

## Conference Paper

# Discursive Analysis of the Written Compositions of STEM Grade-11A Students: A Grounded Theory

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## Abstract

The written corpora by the STEM Grade-11A students of Calbayog City National High School for the school year 2017-2018 were identified, categorized and analyzed to know the common discursive errors they committed. Initially bounded from Ferris (2005) error analysis model, the researcher analyzed the most recurrent errors that students committed in succeeding writing activities that lasted until the end of the first semester. The result of which was the basis for the theory evolved. The findings showed that the students commonly committed lexical, mechanical, syntactical and morphological errors since most of their errors revealed exceptionally high values in these categories thus; the researcher concluded that students would likely fail to construct written discourses correctly because of these failures. A theory on analyzing errors among written discourses was evolved in order to help students improve their writing skills and combat chances of committing errors.

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## 1. Introduction

*“Sbagliando simpara” (We can learn through our errors).*

As it is known, the language learning, like any other learning process, involves making errors. In language teaching and learning, the study of learner’s error is a technique for identifying, describing and systematically explaining the errors made by a learner, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics. A person could not automatically gain a grip on said language unless he has made series of trials and errors in his use of English as a second language (Ellis, 1997).

Ultimately, learning English as a L2 (second language) is not an easy task. According to Brown, in order to master the English language, learners have to be adequately

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exposed to all of the four basic skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing (now five (5) adding viewing via the implementation of the K-12 basic education program). Language teaching in this country is currently focusing on the teaching and learning of the four language skills. However, the standard of English among Filipino children is on the decline despite learning English for several years. Filipino students are still weak in English, especially in their writing skills. They still seem to commit errors in all aspects of language (Brown, 2000).

In the 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2011-2012 National Achievement Test Results, English as one of the major core areas taken in the said examination, revealed the low performance rating of students and pupils both in elementary and secondary levels ranging from 51.33, 47.73 and 51.80, respectively. Such results showed examinees were not able to reach the 75% performance rate. Further, students ultimately fail in answering questions about identifying errors and vocabulary (Nat-Guidelines, 2013).

In Calbayog City National High School, NAT results for English subjects both for second year and fourth year descend every year. Results punched 78.40% for 2007-2008, 75.23% for 2008-2009 while 72.16% for 2009-2010, respectively.

These factual pieces of information inspire the researcher to find out the different common errors that students commit in constructing their own compositions. This study identified the most recurrent errors that students committed which introduced new perspective of how individuals specifically English language learners could learn the language and that is through knowing and avoiding errors they commit in their written compositions.

## 2. Objective of the Study

This study aimed to determine the most recurrent errors that students committed in their corpora in order to evolve a theory on error analysis.

## 3. Materials and Methods

The researcher utilized discourse analysis and grounded theory as research methods of this study. The researcher intentionally used both qualitative types of research in order to analyze most recurrent errors from students written corpora and at the same time evolve a theory that would help them improve their writing skills. Since the entire population of a whole section of STEM-11A students was involved, total or complete enumeration was utilized by the researcher in identifying the respondents of this study.

### 3.1. On the discourse analysis

The researcher analyzed the first to the tenth written corpora of the students from STEM-11A section in their 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literature from the Philippines and the World class. The researcher instructed the students to write compositions that cut across several topics of their choice. At first, Ferris (2005) error analysis model was used by the researcher as aid for the analysis. In the succeeding analysis of the written corpora, the most recurrent errors were extracted as basis for the theory evolved. These written corpora were subjected to thematic analysis. The researcher utilized coding and classified the analyzed errors into either mechanical, syntactical, lexical and morphological. Errors under each category are as follows:

- A. Lexical Errors-Word choice, Word form, Informal usage, Idiom error, Pronoun error
- B. Mechanical Errors-Punctuation, Spelling and Capitalization
- C. Morphological Errors
  - Verbs: Tense, Form, Subject-verb agreement
  - Nouns: Articles/determiners, Noun endings (plural/possessive)
- D. Syntactic Errors-Sentence structure, Run-ons, Fragments

## 4. Results and Discussion

This study underscored the analysis, categorization and identification of persistent errors that emanate from the written corpora of the students. Accordingly, this highlighted which among the categories do their committed errors fall.

The following tables below present the persistent errors that students had in their written corpora.

Written compositions in terms of lexical errors are composed of five categories namely; word choice, word form, informal usage, idiom error, and pronoun error. The figures opposite each category indicate the average number of times such error is 7.45 committed by the students. The table shows that the students committed very low in word form (1.40), informal usage (1.20), idiom error (0.90) and pronoun error (1.35), but moderately high in word choice (2.60). The cumulative mean of 7.45 indicates that the students committed exceptionally high in terms of lexical errors in their written compositions.

TABLE 1: Students' Lexical Errors Committed.

Category	Weighted Mean	Description
Word Choice	2.6	Low
Word Form	1.4	Very Low
Informal Usage	1.2	Very Low
Idiom Error	0.9	Very Low
Pronoun Error	1.35	Very Low
Cumulative Mean	7.45	Exceptionally High
standard deviation	3.49	Exceptionally High

Table 2 below on the other hand presents the mechanical errors identified, categorized and analyzed by the researcher from the written corpora of the respondents.

TABLE 2: Students' Mechanical Errors Committed.

Category	Weighted Mean	Description
Punctuation	3.35	Exceptionally High
Capitalization	2.75	Very High
Spelling	1.73	Moderately Low
Cumulative Mean	7.83	Exceptionally High
Standard Deviation	3.99	Exceptionally High

The table reveals that the students committed errors very high (3.35) in punctuation, high in capitalization and moderately low (1.73) in spelling. The cumulative mean of 7.83 indicates that the students committed exceptionally high in mechanical errors.

Table 5 below presents the morphological errors identified, categorized and analyzed by the researcher from the written corpora of the respondents.

TABLE 3: Students' Morphological Errors Committed.

Category	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Verbs ( Tenses Form, Subject-Verb Agreement)	3.13	Very High
Nouns (Articles,/Determiners, Noun Endings, Plural/Possessive)	3.78	Exceptionally High
Cumulative Mean	6.91	Exceptionally High
standard deviation	3.6	Exceptionally High

The table shows that the students committed very high (3.13) in terms of verbs. This means that on the average each student committed 3 errors either in tense form or subject-verb agreement. Meanwhile, the students committed very high (3.78) in terms of nouns. This means that each student committed nearly 4 errors either in the use of articles, determiners, noun endings, or plural possessive.

TABLE 4: Students’ Syntactical Errors Committed.

Category	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Sentence Structure	2.3	Moderately High
Run-on	2.28	Moderately High
Fragments	1.93	Moderately Low
Cumulative Mean	6.51	Exceptionally High
Standard Deviation	3.11	Exceptionally High

The table shows that the students committed moderately high (2.30) in sentence structure and run-on (2.28), while moderately low (1.93) in fragments. The cumulative mean of 6.51 indicates that students committed exceptionally high in syntactical errors.

The cumulative mean utilized in identifying the extent of errors committed by the research participants was taken from most recurrent and persistent errors that they had. Intervals of such varied because the highest and lowest number of errors were considered.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Through the series of writing activities conducted, students had committed recurrent and persistent errors in all categories. However, among these, errors in punctuation and nouns were the most recurrent as they both punched exceptionally high description. Therefore, it is highly recommended that series of activities shall be conceptualized solely intended for mastery of the use of punctuation and noun.

## 6. Theory Evolved

As a result of exhaustive analysis, the researcher came up with the theory “Error Response and Word Interactive Nuncupation (**ERWIN**) Theory.”

This theory states that students must be engaged in an interactive and communicative learning environment whereby they and the other students should view communication as an important means to understanding. This theory underscores that students must also recognize errors as an important facet in second language learning. And with that, they must be given importance by exposing them to various interactive learning activities that would develop their communicative competence and respond immediately to language errors. In order to do that, providing series of writing activities among them is a necessity to burgeon communicative culture within them and in their schools by and large.

## Author's Note

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