



Freshmen Versus Seniors: A Syntactic Error Analysis of the Student's Essay Writings

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ABSTRACT

Essay writing serves as a valuable means of evaluating students' vocabulary, spelling, and word formation skills. This research examines the essay writings of first-year and fourth-year students by administering a common essay topic and employing syntactic error analysis to assess the written outputs of 40 participants. A mixed-method approach is utilized to analyze the number of errors encountered in the compositions and comparison of the essay writings of the students. The participants for this study were selected through purposive sampling. The findings of the research reveal a significant divergence in the content, syntax, and grammar of essay writing between the two groups of students. Consequently, the study suggests that freshmen encountered errors in composing essays, particularly in relation to prepositions, subject-verb agreement (SVA), and punctuation. Conversely, seniors faced challenges primarily concerning prepositions and SVA in their essay writings. Notably, lowerclassmen exhibited a higher incidence of literal malapropism compared to upperclassmen. Additionally, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and punctuation were identified as common errors among both freshmen and seniors. As a result, the results underscore the significance of essay writing as an objective measure of a student's language proficiency and development. It is recommended to consistently expose both freshmen and seniors to essay writing in order to foster their proficiency in this domain.

Keywords: Essay Writing, Syntactic Errors, Malapropism, Freshmen, Seniors.

1. Introduction

In higher education, students are expected to possess the requisite English language skills for effective sentence, paragraph, and essay writing. Their written work should not only demonstrate grammatical accuracy but also convey coherent and meaningful messages (Praise & Meenakshi, 2015). A grammatically correct sentence adheres to the established rules and conventions of the language, ensuring proper syntax and structure. Similarly, a semantically acceptable sentence conveys a clear and unambiguous meaning. These requirements are aligned with the student's academic level and the demands of their coursework. As tertiary students, they are exposed to various academic tasks, such as report writing, journal articles, and other publications, which necessitate strong writing skills. Thus, it is evident that the expectations placed on university students include the ability to produce grammatically and semantically acceptable sentences.

The essay is a commonly assigned task throughout students' academic journeys, spanning from primary to tertiary education. It serves as a writing form aimed at assessing and refining their language proficiency, particularly in the field of English education, which involves navigating complex processes and engaging with multiple competencies. According to Jabali (2018), tertiary-level students encounter specific challenges in their writing processes. Therefore, it is advisable for students to develop proficient essay writing skills early on in their educational journey to effectively tackle these challenges.

Proficient writing skills are one of the essential competencies for students to acquire (Piamsai, 2020). The objective of writing is to encourage students to express their ideas, thoughts, and concepts, moving beyond personal opinions by utilizing external sources as guides. An essay should be concise, purposeful, and well-structured, ensuring that the student remains focused and avoids wandering or digressing from the intended message. Additionally, it is important for the writing to be deliberate and engaging, capturing the reader's interest.

Acquiring essay writing skills is a highly beneficial endeavor that can greatly enhance day-to-day communication (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017). The writing of essays by students has long been a subject of controversy, with correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling being key elements of effective communication. Educators on college campuses have expressed concerns over observed deficiencies in writing abilities over the years (Whyte, 2012; Daffern & Mackenzie, 2019). While some argue that adhering to traditional practices perpetuates these issues, it is essential for students to persist in essay writing until mastery is achieved. Through consistent practice, students will develop their ability to construct well-formed sentences and effectively convey their thoughts.

Error analysis is a systematic process that involves the examination of unsuccessful language usage, encompassing the study of its occurrence, nature, causes, and consequences. The data collection procedure for error analysis consists of two distinct steps. The first step involves the universal collection,

which aims to gain a preliminary understanding of the learner's writing proficiency. The second step entails conducting an in-depth analysis of errors, with a specific focus on sentence-level errors that are commonly encountered and have an impact on semantic expression and discourse analysis (Hafiz et al., 2018). Consequently, prioritizing the enhancement of writing abilities, reinforcing sentence-level training, and rectifying errors in English sentence patterns can yield significant benefits. Common syntactic errors include incomplete sentence structures, subject-verb agreement errors, inappropriate usage of conjunctions, prepositions, articles, and other similar linguistic elements.

The research aims to examine the errors committed in essay writing skills between students at higher and lower year levels. The objective is to analyze the proficiency of higher-level students in comparison to lower-level students. Specifically, the study seeks to syntactically analyze the written essays of first-year and fourth-year secondary education students, with a particular emphasis on their usage of grammatical elements, including vocabulary, spelling, punctuation marks, and word formation. By investigating these aspects, the researchers aim to gain insights into the variations in the use of grammatical components and their impact on the written output of the students.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This research employed a mixed methodology to investigate and analyze the contents of the students' essay compositions. The qualitative approach involved the use of syntactic error analysis to examine and describe how various grammatical aspects, including vocabulary, spelling, punctuation marks, word formations, and malapropisms were employed in the essays. By employing qualitative methods, the researchers aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of how these grammatical components were manifested in the students' writing. Conversely, the quantitative approach was utilized to measure and quantify the frequency of common errors committed in the students' outputs.

2.2 Respondents

For this research, the study participants consisted of students enrolled in the first and fourth years of Secondary Education. The researchers utilized a purposive random sampling technique, which involved randomly selecting individuals based on specific characteristics relevant to the population and research objectives. The sample size comprised 20 randomly selected first-year students and an additional 20 randomly selected fourth-year students who were enrolled during the academic year 2022-2023.

2.3 Research Instrument

The researchers distributed a standardized essay prompt to all participants, requesting them to justify their decision to pursue Secondary Education instead of other courses offered at the institution. Each student was allocated a 20-minute time slot during their scheduled face-to-face class sessions to compose an essay, with a minimum word count of 300 words. To evaluate the quality of the essays, the researchers conducted a thorough manual assessment of the written responses, utilizing Grammarly and a rubric as additional tools for a comprehensive analysis of various language elements, including vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and word formation skills.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher-initiated correspondence with the school administrator to request permission for conducting the research study. Additionally, a consent letter was provided to the cooperating teacher and students, containing the necessary information and conditions for their participation in the study. The letter enclosed the terms and conditions that governed the participation of all involved individuals in the research.

An orientation session was conducted to provide the respondents with a clear understanding of the research procedures. Subsequently, the consent letters were collected from the participants, and only those who willingly agreed to the specified terms and conditions and attended the orientation were included as final respondents in the study.

The essay prompt was administered to the respondents under the supervision of the researchers. The students were gathered in a separate classroom, where they were requested to complete the assigned essay. Upon completion, the researchers collected the essay submissions, and a syntactical analysis was conducted between the essays of the 1st year (freshmen) and 4th year (senior) students. This analysis focused on various grammatical aspects, including vocabulary, spelling, punctuation marks, and word formation. Thorough evaluation and documentation of the observed differences in the students' essays were carried out by the researchers. Notable variations in vocabulary, spelling errors, punctuation marks, and word formation techniques were recorded.

Additionally, the researchers identified common spelling and punctuation mistakes made by the students, examined the employed word formation processes, and analyzed the vocabulary utilized in the essays. Upon meticulous examination, the researchers determined the final percentage of variations and differences observed in the essays, thereby addressing the research questions posed in the study.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, the findings obtained from the gathered data (i.e., essay outputs), along with the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the outcomes, are presented.

Table 1 - Common Errors of Students in Essay Writing

Category	Freshmen	Seniors	TOTAL
Preposition	32	22	54
Spelling	7	5	12
Punctuation	12	9	21
Subject-Verb Agreement	21	17	38

3.1 Prepositions

Table 1 indicates that the preposition category has the highest frequency of errors. Specifically, the errors occur when incorrect prepositions, such as "in" and "on," "will" and "would," "of" and "for," or "at" and "to," are used in sentences. As a result, these prepositions are interchanged with other prepositions that are closely associated with meaning within the sentence. The explanation suggests that the sample texts, which are taken from the essay outputs of the respondents, contain instances where these preposition errors occur.

Excerpt 8: *I chose education for becoming a teacher...*

Excerpt 12: *I believe education is important for shaping the future generations...*

Excerpt 20: *choosing this education course will provide me with the necessary skills...*

The error in this sentence 8 is the use of the preposition "for" after the verb "chose." The correct preposition to use in this context is "as," as it indicates the purpose or role of choosing education. The sentence should be corrected to: "I chose education as a path to becoming a teacher..." Surprisingly, the study of Gvarishvili (2013) posits that in the realm of language learning, each language operates according to its unique set of rules governing the usage of prepositions. Within the context of second language acquisition, numerous points of conflict arise, with prepositions often occupying a central role in these clashes. One particular instance of this clash involves the position of prepositions. In English, it is customary for prepositions to precede nouns.

On the other hand, the error in this sentence 12 is the use of the preposition "for" after the adjective "important." The correct preposition to use in this context is "in," as it indicates the involvement or influence of education in shaping future generations. The sentence should be corrected to: "I believe education is important in shaping the future generations..." However, negative transfer or interference from one's native language (L1) can lead to interlingual mistakes, which may be compounded by intralingual errors such as overgeneralization (Budiharto, 2018). This type of error commonly occurs when a preposition in the second language is initially understood as the equivalent of a specific preposition in the native language, and then this knowledge is mistakenly applied in inappropriate contexts.

Similarly, in sentence 20, the utilization of 'will' implies a certain action in the future, whereas 'would' conveys a hypothetical or conditional statement. Given the uncertain nature of the decision to pursue the education course, it is more suitable to employ 'would,' as it conveys the potential outcome or the possibility of acquiring the desired skills and knowledge. In the study of Duan (2011), the mistake made by the students is that they incorrectly utilize the simple future tense in the subordinate sentence. This error occurs because the students lack knowledge of the usage of "will," which can function as both a modal verb and an auxiliary. On the contrary, instead of using the past future tense, the students should employ the simple future tense in those instances. This particular type of error is a direct consequence of intra-lingual interference. Chinese students tend to make these mistakes when they are not fully proficient in the various uses of the word "would". Additionally, the subjunctive sense of this word is frequently encountered, particularly in spoken English, such as in the sentence pattern "would you like to...". As a result, students naturally gravitate towards using the word "would" when constructing sentences.

3.2 Spelling

The correct spelling of words is crucial in written language as it plays a significant role. Mistakes in spelling have the potential to alter the meaning and comprehension of written text, leading to ambiguity (Altamimi & Rashid, 2019). Therefore, it is imperative to employ accurate spelling to effectively communicate the precise intended message of the content. Provided below are selected excerpts that illustrate instances where the respondents made spelling errors:

Excerpt 4: *Education is important for personal growth and career sucess...*

Excerpt 13: *Through education, we can accomplish our goals and aspirations...*

Excerpt 17: *One of the main reason why I choose education is to gain knowledege and skills.*

The provided excerpt above highlights instances of misspelled words, particularly those that involve double or repeated letters. It can be inferred that students frequently overlook certain letters, as observed in words such as "success," "accomplish," and "skills." Other common errors identified include

"committee," "occasion," "vision," "beautifully" and similar instances. According to Babayigit and Stainthorp (2010), the ability to understand and apply grammar and phonological rules significantly influences one's spelling ability. Hence, it can be argued that spelling holds a crucial position as a fundamental skill for students. Precise spelling empowers writers to effectively communicate their ideas and perspectives in a standardized manner, facilitating comprehension among readers. Therefore, in order to achieve impactful writing, it is imperative to ensure accurate spelling.

The process of learning vocabulary involves four stages, which include discrimination, where learners distinguish sounds and letters to accurately pronounce and comprehend words. The second stage involves understanding the meaning of words. The third stage focuses on remembering and retaining the meanings of words in memory. Lastly, the consolidation and extension stage involves learning new vocabulary and integrating it into the learners' existing vocabulary system (Grauberg, 2017). However, learning vocabulary can be challenging for some students, particularly ESL students, as they encounter a wide range of words that may not be frequently used. Oxford (2019) argues that there are generally no fixed rules for learning vocabulary and grammar. It requires practice and exposure to words during the course of their studies.

3.3 Punctuation

A frequent occurrence among students is the misuse of English punctuation marks in their writing (Nurhaidah, 2017). However, it is crucial to note that proper punctuation plays a vital role in constructing a well-written paragraph or piece of writing. Unfortunately, many students underestimate the significance of English punctuation and possess limited knowledge about its usage. This situation calls for analysis, which involves studying the individual components of punctuation. Such analysis is beneficial for both students and teachers as it aids in self-evaluation and improvement.

Excerpt 23: *I chose to pursue a degree in education because, I have a passion for teaching...*

Excerpt 29: *My goal is to make a difference in students' lives especially by providing them...*

Excerpt 35: *Education is the foundation, it builds a strong future for individuals and societies...*

In sentence 23, there is an unnecessary comma after the word "because." The comma disrupts the flow of the sentence and is not grammatically required. To maintain a formal tone and correct the error, the comma should be removed. In the same way, in excerpt 29, there is a missing punctuation mark at the end of the word 'lives'. To ensure grammatical correctness and formality, use of commas before the word 'especially' in the sentence to indicate a pause and separate it from the rest of the sentence. It helps to clarify that the phrase "by providing them" applies to the goal of making a difference in student's lives as a whole, rather than specifically referring to providing them with something. The comma helps to emphasize the intention of making a difference and highlights the significance of providing opportunities or support as one of the ways to achieve that goal. Lastly, in the final sentence, there is a missing punctuation mark after the word "foundation." To maintain a formal tone and clarify the sentence structure, a semicolon can be used to connect the two related statements.

According to the analysis findings, it was observed that both first-year and fourth-year students made a combined total of 21 errors, with 12 errors by the first-year students and 9 errors by the fourth-year students. Among the students in the Education department during the first semester, the most prevalent error was related to the incorrect use of commas, which accounted for 18 instances. This indicates a high frequency of errors due to omission. Additionally, there were also instances of misusing punctuation, with infrequent usage observed. Nurhaidah (2017) supports the findings of this study, affirming that students often face confusion when it comes to using punctuation. This confusion arises from a lack of understanding of sentence meaning, difficulties in correctly using commas in appositive and adverbial time cases, challenges in placing commas when dealing with series in the form of complete sentences, and struggles in distinguishing between quoted and regular sentences in narrative texts.

3.4 Subject-Verb Agreement

Errors in subject and verb agreement exhibit variation. Different taxonomies have been proposed to classify these errors into distinct categories. One such categorization is provided by James (1998). James identifies four types of errors in subject and verb agreement based on their surface taxonomies. These taxonomies focus on how learners modify the surface structure of language incorrectly. The taxonomy suggests that errors can occur due to specific and systematic alterations in the surface structure. The taxonomy consists of four types: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering (Dewi et al., 2021).

Excerpt 11: *The reasons for choosing education is...*

Excerpt 25: *Each student have their own reasons...*

Excerpt 38: *Education and experience is important...*

The provided sample sentences exemplify incorrect usage of Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA). Specifically, sentence 11 is deemed grammatically incorrect due to its manifestation of subject-verb disagreement. The subject "reasons" is plural, while the verb "is" remains singular. To rectify this error, the verb must concur with the plural subject, resulting in the revised sentence "The reasons for choosing education are..." Likewise, sentence 25 exhibits subject-verb disagreement as the singular subject "each student" necessitates the corresponding singular verb form "has," rather than the plural form "have." Lastly, sentence 38 portrays subject-verb disagreement as the compound subject "education and experience" represents a plural entity, thus mandating a plural verb form. Consequently, the appropriate formulation should be "Education and experience are important..." In each of these excerpts,

the error lies in the discrepancy between the subject and the verb. It is imperative to ensure that the verb aligns with the number (singular or plural) of the subject in order to uphold grammatical precision.

Table 1 clearly indicates that first-year students made a higher number of errors, with 21 instances of subject-verb disagreement, compared to fourth-year students who had a frequency of 17 errors. Consequently, a total of 38 SVA errors were identified in their essays, which ranked as the second most common type of mistake, following prepositions. This finding is consistent with the observations made by Nayan & Jusoff (2009), highlighting that students persistently face difficulties in effectively employing subject and verb agreement when constructing paragraphs in the present tense. The research identifies three distinct categories of errors demonstrated by the students: misformation, omission, and addition. These errors can be attributed to inter-lingual transfer, intra-lingual transfer, and misleading inputs.

In general, both freshmen and senior students made errors in various categories, including prepositions, spelling, punctuation, and subject-verb agreement. The aspect of subject-verb agreement proved to be a consistent challenge for students at both academic levels, indicating difficulties in ensuring proper agreement between subjects and verbs when constructing sentences. Prepositions had the highest overall frequency, suggesting that students of all levels encountered difficulties in accurately using prepositions in their writing. The nuanced usage and varied placement of prepositions within sentences often lead to confusion. On the other hand, spelling errors had the lowest frequency, indicating that students showed relatively better proficiency in spelling accuracy. However, it is important to acknowledge that even though spelling errors were less common, they still require attention and improvement to maintain overall writing quality. Lastly, punctuation errors accounted for 21 instances, indicating that students faced challenges in correctly employing punctuation marks. Proper punctuation plays a vital role in ensuring clarity and coherence in writing, and errors in this area can significantly impact the overall effectiveness of written communication.

3.5 Malapropism

Malapropism is characterized by the confused use of words, wherein an appropriate word is mistakenly replaced with one that sounds similar but carries a ludicrously inappropriate meaning (Estremera, 2021). Another definition provided by Basyar (2020) describes malapropism as a humorous form of word misuse or distortion, particularly involving the use of a word that resembles the intended word but is contextually absurd. The table below summarizes the common malapropism committed in the essay works of first-year and fourth-year students:

Table 2 - The Malapropism in the Essay Compositions

Types	Freshmen	Freq.	Seniors	Freq.
	Sample Texts		Sample Texts	
Literal Malapropism	<i>Education is the foundation for a succulent future...</i>	4	<i>...teaching is a step towards becoming a well-rounded indivisible...</i>	2
	<i>I can make a significant infact on society...</i>		<i>...it allows individuals to unlock a plethora of furtunities....</i>	
	<i>Choosing to study education will open doors to a wide ranger...</i>			
Semantic Malapropism	<i>A strong educational foundation is the stepping stool...</i>	3	<i>...students can blossom into fully-fledged and sophisticated individuals.</i>	2
	<i>...allowing me to live a life of luxuriant instead of poverty.</i>		<i>...enabling them to become well-developed and flabbergasted individuals...</i>	
	<i>Education helps students evolve their talents and skills...</i>			
Morphological Malapropism	<i>...education plays a vital role in fostering the germination of young minds...</i>	2	<i>Education equips individuals with the necessaries for success...</i>	1
	<i>I aspire to be a knowledgable and will-informed educator.</i>			
Idiomatic Malapropism	<i>...students can enhance their intellectual capacitates.</i>	1	<i>Choosing education is like hitting two birds with one stone in a long shot.</i>	2
	<i>Education is the path to greener pastors...</i>		<i>...but you also need to keep your ducks on the same page.</i>	
TOTAL		10		7

3.5.1 Literal Malapropism

Table 2 provides an overview of the various types of malapropism observed in the students' essay compositions. Among these types, literal malapropism emerged as the most prevalent. Literal malapropisms occur when individuals mistakenly choose a phonetically similar word that is contextually inappropriate while attempting to convey a specific meaning. Consequently, such errors can result in sentences that lack coherence or convey unintended

interpretations. Generally, literal malapropisms can be attributed to limited vocabulary or a lack of awareness regarding the appropriate usage of words by the speaker or writer.

In the provided texts, there are several instances of incorrect word usage. The term "succulent" is utilized inappropriately, as it is typically associated with describing plants or food known for their juiciness, rather than describing a future. Similarly, the word "infact" is a malapropism, mistakenly used instead of the word "impact." "Infact" is not a valid English word and fails to convey the intended meaning. Additionally, the word "ranger" is employed erroneously instead of "range" or "array." Lastly, the word "ranger" is used incorrectly once again, instead of "range" or "array."

On the other hand, fourth-year students are able to commit literal malapropism, that is the first sentence is incorrect due to the use of the word "indivisible" instead of "individual." The word "indivisible" means unable to be divided or separated, which is not the intended meaning in the context of describing a person. The correct word choice should be "individual," which refers to a person as a distinct entity. Similarly, the second sentence is incorrect due to the use of the word "furtunities" instead of "opportunities." "Furtunities" is a malapropism, a mistaken substitution for the intended word. The correct word choice should be "opportunities," which refers to favorable circumstances or chances for advancement or success.

3.5.2 Semantic Malapropism

The table presented above indicates that during the analysis of the respondents' essay texts, a total of 5 instances of semantic malapropism were identified, with 3 occurrences found among the first-year students and 2 occurrences among the fourth-year students. Semantic malapropism occurs when an individual mistakenly replaces one word with another that sounds similar but has a distinct semantic or contextual meaning. This can result in unintended or amusing interpretations of the sentence. Such malapropisms commonly arise due to the speaker's limited vocabulary or insufficient understanding of the appropriate word usage in a specific context.

For first-year students, the sentence "allowing me to live a life of luxuriant instead of poverty" is incorrect as the word "luxuriant" is used inaccurately. It should likely be "luxury" or "affluence" to convey the intended meaning of wealth or abundance rather than abundant growth. In the second sentence, if emphasizing the idea that education facilitates a gradual transformation of students' talents and skills, "evolve" would be more suitable. It suggests that through education, abilities are refined and enhanced over time, aligning with the concept of gradual change. However, if a broader sense of growth, improvement, and acquisition of new abilities is desired, "develop" would be appropriate. It implies that education nurtures and enhances talents and skills, aiding in progress and acquiring new capabilities. Lastly, the word "germination" in the last sentence is unsuitable. It refers to the sprouting of a seed into a plant and doesn't fit the context of fostering young minds. Instead, "development" or "nurturing" would better convey the idea of education's role in supporting the growth and progress of young minds.

Fourth-year students, on the other hand, may still encounter some errors in their essays. In the sentence "students can blossom into fully-fledged and sophisticated individuals," there is inaccuracy as the word "blossom" is used metaphorically to depict growth and development, but it does not aptly describe the transformation into fully-fledged and sophisticated individuals. Typically associated with the blooming of flowers or the unfolding of potential, "blossom" fails to capture the intended meaning of maturity and sophistication. Similarly, the sentence "enabling them to become well-developed and flabbergasted individuals" is flawed. The word "flabbergasted" denotes surprise or astonishment, which does not align with the desired meaning of the sentence. Utilizing a different word such as "accomplished" or "capable" would better convey the notion of individuals who have cultivated their skills and abilities through education.

3.5.3 Morphological Malapropism

Morphological malapropism refers to a type of language error where a word is incorrectly formed or altered at the morphological level. It occurs when a speaker or writer mistakenly uses a word or morpheme that is similar in sound or appearance to the intended word but has a different morphological structure or meaning. This can result in the creation of nonsensical or grammatically incorrect words or phrases. Morphological malapropisms often arise from confusion or misapplication of morphological rules, such as adding or removing prefixes or suffixes or incorrectly inflecting or deriving words.

The first sentence in the first-year composition, "I aspire to be a knowledgable and well-informed educator," exhibits two instances of morphological malapropism. The word "knowledgable" is incorrect and should be replaced with "knowledgeable." This error stems from a mistaken alteration of the word's morphological structure. Additionally, the phrase "will-informed" is incorrect, and the correct term is "well-informed." The use of "will-informed" instead of "well-informed" demonstrates an erroneous application of the prefix "will-" instead of the appropriate prefix "well-". Similarly, in the second sentence, "students can enhance their intellectual capacitates," the word "capacitates" is incorrect, and it should be replaced with "capacities." The misuse of "capacitates" instead of "capacities" exemplifies a morphological malapropism, wherein an incorrect inflection of the word results in an inaccurate form.

In contrast, the essay outputs of the seniors only contain one instance of morphological malapropism. The sentence "Education equips individuals with the necessaries for success" is deemed incorrect due to the improper usage of the word "necessaries." The accurate form of the word is "necessities." "Necessaries" is not a commonly used plural form of the term "necessity" and fails to convey the intended meaning of essential or required items. The utilization of "necessaries" instead of "necessities" exemplifies an error in selecting the appropriate word form, resulting in an inaccurate expression.

3.5.4 Idiomatic Malapropism

Lastly, it can be observed that freshmen students tend to use idioms less frequently in their compositions compared to seniors, who incorporate idioms more often in their writing. As a result, the fourth-year students had two instances of idiomatic malapropism, whereas the first-year students had only one malapropism. Idiomatic malapropism occurs when a person mistakenly substitutes a similar-sounding phrase that may seem plausible but is inappropriate or nonsensical in the given context. Such errors can lead to confusion or amusement as the intended meaning of the original idiom is distorted or lost. This type of malapropism underscores the significance of comprehending and using idiomatic expressions accurately to ensure effective communication.

In one of the first-year outputs, the sentence "Education is the path to greener pastors" is incorrect because it contains an idiomatic malapropism. The intended phrase is likely "greener pastures," which is an idiomatic expression meaning better opportunities or a more favorable situation. However, the word "pastors" is mistakenly substituted for "pastures," leading to a nonsensical and inappropriate interpretation. The incorrect use of "pastors" instead of "pastures" demonstrates an idiomatic malapropism where a similar-sounding word is substituted, resulting in a distorted meaning.

On the other hand, the fourth-year sentence "Choosing education is like hitting two birds with one stone in a long shot" is incorrect because it contains an idiomatic malapropism. The intended phrase is likely "killing two birds with one stone," which means accomplishing two things at once or achieving multiple objectives with a single action. However, the phrase "in a long shot" is added inappropriately, altering the meaning and creating confusion. Similarly, the sentence "...but you also need to keep your ducks on the same page" is incorrect due to an idiomatic malapropism. The intended phrase is likely "keep your ducks in a row," which means to maintain order, organization, or coordination among various elements. The substitution of "on the same page" instead of "in a row" results in a different and nonsensical interpretation, as it does not convey the intended meaning of alignment or coordination.

Generally, malapropism can occur in essay compositions written by both freshmen and senior students for various reasons. One possible cause is a limited vocabulary, where students may not possess sufficient knowledge of certain words or phrases and unintentionally substitute incorrect alternatives that sound similar. Additionally, students may struggle with understanding and correctly using idiomatic expressions, leading to the misuse of idioms and resulting in malapropism. Errors in proofreading and editing can also contribute to malapropism as students may overlook or fail to identify these mistakes during the revision process. Interference from the student's first language can further compound the issue, as they may attempt to translate idiomatic expressions or use similar-sounding words and phrases from their native language that have different meanings in English. Furthermore, a lack of emphasis on developing language skills, such as expanding vocabulary and comprehending idiomatic expressions, can contribute to difficulties in accurately employing words and phrases. To address malapropism, educators should provide guidance, instruction, and feedback on the language used to help students enhance their language skills and minimize instances of malapropism in their essay compositions.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis of essay compositions highlighted several areas in which students, both freshmen and seniors, made errors. These errors included subject-verb agreement (SVA), prepositions, spelling, and punctuation. However, it was observed that the lowerclassmen made more syntactic errors compared to the upperclassmen. Further instruction and practice are needed to improve subject-verb agreement and the accurate use of prepositions. While spelling errors were less common, they still require attention. Proper punctuation usage is also crucial for clarity in written communication. To enhance writing skills, targeted instruction and feedback should be provided. Malapropism can occur due to limited vocabulary, difficulty with idiomatic expressions, proofreading errors, and interference from the first language. Addressing these issues requires guidance and instruction to improve language skills and reduce errors in essays.

The essay composition analysis provides several recommendations for improvement. First, targeted instruction and practice should focus on addressing challenges with subject-verb agreement. Second, explicit guidance is needed to improve the use and placement of prepositions. Third, maintaining an emphasis on spelling accuracy is crucial. Additionally, instruction on proper punctuation usage is essential for clarity. Finally, addressing malapropism requires a comprehensive approach that includes vocabulary enhancement, understanding idiomatic expressions, improving proofreading skills, and addressing language interference. Implementing these recommendations will help students enhance their writing skills and produce higher-quality essays.

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