ANALISIS KESILAPAN PENULISAN DALAM KARANGAN PELAJAR BUKAN BAHASA INGGERIS

AN ANALYSIS OF WRITING ERRORS IN ESSAYS OF NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of writing errors in non-English major students' essays using a qualitative research approach. The study, conducted from September 2021 to June 2022, aims to identify and examine the types, frequencies, and underlying causes of writing errors among college students in Ma'anshan University, Anhui Province, China. A sample of 50 essays from these students was collected and analyzed during this period. The research showed that the number of errors occurred in students' essays was 400 errors which contained nine types errors totally. To gain deeper insights into the students' perspectives on these errors and the factors contributing to their occurrence, interviews were conducted with 20 students. Combined with manual data analysis guided by Sawalmeh (2013), the qualitative analysis of the interview data complemented the findings, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the writing errors among non-English major students as well as precious insights into English writing.

Keywords: *Writing errors, Analysis, Factors, Non-English Major Students' Essays.*

Introduction

"Writing errors" can be defined as deviations from the established rules, conventions, and standards of written language usage. These errors encompass various linguistic aspects, including grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, syntax, and discourse coherence. A thorough exploration of writing errors sheds light on the challenges faced by non-English major students in the realm of English writing. English writing holds significant importance for college students' essays as it directly impacts their academic success and overall language proficiency. Proficient English writing skills enable these students to effectively express their ideas, demonstrate critical thinking abilities, and meet the rigorous academic standards expected of them. Clear and coherent writing not only enhances their ability to communicate complex concepts but also facilitates their engagement in scholarly discussions and contributes to the academic discourse within their respective fields of study. Moreover, strong English writing skills open doors to future career opportunities, as effective written communication is highly valued in professional settings. By honing their English writing abilities, students can enhance their academic performance, broaden their career prospects and develop valuable lifelong skills essential for success in today's globalized world.

With English serving as a predominant global language, an ever-growing population of non-English major students is confronted with the task of writing essays and academic papers in English as part of their college coursework. However, due to their limited exposure to English language instruction and diverse linguistic backgrounds, these students often encounter substantial challenges in achieving accuracy and proficiency in written communication.

A fundamental aspect of this research entails the systematic identification and categorization of common writing errors manifested by non-English major students. This process involves meticulous scrutiny of the essays and the subsequent classification of the observed error types. By categorizing these errors, the study aims to foster an all-round comprehension of the specific hurdles faced by non-English major students in their writing endeavors.

Additionally, it should be noted that the study seeks to explore the underlying factors contributing to the occurrence of these writing errors among these students (Agustin & Wulandari, 2022). Factors such as linguistic background, prior educational experiences, and exposure to English writing may influence the writing challenges encountered by students. Gaining an understanding of these factors can provide valuable insights into the foundational causes of these errors, thereby informing the development of tailored interventions. Aligned with the research objectives, the study also aims to provide practical recommendations and insights (Al Khateeb, 2022) pertaining to effective educational management strategies and curriculum development. These recommendations strive to support students in enhancing their writing skills and addressing the identified areas of difficulty. Drawing on evidence-based suggestions, the research endeavors to contribute to the advancement of English writing proficiency among non-English major students.

Through meticulous analysis, the researcher aims to identify challenging areas, explore contributing factors, and provide practical recommendations for educational management and curriculum development, thereby enhancing non-English major students' academic performance and preparing them for future success.

Literature Review

Writing is always an important skill to learn since it plays a major role in expressing one's ideas, thoughts, opinions and attitudes (Sumardi & Tarjana, 2018), and it helps improve one's communication skills, sharpen creativity, widens knowledge, enhance the level of confidence, and it is vital to academic success. The study reveals that students with limited prior exposure to English writing conventions face significant challenges in areas such as sentence structure, coherence, and vocabulary usage. The findings underscore the importance of providing explicit instruction and scaffolding to support these students in overcoming their writing difficulties. There are two ways to look at writing errors: firstly, they can be attributed to improper language processing, such as staged errors or errors brought on by abrupt memory loss; secondly, they can be caused by a lack of communication, such as the inability to effectively use the target language to convey ideas or ideas, etc.

Zhang et al., (2022) conduct a comparative analysis of writing errors between non-English major and English major college students. Their research highlights notable differences in error types and frequencies, suggesting that non-English major students encounter distinct challenges specific to their linguistic backgrounds and academic pursuits. The study recommends tailored instructional approaches that address the unique needs of non-English major students to foster their writing development effectively. Some studies conducted by Fajrina (Fajrina et al., 2021) have highlighted that language proficiency can be a significant challenge in English academic writing. This is because an essential aspect of L2 English academic writing is the parallel development of students' proficiency in morphological, syntactic, and lexical aspects alongside their academic writing skills.

Theories and frameworks play a crucial role in deepening our understanding of error analysis and its application to second-language writing. Several theories have contributed valuable insights to this field. One such theory is Contrastive Analysis Theory, which was developed by Robert Lado in the 1950s. This theory asserts that errors in second language learning can be anticipated and explained by examining the differences between the learner's native language and the target language. Learners develop an interim system called interlanguage, which is influenced by both their native language and the target language. Errors arise as a result of the transitional nature of this interlanguage, as learners navigate between the structures and rules of their native language and those of the target language. Building upon these theories, various frameworks have been developed to categorize and analyze errors in second language writing. The Global Structure Taxonomy, developed by Shen and Wang (Shen et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021), focuses on macro-level structural elements, such as paragraphing, topic sentences, sequencing, and cohesion, with an emphasis on overall text organization and coherence. The Lexical Approach, advocated by Lewis, emphasizes vocabulary's role in writing proficiency and addresses errors related to word choice, collocations, idiomatic expressions, and lexical accuracy. Additionally, the Genre-based Approach, influenced by Swales and Bhatia, considers genre conventions and examines errors in relation to specific genre characteristics. Integrating these frameworks provides the researcher with a comprehensive understanding of error analysis in second-language writing, facilitating targeted interventions to enhance students' writing skills across diverse linguistic dimensions and textual aspects.

Methodology

In the pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of participants' writing errors, the researcher should undertake a meticulous analysis of their written essays, subjecting each error to scrupulous scrutiny. The researcher endeavors to discern recurring patterns and tendencies in participants' error production. In parallel, observational methods emerge as a valuable avenue through which the researcher gains insights into their intricate writing processes. Through the employment of video or audio recordings during writing tasks, the researcher is afforded the opportunity to closely observe participants' decision-making processes, planning strategies, and revisions.

3.1 Participants
The study was conducted on 25 non-English major students, ranging in age from 18 to 20 years. The participants were specifically enrolled in their second semester of their freshman year. Prior to their enrollment in this study, they had completed a one-semester course of College English, during which they had undergone comprehensive instruction in IELTS Reading, Writing, Audiovisual, and Speaking courses. The subsequent semester entailed advanced-level coursework in these specific areas. It was noteworthy that none of the participants had received formal English-language education abroad or resided in an English-speaking country. This precautionary measure was implemented to ensure a degree of homogeneity in the data acquisition process.

3.2 Procedure
The participants in this study were provided with a consent form and assured about the confidentiality of their personal information. The dataset consisted of 50 written compositions, encompassing three thematic units that focused on topics such as campus life, friendship, and travel, among others. Each participant was instructed to produce a composition within a time limit of one and a half hours, comprising 120-200 words, in alignment with the assigned theme. They wrote the first 25 compositions during the first week (the topic was their campus life) and the other 25 compositions during the fourth week (the topic was friendship). In the subsequent weeks, participants were requested to generate additional written pieces. However, as these compositions were subject to corrective feedback provided to the participants for error analysis purposes during that period, they were excluded from the scope of the current study. It is important to note that the participants were non-English majors who had received feedback from their course instructors regarding other courses they had completed or were concurrently undertaking. Furthermore, participants were explicitly prohibited from utilizing dictionaries or seeking assistance from the researcher, ensuring the exclusion of any factors that could potentially distort the authenticity of their writing.

3.3 Coding
After careful deliberation, the researcher opted to conduct a manual analysis of the 50 compositions to identify errors and affirmed that automated analysis may yield inaccurate outcomes, thus emphasizing the necessity of manual revisions, even if automated analysis has been performed. As an additional precautionary measure, the compositions were subjected to scrutiny by another coder, who was a native Spanish speaker and held a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics. This additional reviewer's perspective proved

valuable in identifying errors that may have been overlooked by the original author. It is noteworthy to mention that other types of errors, such as punctuation errors, were not included in the analysis. The subsequent table provides practical examples to illustrate these errors.

Table 1. Examples of participants' errors

No.	Type of error	Example	Correction
1	Verb tense	She go to the store.	She goes to the store.
2	Subject-verb agreement	The students is studying.	The students are studying
3	Sentence fragments	Running in the park.	I enjoy running in the park.
4	Double negatives	I don't have no money.	I don't have any money.
5	Incorrect word order	I have found a job interesting.	I have found an interesting job.
6	Misuse of prepositions	I am waiting in the line.	I am waiting in line.
7	Misuse of pronouns	Him will have a nice trip.	He will have a nice trip.
8	Spelling	oportunity	opportunity
9	Capitalisation	i want to have a rest.	I want to have a rest.

Result and Discussion

Within this section, an analysis of the participants' writing is presented through both descriptive and inferential statistics. The 50 writing compositions underwent a meticulous error count and consolidation process, subsequently resulting in the conversion of these figures into corresponding percentages. Notably, the participants collectively produced a total of 400 errors. To provide a visual representation of the error distribution, the following chart illustrates the percentages associated with each specific error type.

Table 2. Data result of errors

No.	Type of error	Frequency	Percentage(%)
1	Verb tense	48	12%
2	Subject-verb agreement	40	10%
3	Sentence fragments	28	7%
4	Double negatives	24	6%
5	Incorrect word order	40	10%
6	Misuse of prepositions	44	11%
7	Misuse of pronouns	20	5%
8	Spelling	100	25%
9	Capitalisation	56	14%
	Total	400	100%

In the above table, spelling errors accounted for the largest percentage, representing 25% of the total errors. The second most common errors were capitalisation errors which comprised 14% of the error count followed by errors in using verb tense (12%), prepositions (11%), subject-verb agreement (10%), incorrect word order (10%), sentence fragments (7%) and double negatives (6%). Misuse of pronouns had the lowest occurrence, making up only 5% of the total errors.

As presented in the table 2, the most common grammatical errors were in spelling (100 errors or 25%). Because the cognitive load and time constraints associated with college assignments often prompted the participants to prioritize content generation and organization over meticulous spelling checks. The participants wrote, "The students at our college are actively invovled in extracuriccular activites". In this sentence, they seemed to mix "invovled" with "involved", "extracuriccular" with "extracurricular" and "activites" with "activities" due to their limited vocabulary knowledge particularly when they struggled to accurately recall the correct spelling of less common or unfamiliar terms. Some participants even wrote "The campus is a hub of knowlege, providing source like books and journals." They totally mixed up words like "knowlege" and "knowledge", "source" and "resource", ignoring the slight difference between the wrong word and the correct one because of their insufficient spelling skills. Besides, they had difficulty in using articles, getting confused with "a interesting life experience" or "an interesting life experience", and sometimes they might miss these articles.

In the research conducted, it was determined that capitalisation errors occupied the second position in terms of prevalence, accounting for a total of 56 errors or 14% of the overall identified errors. Nowadays, with the wide use of mobile phones, the participants got into informal writing habits, which capitalization rules were often relaxed or ignored. For example, "the" and "french" in the sentence "the professor taught us about the french revolution in history class." should be both capitalized because the former one was the first word of the sentence and the latter one was a proper noun. The student wrote "my friend and i went to the park to play frisbee." instead of "My friend and I went to the park to play frisbee." From the sentence, the student used the wrong form of "my" and "i", which should be "My" and "I" respectively. For non-native English learners, capitalization rules may differ in their native language, causing confusion or inconsistent application of capital letters in their English writing. Moreover, in the pursuit of completing the task quickly, participants may prioritize speed over correctness, leading them to neglect capitalization rules.

Among the identified errors, verb tense errors accounted for 12% of the total, totaling 48 instances and placing them in the third rank in terms of frequency. To begin with, a lack of comprehensive understanding of verb tenses and their appropriate usages in different contexts that participants misused led to these errors. This may stem from insufficient instruction or limited exposure to diverse examples. For instance, participants wrote the sentence like "We were best friends since elementary school and we always have fun together." The verbs in this sentence should be consistent, and should be used in the simple past tense like "We were best friends since elementary school and we always had fun together". Errors that participants made in verb tenses mostly because they did not have consistent practice or reinforcement of verb tenses, or even they did not master the rule of tenses. Some participants wrote down the sentence "I have meet my friend yesterday at the coffee shop." In this sentence, they should use "met" instead of "have meet". Overgeneralization of verb tense rules, wherein participants applied a single verb tense to multiple situations, led to errors, such as using the present tense for past events or vice versa.

The participants produced 44 errors or 11% in the use of prepositions. They felt confused because they did not master the application of prepositions such as with, to, on, of, etc. For instance, in the sentence "We share a lot in common to each other," the preposition "to" should be replaced with the appropriate preposition "with" to accurately convey the mutual characteristics and similarities shared between the individuals. Errors in prepositions appeared because there was uncertainty in participants to select the correct preposition. Mostly due to the complexity of prepositions, participants got confused, resulting in incorrect usage. Moreover, the same preposition had multiple meanings depending on the context. Participants may not pay careful attention to preposition usage while writing, to give an instance, "I always hang out with my friends at the cafeteria during the breaks." When referring to a location, it should be "hang out with my friends in the cafeteria." Prepositions like "in" and "at" were similar to the participants for they overlooked the need for precise preposition selection and used them interchangeably or incorrectly.

The next errors were in the use of subject-verb agreement (40 errors or 10%) as well as incorrect word order (40 errors or 10%). The participants wrote the sentence like "Each of the dormitories come with their own bathroom facilities" rather than "Each of the dormitories comes with their own bathroom facilities." They misused the plural form "come" with the singular form "comes" because there was uncertainty among the participants regarding the subject "each of the dormitories," whether it should be treated as plural or singular. The same error occurred in the sentence "A group of volunteers are working on organizing the campus clean-up event." In this sentence, when referring to a singular collective noun ("group"), participants should write the sentence "A group of volunteers is working…".

Apart from the errors observed in subject-verb agreement, the participants demonstrated a comparable frequency of errors in word order (40 errors or 10%). For instance, a recurring error was noted in the sentence structure, as exemplified by the phrase "Participating in clubs and activities extracurricular students enjoy," which deviated from the grammatically correct form of "students enjoy participating in extracurricular clubs and activities" when expressing their enjoyment. Participants who were English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners experienced interference from their native language's word order patterns, which occasionally resulted in errors when they attempted to align English word order with the structure of their first language (Pasaribu, 2021). Participants wrote the sentence like "The cafeteria crowded during lunchtime is with students." which was totally Chinglish. They could not write professional English due to their lack of sufficient exposure to well-constructed English sentences. Participants who heavily relied on translation to construct sentences encountered challenges with word order, as translating word-for-word from their native language often led to unnatural or incorrect word placement in English. Additionally, those who used limited sentence structures and failed to vary their sentence types struggled with word order, resulting in repetitive and monotonous writing that lacked clarity and coherence.

The participants exhibited sentence fragment errors at a frequency of 7%, accounting for a total of 28 instances, which positioned them at the seventh rank in terms of occurrence. On the topic of friendship, the participant wrote the sentence, "Always there for me. Supporting me through thick and thin." This was a sentence fragment, lacking a subject and verb in the second sentence, making it incomplete. This error occurred in their attempts to convey complete thoughts and resulted in incomplete sentences. Due to the participants' limited grammar and unsolid vocabulary, they tended to make such errors inevitably. Moreover, the researcher encountered confusion when analyzing sentences

like "A friend who understands. Like a sister to me." due to the absence of a verb in the second sentence, rendering it incomplete. The omission of a verb prevented the sentence from conveying a complete thought, leading to ambiguity and a lack of grammatical coherence.

Double negatives (6% or 24 errors) were the next errors that participants made. The participants wrote, "I don't need nobody else. You're my only true friend." Double negatives were more commonly found in informal or colloquial speech, such as certain dialects or regional variations. If an individual primarily used informal speech patterns, they may unintentionally incorporate double negatives into their writing or formal communication. On the topic of friendship, the participant wrote the sentence "We ain't got no friends like you. You're one in a million." to express his preciousness toward friendship. However, this participant used double negatives to cause misunderstandings in this sentence. Double negative errors could also occur as a result of inadequate proofreading or editing practices. If participants did not thoroughly review their written work, they might not have noticed or corrected these errors. Consequently, the presence of double negatives persisted, potentially undermining the clarity and grammatical accuracy of the text.

Misuse of pronouns was the next error that participants made (20 or 5%). The study revealed the presence of pronoun errors, specifically pertaining to object pronouns and possessive pronouns. Despite receiving instruction, the participants encountered persistent confusion when attempting to accurately employ the appropriate pronouns. Notably, one participant provided an example sentence that exhibited an incorrect object pronoun usage. The original sentence, "The professor handed the assignment to them, expecting a well-written paper." In this sentence, the incorrect object pronoun "them" was used instead of the singular "him or her." The correct sentence would be "The professor handed the assignment to him or her, expecting a well-written paper." Furthermore, the participants also demonstrated misuse of possessive pronouns. For instance, instead of utilizing the appropriate possessive pronoun "his or her" in the sentence "When someone is responsible for their own works," the participants erroneously employed the pronoun "their". To rectify this error, the correct usage would be "When someone is responsible for his or her own works." Challenges arise with gender-neutral pronouns as students accustomed to traditional binary pronoun usage may find it difficult to adjust. Developing familiarity and practice with inclusive pronoun practices would be an ongoing process for some students.

Factors

The factors contributing to these errors included carelessness, which accounted for 51% of the cases, first language interference (23%), translation (16%), and others (10%) such as a combination of insufficient teacher explanations and student difficulties in grasping grammar concepts.
The first factor was participants' carelessness. Participants made errors without using capitalisation, for example, "i plan to stay in the library." while "i" in this sentence should be capitalized. The next error was the incorrect use of pronouns, for instance "The university administration values there students' feedback and suggestions." It was clear that the participant used the same pronunciation /ðeə/ with the wrong word choice due to carelessness. The participants did not recognize the slight difference between "there" and "their", which caused writing errors. Incorrect use of subject-verb agreement was also indicated, for example, "My roommate like to play basketball." In this sentence, "my roommate" was singular, collocating the verb "likes" instead of "like".

Apart from carelessness, the second factor was first language interference, which accounted for 23%. It was known to all that first language interference referred to the influence of participants' native language on their English writing, specifically in terms of grammatical structures, word order, and pronoun usage (Aradillos et al., 2023). This interference manifested in various ways, such as errors in pronoun forms, gender-specific pronoun usage, pronoun agreement, and pronoun placement. For example, concerning the essays related to the topic of friendship, the participants wrote, "Her and I went to the park." The participant misused "her" with "she" because in Chinese, the pronoun "她" (tā) could be used for both "she" and "her". The interference from Chinese grammar led to the incorrect pronoun form in English. Moreover, the sentence "Tom, he is my friend." was incorrect for the deep interference of Chinese because it was common to use a pronoun after the noun for emphasis or clarification in Chinese. The interference from Chinese grammar led to the unnecessary repetition of the pronoun in English, and the correction was "Tom is my friend". The participants had difficulties in choosing proper words according to their writing reactions.

The third factor was translation. Translation errors in English writing occurred when non-native English speakers attempted to convey their thoughts or ideas in English but made mistakes due to their limited English skills (Rahma & Zen, 2023). For example, the participants wrote, "I had a large desire to go to the beach last weekend." In this sentence, the translation error occurred in the use of the adjective "large" instead of "strong" or "intense" to convey the idea of a strong desire in the past. While "large" referred to physical size, it did not accurately capture the intended meaning in this context. A more accurate translation would have been "I had a strong desire to go to the beach last weekend." In addition, participants made errors in using word order. By way of illustration, the participants wrote the sentence "He gave an expensive gift his brother yesterday". The error observed in this particular sentence lied in the positioning of the indirect object "his brother" prior to the direct object "an expensive gift." In English, the conventional word order dictated subject+verb+direct object+indirect object+adverb of time. Therefore, to rectify this, the accurate sentence would be: "He gave his brother an expensive gift yesterday." The participants did not take the word order into consideration when writing.

The last 10% of factors included a combination of insufficient teacher explanations and student difficulties in grasping grammar concepts. The teacher briefly mentioned the grammar rule without providing any examples or offering a step-by-step breakdown of its usage. Despite repeated explanations and exercises, participants still struggled to differentiate between present simple and present continuous tenses, often using them interchangeably. As a result, the students were left unsure about the correct application of the rule. Engaging students in interactive activities and practice exercises allowed them to apply grammar concepts actively. Pair or group work, role-plays, and games all encouraged students to use grammar rules in meaningful contexts.

Through deepening into types and factors of these grammatical errors, it is anticipated that the teachers or instructors can provide assistance and guidance to students in enhancing their English writing skills by improving their grammar usage and minimizing errors. Additionally, it is expected that this study will aid English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in identifying shortcomings in their English grammar usage. By acknowledging their grammatical errors, the learning process can become more seamless, particularly for Chinese students who are acquiring English and have a specific need for proficiency in English grammar.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of writing errors in non-English major students' essays sheds light on the common linguistic challenges they face in expressing their ideas in English. The study revealed that these errors often stem from both linguistic and cultural influences, as well as limited exposure to English language contexts (Shi & Wang, 2019).

The findings underscore the importance of targeted instruction and support for non-English major students to enhance their writing skills. English language educators and institutions can benefit from understanding the specific error patterns identified in this study, as it enables them to design effective interventions and strategies to address these issues. The study highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that considers both grammatical accuracy and the development of critical thinking and coherent arguments in students' writing. While addressing errors is crucial, it is equally important to foster students' creativity, critical analysis, and fluency in English writing. Ultimately, by recognizing and addressing the writing errors prevalent among non-English major students, educators can better support their language development and equip them with the necessary skills to effectively convey their thoughts and ideas in English. This not only enhances their academic performance but also prepares them for future professional endeavors in an increasingly globalized world.

Despite the valuable insights and frameworks offered by existing research on error analysis in students' essays, a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of this domain is necessary. One notable limitation lies in the predominant focus on surface-level errors, such as grammar and vocabulary, which overlooks higher-order concerns like content, organization, and argumentation. By neglecting the holistic aspects of writing, this narrow perspective fails to capture the intricate interplay between various linguistic and rhetorical dimensions. Furthermore, the controlled settings in which much of the research is conducted do not fully reflect the complexities of real-life writing situations, thereby limiting our understanding of how learners' writing skills and error patterns manifest in authentic communicative contexts. To address these limitations, it is crucial to incorporate qualitative approaches that delve into learners' perspectives, thought processes, and self-reflection, providing deeper insights into the underlying causes of errors. Moreover, a broader scope of participants, encompassing learners from diverse proficiency levels and linguistic backgrounds, is needed to enhance the generalizability of findings. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking their progress over time can offer valuable insights into the developmental trajectory of second language writing and the effectiveness of instructional interventions. By addressing these gaps and limitations, the researcher can foster a more comprehensive understanding of error analysis in second language writing, informing the development of more effective pedagogical approaches and support systems for learners.

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