

Common Errors in Grammar and Mechanics in Academic Writing by Senior High School Students

Stephanie Jane S. Garduce¹, Esther L. Baluyos²

^{1,2}Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines

ABSTRACT:

In the realm of language learning, learners' errors have emerged as a significant concern for analysis. Despite academic writing's formal nature, students continue to commit errors. In this qualitative study focusing on Grade 12 students' written academic texts, specifically application letters, a detailed analysis of common errors in grammar and mechanics was conducted. The research utilized content analysis on 186 application letters, employing a researcher-made rubric and involving three raters, including the researcher and two fellow English teachers. Thirty letters with the lowest scores were subjected to in-depth analysis using criterion sampling. The findings revealed prevalent grammatical errors, such as comma splice, subject-verb agreement issues, misused prepositions, and fragments. Mechanical inaccuracies included spelling mistakes, misused punctuation, and capitalization errors. Notably, a significant proportion of errors were identified in mechanics, indicating students' limited grasp of these aspects. The study underscores the crucial need for students to enhance their mastery of grammar, sentence structure, and mechanics in writing. To address these challenges, teachers are encouraged to employ engaging writing scenarios that involve grammatical exercises. Additionally, students should be advised to read extensively and understand the importance of thorough proofreading in refining their written communication skills. This study emphasizes the vital role of educators in guiding students toward proficiency in academic writing, ensuring their competence in grammar and mechanics for effective communication.

KEYWORDS: academic writing, application letter, content analysis, error, grammar, mechanics

INTRODUCTION

Writing in English is a complex process for second-language learners. During this process, second language learners often commit errors that seriously impact their lexis, grammar, and communication (Adebayo, 2022). Error analysis is an essential source of information for teachers. It provides information on students' errors which in turn helps teachers correct students' errors and improves their teaching effectiveness. If these errors are identified, corrections can be made, which would result in appropriate language usage by the learners. It is quintessential to know the errors, error types, and the reasons, if any, for these errors (Rao & Syam, 2020). Writing is the foremost difficult skill to develop among the four skills in the language since writing includes complex language systems such as sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary. Moreover, writing differs from speaking in many features, such as letter, word, and text formation. However, on the other hand, its manifestation in

handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and layout also matters. In that sense, writing can have a vital role in developing learners' vocabulary and grammar, how they express their thoughts, and even how to send messages to other people (Saputra, 2022).

Students need to engage in academic writing, such as book reviews, critique papers, essays, movie analyses, reports, research papers, application letters, and more. Their skills are said to be developed through formal situations. Academic writing includes a comprehensive, dynamic procedure with the particulars and principles of a discipline (Akhtar et al., 2019). Altinmakas & Bayyurt (2019) support the idea that academic writing in English is a gatekeeper for many students worldwide. In this case, many studies have been conducted to investigate the processes and challenges students may face in academic writing. It is said that the academic writing process requires much time and effort for both the teacher and the students. In addition, the researcher on this study has noticed various difficulties of students in academic writing, which requires formal and correct structured sentences to deliver the message to its recipient formally.

MATERIAL, METHODOLOGY, AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Material of the Study

In this study, 186 Grade 12 students actively participated in the teaching and learning process, specifically engaging in an activity centered on writing application letters. These students were specifically selected from five sections of Grade 12 based on their performance, with the thirty lowest-scoring students chosen using criterion sampling. To facilitate the learning process, the researcher utilized a video demonstration, showcasing instructions on how to craft an effective application letter. The instructional content was presented to all five sections of Senior High School Grade 12 students, complemented by a lesson plan. The study employed a qualitative approach, focusing on content analysis, to identify and assess common errors in grammar and mechanics prevalent in the academic writing of Senior High School students.

Methodology

Before commencing the study, the researcher secured approval from the Graduate School and the Principal of Basic Education. A pre-recorded lesson on application letter writing was meticulously reviewed and endorsed by the adviser and the panel before its implementation. The researcher then conducted the lesson for 186 students across five sections, followed by a classroom discussion outlining the steps in writing an application letter, using the approved lesson plan. Subsequently, the 186 application letters submitted by students were evaluated by three raters employing a researcher-made rubric, ensuring a reliable assessment process. To ensure a focused analysis, the study concentrated on thirty of the lowest-rated letters across the five sections. This selection method guaranteed a comprehensive understanding of the prevalent mistakes in application letter writing among Grade 12 students, given the uniform instructional input provided to all 186 students through the instructional video.

Literature Review

The challenges faced by second-language learners in mastering English writing have been extensively explored in academic literature. Akhtar et al. (2019) highlighted several key challenges including clarity, coherence, lack of writing practice, and motivation, along with specific errors in

tenses, mechanics, conditionals, and subject-verb agreements. Understanding these challenges is crucial as they hinder effective communication and comprehension. Muhammad et al. (2022) emphasized the significance of proper punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in enhancing sentence structure and ensuring meaningful writing. Correct usage of these elements aids readers in comprehending ideas, underscoring their pivotal role in effective communication (Lauchman, 2020).

Research has also delved into the intricate nature of errors in English language writings. Sermsook et al. (2018) identified common errors in English majors, such as punctuation, articles, subject-verb agreement, spelling, capitalization, and fragments. These errors were primarily attributed to interlingual and intralingual interference, limited grammar and vocabulary knowledge, and student carelessness. Rismadewi (2021) highlighted specific errors in academic writing, including verb, preposition, article, and pronoun errors. This study emphasized the need to teach grammar and vocabulary in context, aligning with Chomsky's Grammar Theory (1957), which suggests that students internalize language better when taught within meaningful communication situations.

Academic writing, which is characterized by its formal structure and content, demands meticulous attention to both mechanics and grammar. Junaid and Santaria (2022) emphasized the importance of correcting structural and content-related aspects, as errors in grammar, subject-verb agreement, pronouns, articles, and vocabulary, coupled with mechanical issues like layout, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and font size, can impair the quality of academic writing. The complexity of writing lies in its multifaceted roles, including organizing ideas, applying suitable vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures (Ramasamy & Aziz, 2018).

While prior research often focused on specific error types or used essays as data sources, this study is distinct. It analyzes grammar and mechanics errors in application letters, a genre rarely explored in previous research. This approach provides a holistic view of students' writing abilities. Understanding the prevalent errors in application letters is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching strategies, course materials, and the English curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Grammar and Sentence Structure

A grammatical error is a fault made by the language learner in the rules of a language caused by the lack of learners' grammar knowledge (Resmadewi, 2020). In this section, grammatical errors have been classified into five types: comma splice error, subject-verb agreement error, misused prepositions, and fragment error.

Comma Splice Error. A writer may correct a comma splice error in several ways. In correcting these errors, the method to be used depend on the relationship that the writer wants to convey between the two clauses. Statement one (Table 1.1) was written, "*I have more than 4 years of coaching experience, my profession aligns with the job.*" There was no logical connection between the two independent clauses in this statement. The two independent clauses in this sentence show distinction; therefore, they should be separated by putting a period at the end of the first independent clause. Thus, the correction structure will be, "I have more than 4 years of coaching experience and my profession aligns with the job." Statement 2 (Table 1.1): "*I believe San Beda University is the suitable school for me, I can enhance my skills more and achieve medals for the university, my time spent in my trainings has prepared me for such an opportunity.*" In a long statement like this, a comma should not be used to simply separate these independent clauses. To correct this, the writer could use a period after the first independent clause. It

should be written as “I believe San Beda University is the suitable school for me. I can enhance my skills more and achieve medals for the university. My time spent in my trainings has prepared me for such an opportunity.” It was found out that there were three independent clauses in the statement and putting the correct punctuation gives the statement a clear meaning. Statement three was also corrected by putting the correct punctuation such as period at the end of the first independent clause.

Statement four (Table 1.1) was written “*I am a hardworking person, I can work overtime.*” A semicolon was probably to be used as a remedy for comma splice since there was logical connection between the two independent clauses which was already clear, and the ideas represented in the two clauses were very closely related. When the relation between the two clauses is one of sequence—either a sequence in time or a logical sequence, then a semicolon is to be applied. This rule could be implemented by correcting this sentence, “*I believe that YG Company have a huge success, I’m looking forward that I could share this with you.*”. The first independent clause talked about his vision of success for the company. The second independent clause told his ambition to be part of the success. In other words, the connection between the two was already clear. Therefore, the correct structure may be “I believe that YG Company has a huge success; I’m looking forward that I could share this with you.”.

Statement six and seven (Table 1.1) can be corrected with a conjunction after the comma instead. Statement six: “*In the same restaurant, I also succeeded in performing front office duties for a year, I gained a lot of experiences in hospitality.*” A writer may write instead “In the same restaurant, I also succeeded in performing front office duties for a year, and I gained a lot of experiences in hospitality.” By adding the conjunction “and”, the writer may be able to fix the error. Conjunction “and” was used to show the relationship of two independent clauses. However, it is still necessary to understand that conjunctions have separate functions and meaning in the sentence. In statement seven, “*I think I have what you need, I want to apply for the position.*”, a coordinating conjunction could be applied after the comma. Putting a comma alone made the statement an error. Thus, the correct structure is “I think I have what you need, so I want to apply for the position.”

Carefully choosing a conjunction is also a consideration for writers since each conjunction emphasizes different meanings. In this statement, the second independent clause was the writer's result or decision about the first independent clause. As a result, most of the students need to correct punctuation. This study suggests that the errors happened because of carelessness and a lack of knowledge of the importance of mechanics in writing.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online (2021) defines a “comma splice” as using a comma between main coordinate clauses not connected by a conjunction. A comma splice error occurs when sentences or independent clauses are improperly connected by a comma alone. In the evaluation, the comma was the highest error in misused punctuation on the written application letters. The study's results suggested enhancing the grammar and mechanics accuracy of these Grade 12 students' writings. Comma splices may cause misperception to the readers since the produced sentence needs to be clearer between the two clauses (Hatuti, 2022). In addition, commas are insufficient to separate two or more independent clauses in a statement. Rules in correcting comma splices must be followed to correct these errors. According to “Common Core English Grammar & Mechanics 8” (p. 292), there are rules for separating these independent clauses.

Subject-Verb Agreement. Twenty-seven subject-verb agreement problems were found during the test. The student's inability to correctly identify the significant connection between a subject and a verb is caused by the demand for more accuracy. It was observed that some students were still needing help

determining the subject of the phrase, which led them to utilize verbs that were inconsistent with the proper subject of the verb. Many writers require assistance with the appropriate subject and verb agreement, particularly in lengthy statements where it may be challenging for them to identify the sentence's subject (Nayan, 2019).

The subject and verb in a sentence in an application letter must agree for it to be grammatically correct. The singular subject must agree with the singular verb, and the plural subject with the plural verb. First statement from one of the application letters considered, *"Although the business in Carangan are very different from what I have been used to..."* has a subject-verb agreement error. The subject of this statement, "business", is unambiguously in the singular form, which must also agree with the singular form of the verb. Thus, the appropriate sentence ought to be: *"Although the business in Carangan is very different from what I have been used to..."* In statement number two (Table 1.2), *"My professional expertise are close to the job you are hiring."* has the same subject with statement number three, *"My professional expertise cater on what you've been looking for."* It is obvious from these statements that the subject "professional expertise," was expressed in singular form but the verb used in the sentence is in plural form. The writer should utilize the singular form of verbs like "is" and "caters" to rectify these. The appropriate answers should be: *"My professional expertise is close to the job that you are hiring."* and *"My professional expertise caters on what you've been looking for."* Statement six stated, *"My experiences in this industry have prepared me for this opportunity."* The verb "has prepared" does not agree with the subject "experiences." One of the criteria of subject-verb agreement is that the verb must concur with the nearest subject and not be deceived by the phrases and clauses that come between them. The simple subject is not the prepositional phrase "in this industry". The verb should agree with the true subject and not the object of the preposition. The correct statement is: *"My experiences in this industry have prepared me for this opportunity."*

The verb must agree with the subject employed in the phrase, a crucial grammatical rule. According to this rule, the verb must also be singular if the subject is singular. On the other hand, the verb must be multiple if the subject is. The subject-verb agreement error was found to have the highest number of grammatical errors in this study ($f=27$), indicating that teachers should reinforce the subject-and-verb agreement rule in their lessons. The occurrence of SVA errors may have resulted from structural differences between the mother tongue language and English. According to Larry Selinker's (1972) Interlanguage Theory, second language learners' native tongues have a different sentence structure where the verb is typically at the front of the phrase. The subject comes before the verb in English; thus they should complement one another.

The student's application letters had several subject-verb agreement grammar mistakes. A grammatical mistake is when a language learner violates one of the language's rules due to ignorance of the grammar (Resmadewi, 2020). This was one of the variables that contributed to interlingual interference. As defined by Puspita (2019), interlingual interference refers to mistakes brought on by learners' mother tongues. English grammar should be taught to students as early as possible by teachers. This issue needs to be addressed because second-language learners may run into this problem. For students to employ the principles in dialogues and real-world contexts, teachers could also place lectures on subject and verb agreement in context.

Grammar and sentence structure should be given the most attention in an application letter. It was thought that having a solid grasp of grammar was essential for creating effective sentences. To convey meaning, words, phrases, and sentences must be well-written. According to Sadiyah & Royani

(2019), writing and grammar are inextricably linked because learners should consider grammatical norms, among other things, before writing. Grammar proficiency is crucial for writing abilities since it can assist students in constructing effective sentences. Teachers should therefore be able to start teaching grammar at a young age so that pupils can become proficient in its usage and norms. Grammar benefits the learner in various ways and serves as the foundation for effective communication. They include chances for employment, educational prospects, social skills development, a confidence boost, and more. When writing for an academic audience, a writer should use proper grammar and sentence construction for formality and to ensure that the intended content is delivered clearly. Several students' application letters, however, still had grammatical problems. Grammar and structure were among the students' writing process challenges in this study. Based on the findings, students still struggle with grammar rules during the writing process.

Misused Prepositions. In the evaluation, there are two categories of preposition errors, and these are addition and misinformation. An addition error is the presence of a preposition that should not be part of the sentence. On the other hand, misinformation is the incorrect presence of prepositions in statements. For example, in the evaluated letters, one statement says, "*I have more than 2-year-experience at being in a mechanic in several shops.*" The addition of the preposition "in a mechanic" should be omitted in the statement to make it correct, and there was an incorrect presence of the preposition "at". Therefore, the correct statement should be: "I have more than 2-year-experience of being a mechanic in several shops." "At" is being replaced by "of" since the preposition "of" is used to show the relationship of a thing or a person or vice versa. In this statement, the mechanic is connected to the two-year experience of the writer.

Prepositions serve as function words that indicate a direction, time, place, location, or spatial relationship or introduce an object before a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase. Prepositions include terms like "in," "at," "on," "of," and "to," among others. They are meaningless without a word; thus, they must be added. According to Lee et al. (2020), it can be challenging for many second-language English learners to utilize prepositions with content words in the context correctly. There were seventeen instances of prepositional misuse recorded in the evaluation. The incorrect use of these prepositions can change the statement's intended meaning. Therefore, prepositions still need to be revised for learners of English as a second language. Linguistically speaking, prepositions are part of grammar and are frequently used in speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Mahardika & Bram, 2022).

In another example "*I want to compete and represent your university from the big competitions.*" This is another example of misinformation in which the statement should not use "from" but to use "in" instead. The prepositions "on" and "in" are used in referring to a place or time, but the only difference is that, "in" is used when referring to specific place or time. In this example, there is specific place or time mentioned. Therefore, the correct statement is, "I want to compete and represent your university in big competitions."

Most preposition errors evaluated are about misinformation or the incorrect use of a preposition in a statement. The study of Setyaningrum & Fatmawaty (2022) also found that out of 69 errors in a preposition, 31 were because of misinformation, followed by the addition, which counted 23. Setyaningrum & Fatmawaty (2022) also mentioned that misinformation happened because they did not comprehend the transformation of particular words well. It was also the reason for the students who needed more understanding and knowledge of the rules and meanings of prepositions. Students may

believe that one preposition may be the same as another preposition. Thus, they must focus on choosing the right preposition for their statements, making them non-erroneous.

Fragment Error. Fragments are incomplete sentences. These dependent clauses need to be attached to a main clause or the independent clause to complete its thought. One of the examples states, *"Although the business in Carangan are very different from what I have been used to."* Aside from its error in the subject-verb agreement, it can also be said that this is erroneous since there is a period at the end of the statement even though the statement does not express a complete thought. It is called a subordinate fragment because it uses a subordinating conjunction at the beginning of the fragment. Thus, it must be attached to an independent clause to complete the thought. In other words, this should not be ended with a period since only sentences can use a period in the end. The correct form is *"Although the business in Carangan is very different from what I have been used to, I still manage it very well."*

Another example is, *"As an aspiring young pilot with over 9800 hours flight time and five years professional experience executing perfect flight remarks, analyzing flight data, and running landings that drive successful rating from our customers."* It is also an error since it does not express a complete thought yet is punctuated by the period in the end. This fragment is called the –ing fragment since verbs end in –ing. The correct form must be added with at least one independent clause to complete its meaning. For example, it could be, *"As an aspiring young pilot with over 9800 hours of flight time and five years of professional experience executing perfect flight remarks, analyzing flight data, and running landings that drive successful ratings from our customers, I think that I fit for this job."*

A fragment error happens when a fragment is punctuated as a complete sentence. Since a sentence must have at least a subject and a verb to send a complete thought, missing one element is erroneous (Hastuti, 2022). Therefore, a fragment is not a sentence since it does not express a complete thought. In this study, four out of 80 errors in grammar were fragment errors, suggesting that students still need to be more careful in acknowledging the completeness of a sentence. These errors were categorized into adverb/subordinate fragment and –ing fragment.

Grammatical errors constitute 48 errors in writing. Among the four classified errors, the comma splice error had the highest errors of 40%. Second on the list was the subject-verb agreement error, 33.75%. Third was the misused preposition, 21.25%. And lastly, fragment errors, 5%. The theory of Grammar by Noam Chomsky suggests that students' brains can only store limited rules in organizing language. They are still in the process of learning the grammar rules of the second language. Since they are not native speakers of the English language, they inevitably commit errors, especially in grammar and structure. It is also emphasized in the Interlanguage theory that students tend to commit these errors because of the differences in the content and structure of the English language and their mother tongue language. It is called Interlanguage interference.

The result of the study stated the common errors the students committed, particularly with the grammar of the application letter. Grammar has played a vital part in the effectiveness of the written application letter. Thus, analyzing these errors could benefit both the teacher and the students. Teachers should put the correct use of grammar in actual situations, such as using it in conversations and other real-life situations. Simple memorization enables learners to forget the rules of grammar easily. Students should also be given various reading materials to enrich their understanding of correct grammar usage and structure.

Table 1 Errors in Grammar and Structure

Category	Example Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Comma Splice Error	<i>“I have more than 4 years of coaching experience, my profession aligns with the job.”</i>	32	40%
Subject-Verb Agreement Errors	<i>“My professional expertise are close to the job you are hiring.”</i>	27	33.75%
Misused Prepositions	<i>“I have more than 2 years of experience at being in a mechanic in several shops.”</i>	17	21.25%
Fragment Errors	<i>“Since I have education and skillful experience in the food and hospitality industry.”</i>	4	5%
Total Number of Errors		80	100%

Table 1.1 Comma Splice Errors

No	Errors	Corrections
1	<i>“I have more than 4 years of coaching experience, my profession aligns with the job.”</i>	I have more than 4 years of coaching experience and my profession aligns with the job.
2	<i>“I believe San Beda University is the suitable school for me, I can enhance my skills more and achieve medals for the university, my time spent in my trainings has prepared me for such an opportunity.”</i>	I believe San Beda University is the suitable school for me. I can enhance my skills more and achieve medals for the university. My time spent in trainings has prepared me for such an opportunity.
3	<i>“I wish to apply for the position of Deck Engineer in this industry, by the quest for more challenges, I am ready to work in any type of vessel anywhere in the world.”</i>	I wish to apply for the position of Deck Engineer in this industry. By the quest for more challenges, I am ready to work in any type of vessel anywhere in the world.
4	<i>“I am a hardworking person,I can work overtime.”</i>	I am a hardworking person; I can work overtime.
5	<i>“I believe that YG Company have a huge success, I’m looking forward that I could share this with you.”</i>	I believe that YG Company has a huge success; I’m looking forward that I could share this with you.
6	<i>“In the same restaurant, I also succeeded in performing front office duties for a year, I gained a lot of experiences in hospitality.”</i>	In the same restaurant, I also succeeded in performing front office duties for a year, and I gained a lot of experiences in hospitality.

7	<i>"I think I have what you need, I want to apply for the position."</i>	I think I have what you need, so I want to apply for the position.
---	--	--

Table 1.2 Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

No	Errors	Corrections
1	<i>"Although the business in Carangan are very different from what I have been used to..."</i>	Although the business in Carangan is very different from what I have been used to..
2	<i>"My professional expertise are close to the job you are hiring."</i>	My professional expertise is close to the job you are hiring.
3	<i>"My professional expertise cater on what you've been looking for."</i>	My professional expertise caters on what you've been looking for.
4	<i>"I believe that YG Company have a huge success..."</i>	I believe that YG Company has a huge success...
5	<i>"I am confident that my skills makes me a strong candidate."</i>	I am confident that my skills make me a strong candidate.
6	<i>"My experiences in this industry has prepared me for this opportunity."</i>	My experiences in this industry have prepared me for this opportunity.

Table 1.3 Misused Prepositions

Type of Error	Sample Errors	Number of Error
Misinformation	<i>i want to compete and represent your university from big competitions."</i>	10
Addition	<i>"I have more than 2 years of experience at being in a mechanic in several shops."</i>	7
Total Number of Misused Prepositions		17

Mechanics in Writing

The mechanics of writing is also considered an important factor in constructing a well-written application letter. Mechanics in writing include the use of punctuation marks and capitalization. Using punctuation is very important because it can make the reader easily understand the meaning of the writing even without looking at the expression of the person who wrote the message. It was found that wrongly placed punctuation marks may make a sentence ambiguous or even change its meaning. In the evaluation, the most common error in mechanics in terms of punctuation was the misuse of the comma. The comma is the most frequent and multifunctional device that exhibits more variations and differences than any other punctuation mark in the context. The misused punctuation counted 32 out of 91 or 36.16% of errors in mechanics. According to Al-Khalil (2022), when a writer uses poor punctuation, the reader obtains a negative picture of how much they care about their writing. Suliman et al. (2019) found

that students made many notable punctuation errors; however, in this study, having students become aware of their punctuation mistakes may enhance and help students improve their ability to write and read with fewer errors. In other words, many phrases are just jumbles of words without punctuation marks. Like any other art, punctuation can only be learned through study and practice.

Spelling Errors. In the written application letters, the total percentage of errors in spelling was 15.38% or counted 14 out of the 91 errors in mechanics. Errors in spelling were identified into four categories: omission, insertion, substitution, and transposition. Among these four categories identified, omission counted the highest with seven errors; insertion counted four; substitution also counted four, and one for transposition. Spelling error correction is an important yet challenging task because a satisfactory solution needs human-level language understanding ability (Zhang et al., 2020). The result of this study suggests that errors in spelling committed by the students are typically an effect of a word's weak orthographic representation in the minds of these students. Spelling errors make the text harder to read and process, so it is necessary to practice for students to write apprehensive and clear text, especially for writers with a different mother tongue.

Letter Omission. Omission error is characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance in spoken or written form (Kharmilah & Narius, 2019). It is because learners sometimes need to figure out the word that will tend to commit errors in writing. In the evaluation, five misspelled words appeared because of letter omission. These are *convient* - convenient, *realy* - really, *profesion* - profession, *suceeds* - succeeds, *resturants* - restaurants, *receve* - receive, and *manger* - manager. A writer that is not familiar of the word definitely makes error in writing. It was found out that the cause of committing this error is the inconsistent correspondence between the sound and the letter in the English language. One error in spelling is the word really that is misspelled and become "realy". Writers tend to use only one consonant since they are not aware of the double consonant in words that lead them to omit the other consonant. It is supported in the study of Gingras & Senechal (2018) that writers implicitly acquire errors in spelling in which they tend to omit a letter from the word because of the double consonant in which the other letter is considered to have no phonological value.

Letter Substitution. It happens when a letter is replaced by another letter in a word. This error can be attributed to a failure to recognize that English words have multiple correspondences between the sound of the language and the letters that represent the sound. It is plausible that this error occurred in the learner's effort to correspond the articulation with the spelling. In the evaluation, four words were misspelled because of letter substitution. The following words are: *previlage* *previlege* -privilege, *expertice* - expertise, *resteurent* -restaurant, and *espessially* -especially. The majority of the vowel substitution is exchanged between "a", "e" and "i". The word "privilege" is commonly misspelled because of vowel substitutions such as "*previlage*" and "*previlege*". This error can be attributed that in a failure to recognize that English words have multiple correspondences between the sounds of the language and the letters that represent those sounds. (2016). This factor is also in line with typical orthographic features of English letters, which have the inconsistent pronunciation of consonants or vowels, dependent on the context (Altamimi & Rashid, 2019). According to Muhassin et al.'s investigation from 2020, the majority of students substituted a vowel for the word, leading to errors in spelling. This study also confirms that substitution, which is mostly related to pronunciation, is conveyed by substituting vowels more frequently than consonants. The small differences between English sound and spelling, which result in the wrong letter selection while writing words, are the main source of substitution.

Letter Insertion. This error appears because of adding an extra letter to the word. In the evaluation, four misspelled words were identified because of letter insertion. It was also found that these letters inserted were mostly consonants. A double consonant cannot only make learners omit or substitute a letter but can also make them add letters/letters to a word. The following words were misspelled because of letter insertion: *privillage* – privilege, *shorthly* – shortly, *wrole* – role, and *may* – my. Noam Chomsky (1965) asserted in his theory that the student makes errors because they have insufficient knowledge to spell the word correctly or lack of attention that lead them to be confused with the word. Non-native speakers do not have adequate knowledge on the target language. These errors would be the result of the lack of knowledge as English is not a phonetic language. In other words, speakers do not always say words the same way these words are spelled.

Letter Transposition. Transposition reverses the position of the letter. In this error, learners tend to reverse the word with unconsciousness and ignorance. For example, the vowels in the word "chief" were reversed into "*cheif*", making it erroneous. Transposition error was the least frequent appearing error in spelling. This type of spelling error is due to the uncertainty of writers who are not sure which element of word to choose. According to Ahmid (2018), transposition is caused by students' limited knowledge of English spelling rules.

Spelling errors happen when writers misspell the words they use in their writing. These spelling errors can occur as typing errors in a word or writing words in English vocabulary (Fitria, 2018). Spelling relates to the learners' ability to correctly and accurately write a word. Writing correct and accurate spelling can add to the quality of writing texts. The study of learners' spelling errors provides an opportunity for them to understand and facilitate the learners' spelling difficulties. It will improve learners' writing and may contribute to transforming learners into good writers (Fitria, 2020). It was found in the study that inaccuracy in spelling made the sentence erroneous and, simultaneously confused the readers. The study concluded that a lack of understanding by students in correct writing caused spelling errors in this study.

Punctuation Marks Errors. This study classified thirty-two misused punctuations in the written application letters of students. Among the punctuations used, the comma was the most commonly misused punctuation identified. When commas are ignored in writing, sentences can be difficult to read because they can indicate pauses and different clauses in a sentence. In addition, punctuation are considered signal used to guide the reader through the text and make comprehension easier (Suliman et al., 2019). If a text is correctly organized, it will be seen as a strong piece of writing. On the other hand, poor punctuation can pose problems for both the reader and the writer by altering the meaning of a document.

Statement 1 in Table 2.2 stated, "*I have more than 4 years of coaching experience, my profession aligns with the job.*" The comma was used to separate two independent clauses which made the statement erroneous. To correct this, a comma should not be used. Instead, the writer may use a coordinating conjunction after a comma to simply separate the two independent clauses in the sentence. Thus, the correct statement is "I have more than 4 years of coaching experience, and my profession aligns with the job". Statement 4 "*In the same restaurant, I also succeeded in performing front office duties for a year, I gained a lot of experiences in hospitality.*" has the same error as in statement 1. The writer may also add a coordinating conjunction to coordinate the ideas in the sentence. The writer may this as "In the same restaurant, I also succeeded in performing front office duties for a year, and I gained a lot of experiences in hospitality". Statement 5 was, "*I think I have what you need, I want to apply for*

the position.” In this sentence, the second independent clause, “*I want to apply for the position.*” is a result or decision with the previous independent clause “*I think I have what you need*”. In this juncture, the writer may use a conjunction “so” to connect the ideas of these two independent clauses. The writer may use this sentence instead: “I think I have what you need, so I want to apply for the position”.

Statement 2 (Table 2.2) stated, “*I believe San Beda University is the suitable school for me, I can enhance my skills more and achieve medals for the university, my time spent in my trainings has prepared me for such an opportunity.*” Two commas were misused in this sentence. The sentence was too lengthy and a comma is not appropriate to be used in separating the ideas presented in the sentence. To correct this, the writer may separate them by using punctuation such as period. The writer may incorporate the period at the end of the first independent clause as well as at the end of the second independent clause. The correct sentence may be written in “I believe San Beda University is the suitable school for me. I can enhance my skills more and achieve medals for the university. My time spent in trainings has prepared me for such an opportunity”.

Another way of correcting a misused punctuation is simply using another punctuation that the writer thinks would be appropriate for the sentence. Statement 3 stated, “*I believe that YG Company have a huge success, I’m looking forward that I could share this with you.*” The writer may use a semi colon instead of comma after the first independent clause. The semi colon may be appropriate to separate the ideas in the sentence. The sentence may be written as, “I believe that YG Company has a huge success; I’m looking forward that I could share this with you.

Punctuation is a system of symbols or signs used to break up clauses or sentences to make the meaning obvious, indicate where a sentence begins and ends, and determine whether the writing is effective, thorough, and understandable. Punctuation is essential to clear communication; it can be complex and confusing when used incorrectly. Many ESL students still struggle with it, especially when writing and translating, even though some of us virtually know how to use it naturally. For example, they use a comma instead of a full stop, a colon instead of a semicolon, or a question mark in place of an exclamation point (Al-Khalil, 2022). In the study of Sülükçü & Kırboğa (2020), it was found that comma misused was so high, with a percentage of 86.05%.

Most students made the mistake of using a comma where they should use a period and a period where they should use a comma. It demonstrated that students did not know the functions of the comma and the skills to use a comma at good points in a sentence. In this study, students were also seen to have limited knowledge of the correct usage of commas because comma misused was the highest error they committed in writing mechanics. Poor student skills in using punctuation marks could be due to providing students with a manuscript written by someone else instead of allowing them to write a manuscript independently. Punctuation marks are directly associated with the meaning of the text. Individuals who cannot comprehend the text are not expected to use correct punctuation marks (Sülükçü & Kırboğa, 2020). Thus, teachers may give good writing activities to enhance their knowledge of punctuation.

Capitalization Error. It occurs when the writer capitalizes a word that does not require a capital letter or does not capitalize a word that requires one (Broyle & Jacques, 2022). Capitalization errors hinder the reader's experience with the writing and should be avoided at all costs. In the evaluation, the pronoun "I" was commonly written in lowercase, which counted twenty-three errors. The pronoun "I" should be written in uppercase, whether it appears at the beginning of a sentence or in the middle. Another error in capitalization was the unnecessary capitalization of the first letter of the word in the

sentence, which counted as 20. These two errors in capitalization were the only categories seen in the evaluation.

The grammatical errors in the application letters were comma splices, subject-verb agreement, misused prepositions, and fragment errors, with a total number of 80 and a percentage of 46.78%. The errors in mechanics in writing included spelling errors, capitalization errors, and punctuation used, with a total of 91 errors and a percentage of 53.23%. There was a higher percentage of errors in mechanics, 53.23%, compared to errors in grammar, 46.78%, as shown in Table 3.

Table 2 Errors in Mechanics

Category	Example Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Spelling Error	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>privilage, profesion, shorthly</i> 	14	15.38%
Misuse of common punctuation marks: a. Comma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“I am writing to apply in Gaisano mall, I have more than...”</i> <i>“I want to apply. As a mechanical engineer.”</i> <i>“Im hoping for your reply.”</i> 	32	35.16%
Capitalization a. Pronoun “I” b. Unnecessary capitalization of the first letter in a word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“i know i am capable of being an asset in this company.”</i> <i>“I am the best nurse Before and i can Prove that to you Dr. Glenn.”</i> 	45	49.45%
Total Number of Errors		91	100%

Table 3 Percentage of Errors

Category of Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Errors in Grammar	80	46.78%
Errors in Mechanics	91	53.22%
Total No. of Errors	171	100%

CONCLUSION

The study's findings have led to several important conclusions. Firstly, it was evident that students lacked a comprehensive understanding of correct sentence structure and grammar norms. Addressing this gap in knowledge is crucial for their overall linguistic development. Secondly, the study highlighted the need for improvement in students' accuracy concerning capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. These fundamental aspects of language should receive heightened focus in language teaching methods to enhance students' writing proficiency. Lastly, the research emphasized the necessity for students to acquire knowledge and competence in accurately applying the correct mechanics in academic

writing. Mastering these skills is essential for their success in scholarly endeavors, making it imperative for educators to emphasize these aspects in their teaching approaches.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to extend appreciation to school authorities for giving their approval for the conduct of the study. Recognition is also extended to the Senior High School participants, for their willingness to participate in the study.

REFERENCES

1. Adebayo, L. A. (2022). A longitudinal study of learners' writing errors in French. *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 23(1), 207-239. Retrieved on December 22, 2022 from <https://bit.ly/3GQHEwG>.
2. Aprieliava, I. V. et al (2021). Psychological factors influencing on the motivation to study of students of TEI. *Propósitos y Representaciones*, 9(SPE2), 993. Retrieved on March 15, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/3okBezS>.
3. Bulqiyah, S., et al. (2021). Investigating Writing Difficulties in Essay Writing: Tertiary Students' Perspectives. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 4(1), 61-73. Retrieved on February 20, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/3GQZtvr>.
4. Elfa, F., Sabri, M., Novita, L., & Aswandi, A. (2022). The Student's Errors Investigation In Using Punctuation, Capitalization And Spelling In Writing Business Letter. *INOVISH JOURNAL*, 7(1), 56-64. Retrieved on January 12, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/3GTgZiS>.
5. Halima, F. (2021). Investigating EFL learners Difficulties in Using Tenses in Academic Writing The Case of Master One Students of Mohamed Khaider University Biskra. Retrieved on January 12, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/3okL1pk>.
6. Junaid, R., & Santaria, R. (2022). Common Mistakes In The Students' Academic Writing: Rethinking For Curriculum Development. Retrieved on October 3, 2022 on <https://bit.ly/3oGyo8k>.
7. Junaidi, E., & Zaim, M. (2022). Morphological Errors Found in Indonesian Students' English Compositions of Application Letter. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 11(1), 50-64. Retrieved on January 12, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/3L1kx3Q>.
8. Mestre, E. M. M. (2022). Recurrent and not-so-recurrent pragmatic errors in academic writing in English as a Foreign Language. *LFE: Revista de lenguas para fines específicos*, 28(1), 173-192. Retrieved on December 22, 2022 from <https://bit.ly/43UARpk>.
9. Nádvořníková, O. (2020). The use of English, Czech and French punctuation marks in reference, parallel and comparable web corpora: a question of methodology. *Linguistica Pragensia*, 30(1), 30-50. Retrieved on February 20, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/40sJF9m>.
10. Nurhayati, S., & Nurdini, R. A. (2022). Investigating Toefl iBT Writing Tasks (A Case-Study of EFL Learners). *International Journal of English and Applied Linguistics (IJEAL)*, 2(2), 234-244. Retrieved on October 3, 2022 from <https://bit.ly/41DtTYT>.
11. Oguan, R. M., & del Valle, J. M. (2022) The Use of Grammatical and Mechanical Error Analysis Approach: Basis for a Writing Improvement Program for Student Journalists. In *3rd International*

- Conference on Multidisciplinary Industry and Academic Research*. Institute of Industry and Academic Research Incorporated. Retrieved on December 22, 2022 from <https://bit.ly/41yB7PC>.
12. Osman, O. H., et al. (2022). Interlanguage Theory Revisited: Implications for the Classroom. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 5(10), 30-40. Retrieved on January 12, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/3LmLGiW>.
 13. Özkayran, A., & Yilmaz, E. (2020). Analysis of Higher Education Students' Errors in English Writing Tasks. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 11(2), 48-58. Retrieved on December 22, 2022 from <https://bit.ly/3N6AWqg>.
 14. Pablo, J. C. I., & Lasaten, R. C. S. (2018). Writing difficulties and quality of academic essays of senior high school students. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(4), 46-57. Retrieved on February 20, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/40xrkIe>.
 15. Pearce, T., Maple, M., Shakeshaft, A., Wayland, S., & McKay, K. (2020). What is the co-creation of new knowledge? A content analysis and proposed definition for health interventions. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(7), 2229. Retrieved on January 15, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/3oGBdpW>
 16. Pratiwi, R., Aulia, R. P., & Suryani, L. (2019). An Error Analysis on Using Personal Pronouns in Writing Descriptive Text. *Professional Journal of English Education*, 2(5), 608-615. Retrieved on October 3, 2022 from <https://bit.ly/3Aul1ud>.
 17. Rismadewi, N. W. M. (2022). Analysis Of Grammatical Error In Descriptive Writing Among Students Of English Education Department Of Stkip Agama Hindu Singaraja In The Academic Year Of 2020/2021. *Daiwi Widya*, 8(4), 56-67. Retrieved on February 20, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/3N26TQC>.
 18. Roxas, M. J. D. (2020). Exploring senior high school students' academic writing difficulties: Towards an academic writing model. *IOER International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 2(1). Retrieved on February 20, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/41wI57O>.
 19. Rubio, A. D. J., & Conesa, I. M. G. (2022). Error analysis in the essays of engineering students: A comparative taxonomy. *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies*, 37(2), 225-237. Retrieved on January 12, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/3mYlfa1>.
 20. Sogutlu, E., & Veliaj-Ostrosi, M. (2022). Efl Learners' Challenges In Essay Writing: The Case Of A Non-Public High School In Albania. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 3958-3981. Retrieved on February 22, 2023 from <https://bit.ly/3N8ecWV>.
 21. Syam, J. (2020) Error Analysis Of Written English By Omani Students: A Review And Recommendations. Retrieved on October 3, 2022 from <https://bit.ly/3SRjJBh>.
 22. Suliman, F., Ben-Ahmeida, M., & Mahalla, S. (2019). Importance of Punctuation Marks for writing and reading comprehension skills. Retrieved on October 5, 2022 from <https://bit.ly/40z7mww>.
 23. VEY, E. (2022). *An Analysis Of Students' errors In Using Preposition Of Time In Writing Recount Text At The Eleven Grade Of Sma Perintis 2 Bandar Lampung In The Academic Year Of 2020/2021* (Doctoral dissertation, UIN RADEN INTAN LAMPUNG). Retrieved on October 5, 2022 from <https://bit.ly/3rL5hyJ>.

24. Zhang, S., Huang, H., Liu, J., & Li, H. (2020). Spelling error correction with soft-masked BERT. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2005.07421*. Retrieved on December 22, 2022 from <https://bit.ly/3n0VYfe>.