA) theory: omission, addition, selection, and misordering. Furthermore, the researchers suggested that the following legend to make the tables below explicit:

#### Omission Errors

The compositions of the learners had morphological, grammatical, and syntactical omission errors. The researchers found twenty-seven (27) morphological omissions, twenty (20) grammatical omissions, and fifteen (15) lexical omissions overall from fifty (50) sample paragraphs. The table that follows provides an example of omission mistakes taken from the students' paragraphs.

Error category	Illustrations	Corrections
Morphological omission	Denver shifted nervosly on the piano bench  William has a tremendos amount of energy  raboned body had been designed for physical work  She's a very charming and very prety girl.	Jackson shifted nervously on the piano bench  He has a tremendous amount of energy  rawboned body had been designed for physical work  She's a very charming and very pretty girl.
Grammar omission: - Past tense  - Gerund  - Possessive form  - Present perfect	His boss loan him money  They do not appreciate my sing  That mine  I worked as a teacher for three years	His boss loaned him money  They do not appreciate my singing  That is mine  I have worked as a teacher for three years
lexical omission ( word omission errors) - Article  - Verb  - Preposition	My brother really wants dog  I not feeling well  He sat the chair	My brother really wants a dog  I am not feeling well  He sat on the chair

The morphological, grammatical, and syntactic omission errors that students made in their compositions are shown in the above table. When a learner omits the letter (u) from a word, it is referred to as morphological omission. Students at PEGAFI omitted letters from words, leaving off the " u " from the terms tremendous and nervous. Some students left off the letter "t" in the word "pretty" and the letter "w" in the word "rawboned." Grammar omission here refers to the restriction of a rule. For instance, several students omitted the suffix "ed" from the sentences *His boss loaned him money* and "ing" in the sentence *they do not appreciate my singing*. However, five PEGAFI learners struggled with the present perfect tense and the possessive form, leaving out is in the following sentences: *That mine* instead of *That is mine*. And, *I worked as a teacher for three years*, instead of *I have worked as a teacher for three years*. In terms of lexical omission, students substituted the following words for articles, verbs, and prepositions: Article: *My brother really wants dog*, instead of *My brother really wants a dog*.

2-) Verb: *I not feeling well*, instead of *I am not feeling well*;

3-) Preposition: *He sat the chair*; instead of *He sat on the chair*.

#### Learners' addition errors

In contrast to omission errors, addition errors include the addition of extra characters, letters, or words to the sentence structure. The following table shows the additions the researchers found in the learners' papers: twelve (12) grammar addition, twenty-five (25) syntactical addition, and nineteen (19) morphological addition.

Table 2. Some Examples of Addition Error





Error category	Illustrations	Corrections
Morphological addition - Morpheme - "S"	I'm in the skis club One cow will produce about 200000 Glasses of milks I went outside to get some fresh airs <u>I want to drink some waters</u>	I'm in the ski club One cow will produce about 200000 Glasses of milk I went outside to get some fresh air I want to drink some water
Syntactical addition - Article - Superlative	The honey is sweet  She is the most kind person I have ever met  Mike attacked the most weak part	Honey is sweet  She is the kindest person I have ever met  Mike attacked the weakest part
Grammar addition - Modal verbs: third person singular - Personal pronoun - Phrasal verb	L12Q1: She cans speak four languages L18Q1: She must likes ice cream a lot  Does he goes to the gym?  The book to ended up in the trash	She can speak four languages She must like ice cream a lot  Does he go to the gym?  The book ended up in the trash

The table above shows the most apparent morphological and syntactical addition errors. Students from PEGAFI made morphological addition errors. To make terms appear plural, they added an extra "s." If someone wrote "skis," for instance, they would assume that it should be in the plural because the term "ski" refers to a club with numerous members due to the succeeding word 'club'. However, "ski" is a noun and is singular in this sentence. The terms "milks," "airs," and "waters," which cannot be measured or numbered because they are uncountable nouns, were given the letter "s" by some students. They do not, therefore, add a "s" to the plural.

Concerning syntactical addition, students incorrectly included the preposition "to" in the phrasal verbs "ending up" while adding sentences together. The superlative "most" was however inserted by learners (L24 and L35) before the short adjective "kind" (L8) and "most" before the word weak (L15).

The conjugation of modal verbs is a challenge for learners in terms of the grammatical addition. As an illustration, L18 wrote: "She cans speak four languages." The third person singular is then followed by a "s." The modal verbs typically don't take a "s" in the verb person singular. They should write: She cans speak four languages. However, some students struggle with both phrasal verbs and personal pronouns. *Does he goes to the gym?*, as L32 wrote L39 also wrote: *I'll send it to off to finding out.* The correct sentences are: *Does he go to the gym?* and *I'll send it off to find out*

### Selection

With a total of forty-five (45) errors, learners made the most morphological/lexical selection or word choice errors in their writing. The examples of selection errors can be seen in the following table.

Table 3. Some Examples of Selection Error

Error category	Illustrations	Corrections
Morphological/lexical selection	-She's been trying to illicit the support of other committee members -Its ruin may in some cases be unknown to him, and cannot directly effect him -the snake is known for it's ability to shed its -your beautiful	-She's been trying to elicit the support of other committee members -Its ruin may in some cases be unknown to him, and cannot directly affect him -the snake is known for its ability to shed its skin -you're beautiful

Students applied the erroneous word choice for morphological/lexical selection, which caused them to miss the sentence's meaning. For instance, L8 mixed up the words "illicit" and "elicit," "affect" and "effect," "you're" and "your," and "its" and "it's" in L19-Q2. It's possible that students mistook the spelling for the sound of the word.

### Misordering

The least common type of mistakes learners made in their writing compositions was misordering. Twenty-one (21) syntactical mistakes were found.

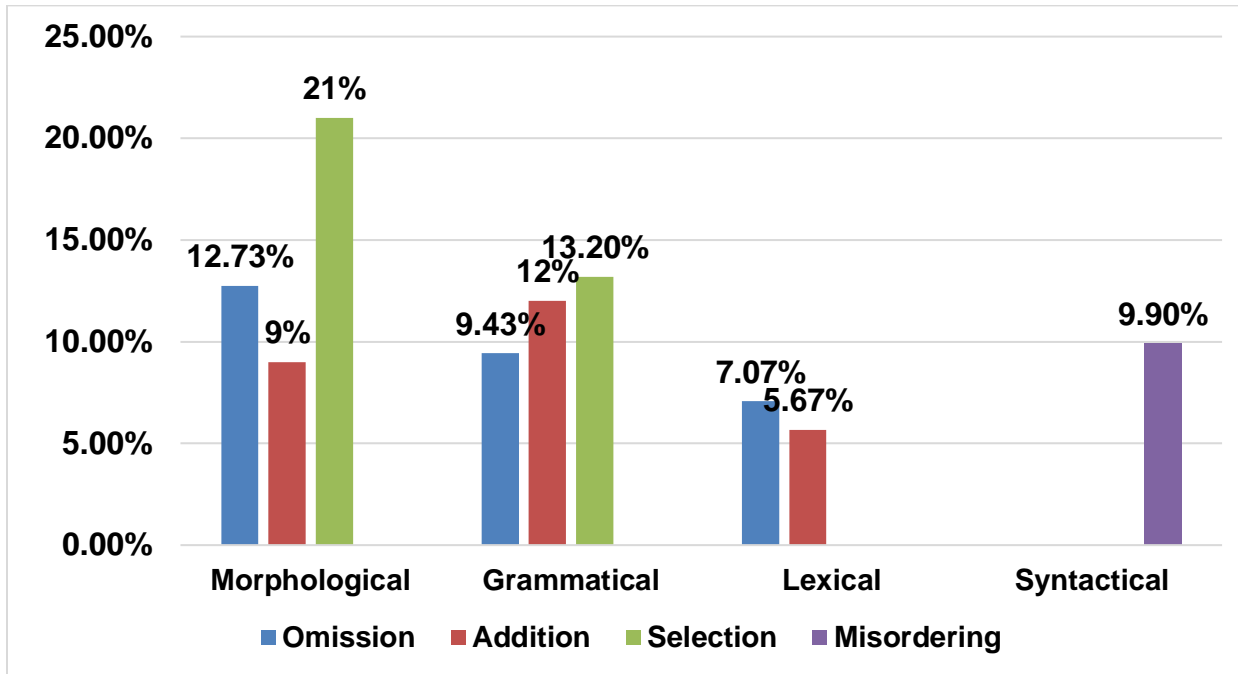
Error category	Illustrations	Corrections
Syntactical Misordering/ words	Extremely, I am hungry	I am extremely hungry
	I played yesterday basketball	I played basketball yesterday
	I rode carefully my bike	I rode my motorcycle carefully





misorder	I was studying at PEGAFI	I was at PEGAFI studying
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The syntactical misordering in the learners' composition is shown in the above table. The study's participants must have learned word order norms at a significant level if there were so few instances of misordering errors. Overall, selection errors are more frequent than misordering errors, which are less frequent. The number of errors found in learners' written composition is summarized in the tables below.



Interlingual and intralingual sources were used to categorize the origins of errors by the researcher. Grammar norms and syntactical order from L1 (Cebuano) to L2 are considered to be transferred in interlingual errors (English). However, improper classification, insufficient application, and overgeneralization of linguistic norms lead to intralingual errors.

The analysis of errors revealed that, at the level of selection, the majority of SHS students' written production is significantly influenced by their first language (Cebuano). In their production, Learners actually transmitted L1 grammatical and syntactical structures to L2. They might not be proficient in the syntactical and grammatical structures of L1. As a result, they used the L1 patterns and principles they had learned to produce L2. Interlingual mistakes are therefore not seen as the outcome of ingrained behavior but rather as a sign that the learner is internalizing the new system of the target language. Interlingual mistakes in this study relate to selection and syntactical misalignment.

### Recommendations

Teachers must be aware of the linguistic variations between Cebuano and the target language—English—in order to educate students about these differences through various tasks and activities and reduce errors and mistakes made by learners.

It's crucial to provide students with extra reading activities. In fact, reading texts and journals can help you improve your command of word structure, spelling, and usage context. This helps students become familiar with Standard English usage and steer clear of morphological and lexical misunderstandings, which would otherwise cause interference between the official language and the target language. Teachers should also stress grammar and morpho-syntactic principles more than writing techniques when working with younger students. The majority of grammatical, lexical, and morpho-syntactical errors and mistakes are caused by learners' lack of proficiency with the structure of the target language. Teachers can recommend a few objective assessments and error analysis exercises to help students improve their writing accuracy as a way to reinforce the instructions. Then, they should give more drills linked to writing such as blank filling, scramble sentences, paragraphs writing and essays.

To help students with writing, teachers should help them understand how syntax works in writing compositions and how spelling affects how readers interpret written sentences and paragraphs. Teachers can explain that using correct grammar structures makes students appear more educated and increases the probability that their students will succeed in school. Plus, using correct spelling preserves students' time while improving their writing as they work on grammar since spellings are easy after good spelling habits develop first. Additionally, teachers should explain the effect punctuation has on how readers interpret written sentences as closed or open-ended and whether certain sentences should have question marks at the end or not. Having these tools will greatly improve students' ability to express themselves clearly in several areas that affect reading comprehension and subsequent writing abilities.

### Conclusion





This paper examines the various errors and mistakes that SHS students commit in their written work. The hypotheses were as follows: 1) Misuse of grammar concepts, misspellings of words, slips, and interferences with language rank highly among learners' errors and mistakes. 2) - Lack of understanding and awareness of certain grammar, vocabulary, and morpho-syntactic structures, as well as a dearth of writing assignments in class, are the root reasons of learners' errors and mistakes.

Many students make morpho-syntactic and spelling errors in their writing. This is because they do not know the correct rules for using words correctly. For example, they may use two consecutive single quotes instead of two consecutive apostrophes when they mean to omit one. Or they may use two hyphens instead of an em-dash when they mean to omit one. Student errors in this area are due to not knowing the correct rules for using words correctly. If students could see the errors other people have made with similar phrases, it would help them learn from those mistakes and improve their own writing skills.

Another common mistake student writers make is choosing poor words and formatting choices. They may use slang or informal expressions that adults would find offensive or outdated. Plus, they may use incorrect capitalization, colons or semicolons when they should use colons and semicolons instead. Student choices are poor for a reason- people do not make these choices accidentally; they do them intentionally to sound more mature or informal. However, these choices make their writing hard to understand since they sound too mature or informal for formal writing assignments. To improve their writing, students need to learn what formal language looks like and how to use it correctly in every part of their compositions.

All novice writers make errors in their morpho-syntactic and spelling choices at some point in their life- it's a natural part of learning new things through writing assignments. However, many of these errors are due to students not knowing the correct rules for using words correctly and choosing poor formatting choices without realizing it. Teachers can help students by providing examples of how other people have used similar wording phrases so students can learn from those mistakes and improve their own writing skills.

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