

An Analysis of Written Errors of Korean Adult Learners of English*

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The objective of this study is to identify the common morphological, lexical, syntactic errors committed by Korean university students of English during 2014 academic year. The subjects who participated in the study were 36 female university students enrolled in TOEFL Speaking and Writing classes, ranging from freshmen to seniors. The elicitation techniques were outlining, TOEFL independent essay writings and explicit feedback on the errors. The errors were classified into 3 main categories and 17 subcategories and then, coded and analyzed accordingly based on frequency counts. Furthermore, a survey was conducted to explore student awareness of the errors and their needs in writing. The findings are as follows: Firstly, the morphological errors were the most frequent; the lexical and syntactic errors the second and third respectively. Secondly, the students recognized the use of transition words, the use of wrong/missing words, and missing/extra article as the most problematic areas in their writings. Since learner errors can help teachers predict possible errors, and eventually minimize student learning problems, it is suggested that teachers should train students with a list of error codes to avoid making errors in essay writing.

[error analysis/lexical error/morphological error/syntactic error/English writing/
오류 분석/어휘 오류/형태론적 오류/통사적 오류/영작문]

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I. INTRODUCTION

The study of learner errors has been an important part of language learning and teaching. Error correction is one of the important issues that every English teacher, regardless of native or non-native, encounters with and has to decide how to handle learner errors, whether oral or written. Some scholars like Krashen (1982), Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) opposed the idea of error correction by arguing that it encourages students to avoid using difficult structures out of fear of making errors. However, it does not mean that teachers should not correct errors. For those who support the error correction, it should be done in the type of negotiation of form, promoting language learning environment (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

Error Analysis is an applied linguistic area used to examine difficulties for second or foreign language learners and in large there are two ways of *identifying errors*: that is, tagging errors according to their nature, or by their sources. The former involves linguistic features of L2 itself, whereas the latter involves the negative transfer of structures/features of L1 to L2. Since the use of error analysis helps teachers and researchers identify a gap in student competence or process of language learning, it has offered a useful guidance in second or foreign language learning and teaching (Al-Badawi, 2012).

Most Korean students of English as a Foreign Language commit a variety of morphological, lexical, and syntactic errors when composing English essays. This study attempts to identify the most frequent errors committed by a selected sample of students. Plus, while most research on error correction has revolved around on whether teachers should correct errors in student writing and how they should go about it, student awareness regarding errors have received relatively little attention. Thus, this study also investigates Korean ESL students' awareness of errors and needs in writing. Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions by explicating the errors committed by Korean students:

- 1) What are the characteristics of morphological, lexical, syntactic errors committed by the students?
- 2) What are the students' awareness of errors in English?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Learner Errors and Error Analysis

Learners constantly make errors, reflecting the incompetence of a learner or a noticeable

gap from adult grammar of a native speaker. To be more specific, James (2013) distinguishes errors from mistakes in that errors occur when the gap arises due to lack of competence; however, mistakes take place when learners fail to perform their competence due to lack of attention.

Taylor (1986) attempted to identify four types of errors. First, psycholinguistic errors are made when learners cannot comprehend the nature of L2 knowledge and have difficulties using it. Second, sociolinguistic errors occur when learners use language improperly for a certain social context. Third, epistemic errors are made due to the lack of world knowledge. Lastly, discourse structure errors takes place when learners cannot organize information into a coherent text. Reid (1998) also explained four causes of errors: (1) L1 negative transfer, (2) overgeneralization of L2 rules, (3) the greatest difficulty of the target language structure and (4) production errors, namely, mistakes.

The analysis of errors shows that not all learner errors can be attributed to the interference from L1. According to Xu (2004), errors provide evidence for a much more complex learning process, where the learners are considered as an active participant in the formation of hypotheses regarding the L2 rules. Xu (2004) also stated that trained language teachers have applied Error Analysis (EA) for decades since EA research began. They have studied students' recurring errors, classified them into categories, and used them as the basis for preparing lessons and course materials to remediate such errors.

2. Previous Studies

There are several studies on error analysis based on learners' writings. Such studies include AbiSamra's (2003) research. He collected 10 essays from Arabic 9th graders, and he found a total of 214 errors and they are classified according to the different categories: grammatical (29), syntactic (35), lexical (26), semantic (3), and mechanics & spelling (120) errors.

In the study of Kato (2006), the total number of errors that Japanese high school students made was 1518. To be more specific, 596 errors were found in 46 first year essays, and 491 errors were found in 58 second year essays, and 431 errors were found in 44 third year essay. As a total, syntactic errors appeared to be dominant at 29%, followed by lexical errors (21.3%), morphological errors in nouns (17.9%) and mechanical errors (17.7%), and morphological errors (14.4%). The most common errors observed in first year essays were lexical errors, which comprised 24%, while syntactic errors comprised most errors in second and third year essays, which amounted to 35.2% and 31.1% respectively. Among the first years' lexical errors, word choice was the most common and amounts to 93 errors. As for second year and third year writings, 158 and 121 errors were made respectively in sentence structure.

M. S. Kim (2010) classified writing and speaking sample errors collected from 134 Korean university students through an in-class free composition and a 10 minute interview. In the writing error analysis, misformation was the most frequent error type followed by omission and addition. In contrast, in the speaking error analysis, omission was placed in the first type of error and misformation in second place and addition in third. In both of written and speaking samples, the use of article, preposition, tense, and plural markers were the most likely to be in trouble and verb+preposition+object and verb+noun/pronoun were the most frequent types of errors.

J. A. Shin (2011) also focused on Korean college students' using improper intransitive verbs in passive sentences in their writings and carried out the analysis of four most frequently overused verbs —*happen*, *occur*, *appear*, and *die*— by students' proficiency levels based on TEPS scores. The results revealed that as the proficiency levels increased, the number of overpassivization errors decreased. Among four verbs, 'happen' was gradually remedied as the level of proficiency goes up. Other three verbs' overpassivization decreased in high-intermediate level, but no difference revealed between low- and mid-intermediate levels.

Hu (2014) carried out the error analysis of Chinese students' English writings. 190 students participated in 120-word-writings for 40 minutes followed by questionnaires that were valid with 120 students and interviews performed randomly. The total 1957 errors were collected out. Grammar errors (27.6%), Chinglish errors (22.8%), and lexical errors (21.2%) in order were the greatest amount of total errors followed by discourse errors (15.6%) and substance errors (12.8%). Interlingual errors that are negative L1 transfer or interference and intralingual problems might be affected on the errors. Plus, the timed writing, test-centered teaching, and misunderstanding about writing might cause the errors. Learners who were absent minded or too nervous are likely to commit errors. Teachers must keep in mind that excessive correcting may give students negative influences such as frustrating students or disturbing class activities. Plus, global errors should be corrected on the spot, but local errors can be left uncorrected.

In Abushihab's (2014) research, 20 Turkish EFL university students wrote 200-250 words about the difficulties they face while learning English. The result showed 52 errors in articles, 50 errors prepositions, 33 in morphological errors, 27 in tenses and 17 in passive and active voice. The researcher discussed those grammatical errors with negative transfer from L1, different word order system in which English is a head-first language but Turkish is a head-last language, and different grammar system. In term of article errors, Turkish has no definition article and has only indefinite article '*bir*'. Preposition errors were made because Turkish are used as suffixes attached to words while in English as separate words. Tense errors occurred due to the lack of tense equivalents in Turkish, and the literal translation of English tenses. Passive and active voice errors are due to an

affixation matter which is Turkish passive form consists of verb + a passive suffix (-n), but in English auxiliary verb is used.

Y. Han (2014) researched the errors of Korean EFL University students' writings based on error categories by Ferris (2002). The results showed that the first most frequent error was mechanics, especially punctuations, and the second error was articles/determiners, and omission or addition, especially preposition errors and word order in third, and fragment errors in fourth. The researcher suggests that more attention should be paid on teaching punctuations and conjunctions —*and, but, because*— to decrease the errors of mechanics and fragments, and explicit teaching through grammar consciousness-raising is likely to decrease articles/determiners in writings.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

This study applied error analysis on 36 TOEFL independent writing samples and the texts were collected during the fall semester, 2014 from university students taking TOEFL Speaking and Writing classes. The students enrolled in this elective course range from freshmen to senior, regardless of major. The majority of them are new to TOEFL, but four of them took the tests before. Their scores fall between 70 and 85 out of 120.

The writing samples were presented as a timed (30 min.) classroom task followed by outlining exercise. In other words, it involved writing an essay on a given topic. In Independent TOEFL essay writings, students are asked to produce either expository or persuasive essays depending on the prompts.

An expository writing is a written discourse that is used to explain, describe, give information or inform. For instance, the expository essay may ask students to think about one important change they want to make in a school that they attend. On the other hand, a persuasive writing is a written discourse where the writer uses words to convince the reader that the writer's opinion is correct in regards to an issue. Simply put, it may ask students to choose a stance and then state why they agree or disagree with a certain statement, using specific reasons and details to support their opinion.

For this research, students were asked to produce a persuasive essay and the prompt given was as follows: “Only people who earn a lot of money are successful.” The study rests on three major steps: (1) the error categorizing step, (2) the error tagging step, and (3) the error counting step, along with a survey carried out to identify student awareness of their own errors. Errors were classified and coded by two researchers and supervised by another writing expert in learner corpus research.

2. Category for Identifying Errors

According to Granger (2008), there are two ways to identify errors. One way is to identify errors by terms of nature like “lexical”, and “syntactic” whereas the other way is to identify errors by sources such as “interlingual” and “intra-lingual.” The former method was chosen as it incorporates less subjective interpretation. The following categories for errors were based on those of Ferris (2002) and Thewissen (2013) and slightly modified to fit into the study objectives. Ferris (2002) stresses that this category is a good representation of what teachers and previous study findings have confirmed in giving feedback to L2 learners. TABLE 1 shows the category of errors used in this research.

TABLE 1
Category of Errors

Morphological error	Code	Example
Subject-verb agreement	SV	Include errors in either noun or verb form leading to lack of agreement in number. Example: Students at the university level usually <i>*is</i> very busy. Edited version: Students at the university level usually <i>are</i> very busy.
Wrong tense	VT	Inappropriate verb tense Example: Everyone <i>*hopes</i> the plan would work . Edited version: Everyone <i>hoped</i> the plan would work.
Ill-formed verb	IV	Include verb-form errors (infinitive, auxiliary verbs etc.), missing verbs, and voice errors. Example: Many people don't know what they <i>* going</i> to do. Edited version: Many people don't know what they <i>are going</i> to do.
Missing/extra/wrong article	AR	Include the misuse of the articles. Example: Courses that I want to take include life drawing and sculpture. <i>* Sculpture</i> class is taught by a famous sculptor. Edited version: Courses that I want to take include life drawing and sculpture. <i>The</i> sculpture class is taught by a famous sculptor.
Wrong form of word	WFW	Include a word form that is different from the one that a writer intended to use (countable-uncountable noun, singular-plural noun, adjective, adverb, etc.) Example: We use only recycled <i>*papers</i> in our office. Edited version: We use only recycled <i>paper</i> in our office. (countable-uncountable noun) Example: Cars produce a great <i>*deals</i> of dirty gas. Edited version: Cars produce a great <i>deal</i> of dirty gas. (singular-plural noun) Example: Certain types of businesses will continue to grow to an <i>*extend</i> . Edited version: Certain types of businesses will continue to grow to an <i>extent</i> .

Word order	WO	<p>Example: We live in the brick <i>*red</i> house. Edited version: We live in <i>red</i> brick house.</p> <p>Example: The shirt he wore to the party was bright <i>extremely</i>. Edited version: The shirt he wore to the party was <i>extremely</i> bright.</p>
Faulty Comparison	FC	<p>Include comparison errors. Example: My aunt is a <i>*gooder</i> cook than my mother is. Edited version: My aunt is a <i>better</i> cook than my mother is.</p>
Determiner-noun agreement	DN	<p>Include misuse of determiners or with a modifier between them. Example: <i>*that</i> cars Edited version: <i>those</i> cars Example: He had <i>*few</i> food in the house. Edited version: He had <i>little</i> food in the house.</p>
Lexical error	Code	Example
Pronoun error	PN	<p>Include a pronoun that doesn't agree with the noun or antecedent for which it stands. Example: Steve caught the dogs and brought <i>*it</i> home. Edited version: Steve caught the dogs and brought <i>them</i> home.</p>
Possessive error	PS	<p>Include the misuse of apostrophe, possessive pronoun/adjective. Example: A <i>*grownups'</i> advantage is that he has already experienced disappointment. Edited version: A <i>grownup's</i> advantage is that he has already experienced disappointment.</p>
Wrong/missing word	WMW	<p>Include misspellings, typos, and wrong words. Example: <i>*The</i> go to the store every day. Edited version: <i>They</i> go to the store every day.</p>
Preposition error	PR	<p>Include the misuse of or missing prepositions. Example: I came <i>*to</i> here. Edited version: I came here.</p> <p>Example: I'm looking <i>* my</i> keys. Edited version: I'm looking <i>for</i> my keys.</p> <p>Example: I don't approve <i>* his</i> speech. Edited version: I don't approve <i>of</i> his speech.</p>
Conjunction error	CE	<p>Include the misuse of conjunction coordination and subordination Example: Life is not only work <i>*or</i> study. Edited version: Life is not only work <i>and</i> study.</p> <p>Example: There is also the ethical question <i>*if</i> people generally have the right to manipulate living beings. Edited version: There is also the ethical question <i>whether</i> people generally have the right to manipulate living beings.</p>

Syntactic error	Code	Example
Fragment	FR	Include dependent clauses standing alone as sentences or clauses missing a subject or a verb. Example: <i>*here mosquitos made her miserable.</i> Edited version: Susan left the campsite <i>where mosquitos made her miserable.</i>
Run-on sentence	RO	Two or more independent clauses with no punctuation or conjunction to separate them. Example: <i>*I have to write a research paper for my class about extreme sports all I know about the subject is that I'm interested in it.</i> Edited version: <i>I have to write a research paper for my class about extreme sports, and all I know about the subject is that I'm interested in it.</i>
Garbled sentence	GS	Contain several errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that make a sentence difficult to understand.

*Examples are from student essays.

3. Survey on Student Awareness

An online survey was administered at the end of the term so as to examine the students' awareness of errors and their needs in TOEFL independent essay writing. Before having students participate in the survey, the instructor went over the questions and provided detailed explanation onto answer choices, including subcategories of errors used in this study. However, those subcategories used in survey are not exactly identical with those used for error analysis so as to help students understand the terms used in the survey.

First of all, the survey asked students to select the most difficult part in essay writing so as to check on their awareness of their weakness. Next, students are asked to select the most common errors that they frequently commit in three main categories respectively: (1) organization, (2) grammar, and (3) usage. They can choose more than one choice, if necessary. The survey was attached in Appendix.

4. Data Analysis

The text retrieval software tool, Antconc 3.2.4, was used for this study to gain frequency lists for the tagged errors. For the online survey on students' awareness on errors, data was collected and analyzed using Google drive and Excel program.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Overall Frequency of Errors

A total of 326 errors were found (TABLE 2). Morphological errors (60.1%) are found most followed by lexical errors (34.7%) and syntactic errors (5.2%).

TABLE 2
Overall Frequency of Errors

Morphological error	Number of examples	Percentage (%)
Subject-verb agreement	12	3.7
Wrong tense	18	5.5
Ill-formed verb	34	10.4
Missing/extra/wrong article	66	20.2
Wrong form of word	49	15.0
Word order	13	4.0
Faulty Comparison	2	0.6
Determiner-noun agreement	2	0.6
Total	196	60.1%
Lexical error	Number of examples	Percentage (%)
Pronoun error	5	1.5
Possessive error	6	1.8
Wrong/missing word	66	20.2
Preposition error	26	8.0
Conjunction error	10	3.1
Total	113	34.7%
Syntactic error	Number of examples	Percentage (%)
Fragment	6	1.8
Run-on sentence	3	0.9
Garbled sentence	8	2.5
Total	17	5.2%
Overall Total	326	100%

Morphological errors include subject-verb agreement, wrong tense, ill-formed verb, missing/extra/wrong article, wrong form of word, word order, faulty comparison, and determiner-noun agreement. The result of morphological errors students made on each subcategory is shown on FIGURE 1. Students made most errors on missing/extra/wrong articles (66 cases, 33.78%), followed by wrong form of words (49 cases, 25%). Errors on ill-formed verbs took about 17.3% of morphological errors, with wrong tense, word order, subject-verb agreement, faulty comparison and determiner noun agreement taking 9.2%, 6.6%, 6.1%, 7%, and 1% respectively.

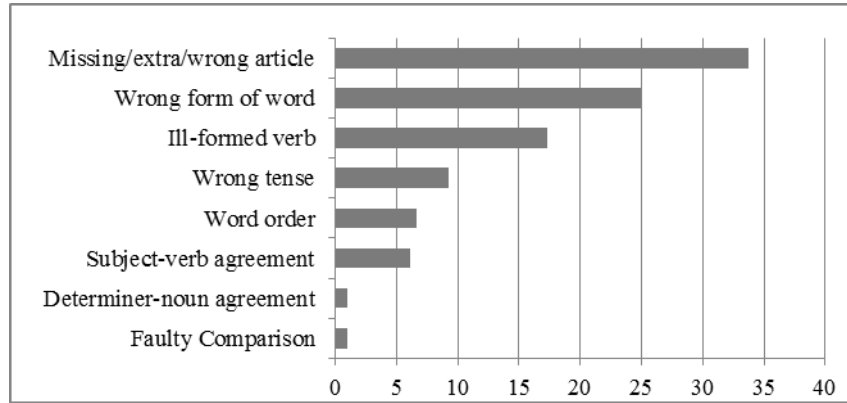


FIGURE 1 Percentage of Morphological Errors

Lexical errors include pronoun error, possessive error, wrong/missing word, preposition error and conjunction error. The result of lexical errors students made on each subcategory is shown on FIGURE 2. Students made most errors on wrong missing words (66 cases, 58.4%), followed by preposition errors (26 cases, 23%). Errors on conjunction errors, possessive errors and pronoun errors took about 8.8% (10 cases), 5.3% (6 cases) and 4.4% (5 cases) respectively.

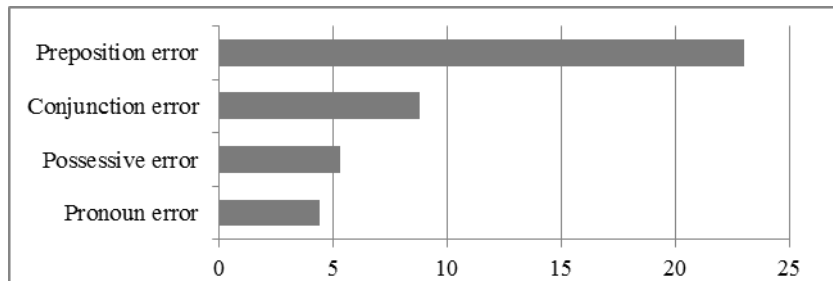


FIGURE 2 Percentage of Lexical Errors

Syntactic errors include fragment, run-on sentence, garbled sentence, and negation error. The result of syntactic errors students made on each subcategory is shown on FIGURE 3. Students made most errors on garbled sentence (8 cases, 47%), followed by fragment errors (6 cases, 35%) and run-on sentence errors (3 cases, 18%).

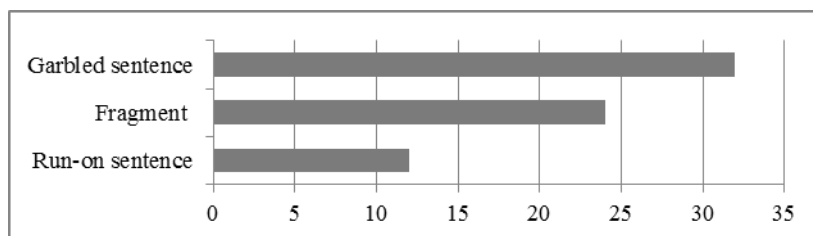


FIGURE 3 Percentage of Syntactic Errors

2. Morphological Errors

1) Missing/extra/wrong articles

The first most frequent errors occurred in the subcategory of missing/extra/wrong article. To the speakers whose L1 is not English, articles can prove troublesome, for the rules governing their use are quite complex. The students in this study overused the definite article the in front of uncountable nouns. For example, many students add the in front of money or success as in ① and ②.

- ① **The* money does not determine **the* success or **the* failure. (→)
- ② You cannot buy **the* happiness with **the* money. (→)

The students tended to omit indefinite articles a, an in front of singular count nouns as in ①, ②, ③. These errors may take place out of fear of making errors, so they chose not to add any articles in front of singular countable nouns. Also, as shown in ②, they tend to neglect the rule of using an before nouns beginning with the vowels *a, e, i, o, u*.

- ① Rather, chasing for much money results in *_ bad situation. (→ a)
- ② On the contrary a number of people don't regard him as *_ successful person because he committed *_a immoral act. (→ a, a → an)
- ③ In the other hand, we are living in *_ developed country. (→ a)

Also, high omission rate or misuse of the definite article occurred because the students failed to use *the* with most nouns whose specific identity is known to the reader. Usually the identity becomes clear to the reader for following reasons: First, a phrase or clause following the noun restricts its identity as shown in ①. Second, the noun describes a unique person, place, or thing as shown in ②. On the other hand, misuse of indefinite article a, an appeared in places where the identity of a particular subject is not known to the reader. Although the students already learned the rule that the noun should be preceded by a or an unless it has been preceded by another noun marker, they often forgot to apply

this rule in their writing, as the example ③.

- ① Based on the advice, they increase *_ possibility to succeed. (→ the)
- ② For example, Hwang Hui was a prime minster in *_ Jeoson Dynasty. (→ the)
- ③ I feel better when I learn **the* new skills rather than make money.

2) Wrong form of word

The second most frequent errors were in the wrong form of word subcategory. The students couldn't distinguish between countable and uncountable nouns as in ① and ②. As for ①, *time* should be placed by *times* since *time* refers to an abstract idea or a general idea that can be broken down into countable units like hours or minutes. *Times* refer to a concrete action or period of time and cannot be broken down into smaller units as a countable noun. In ②, *value* should be used by *values* because *values* mean the beliefs that people have about what is most important in life.

- ① It is one of the most exciting **time* in my life. (→ times)
- ② All people have different **value* in their lives. (→ values)

Singular and plural noun errors have occurred as in ① and ② since students may not concern pluralism.

- ① They will think that these **job* can make them a lot of money. (→ jobs)
- ② They can invest it to **fund* or stocks. (→ funds)

The underlying form of a word such as noun, adjective, adverb or verb have misused as in ①~⑤.

- ① A doctor feels happy and successful after curing **ill*. (→ illness)
- ② They can extend it **fastly*. (→ fast)
- ③ My favorite **entertainment* Yoo Jae Seok said~ . (→ entertainer)
- ④ This can lead to health problems by **weaking* their immune system.
(→ weakening)
- ⑤ I feel so blue and **dissatisfaction* with my life. (→ dissatisfied)

3) Ill-formed verbs

The third most frequent errors were ill-formed verb errors that appeared in the place of infinitive or gerund as in ① and ②, missing verb errors as in ③, passive/active voice errors as in ④, Auxiliary + basic form of verb as in ⑤, misuse of auxiliary verbs such as do as in ⑥.

- ① Earning plenty of money cannot make people **to success* as the only way. (→

succeed)

- ② They spend more time **to earn* money. (→ earning)
- ③ Anyone can be successful if they **_____* really satisfied with what they do. (→ are)
- ④ Therefore, there is something which cannot **buy* in the world. (→ be bought)
- ⑤ I wanted to take piano lessons but couldn't **made* it, ~ (→ make)
- ⑥ It **is* not mean a lot of money and necessity of money. (→ does not mean)

4) Wrong tense

First of all, students made frequent verb tense errors either by mixing a simple present tense with a simple past tense or by using a present tense in a past tense sentence, as in example ①. Also, the use of conditional sentences was problematic. In conditional sentences, students have to choose verbs with care. Choosing verbs in such sentences might be tricky because two clauses are involved. Mistakes occurred when students failed to use the correct tense in both clauses. To be more specific, in factual conditional sentences, in which the case present (or past) relationships are habitually true, the same tense should be used in both clauses. However, students often mixed a present tense with a past tense, as in example ②.

- ① My father told me that he **succeed* although he **don't* have enough money.
(→ succeeded, didn't)
- ② If we **became* a doctor, or a lawyer, we can earn a lot of money. (→ becomes)

5) Word order

A few students encountered problems with word order, especially in the use of adverbs or pronouns, as in example ① and ②. When adverbs come at the beginning of the sentence, the order of a subject and a verb should be switched. Also, the pronoun it should.

- ① Not only **his* father had a lot of money but also he earned a lot. (→ had his father)
- ② It can make people who are poor feel hard, so they would **give up it* maybe.
(→ give it up)

6) Subject-verb agreement

The sixth most frequent errors were subjective-verb agreement as in ①, ②, and ③.

- ① Although success **lead* to more pay in the job, ~. (→ leads)
- ② We know many people who **was* poor but succeeded in their lives. (→ were)
- ③ What they said **are* not true. (→ is)

7) Faulty comparison & Determiner-noun agreement

The least most frequent errors were faulty comparison as in ① and ②. Plus, wrong determiners are used to modify nouns as in ③.

- ① You have **more* wealth, **more* problems you have.
(→ The more wealth you have, the more problem you have)
- ② They can consult more and receive **more good* advice. (→ better advice)
- ③ The investment helps increase their assets and **this* assets can be used in their projects. (→ these)

3. Lexical Error

1) Wrong & Missing word

The first most frequent errors in lexical errors were wrong/missing word errors including misspelling, typos, and word choice errors. Students made misspelling or typos probably because of similar pronunciation or forms of the words as examples ① and ②. Word choice errors occur when students choose wrong meaning of words, ranging from wrong noun, adjective, adverb, verb, preposition to conjunction and two examples ③, ④ are shown below.

- ① For example, **voluteers* earn less money than doctors or lawyers. (→ volunteers)
- ② Finally we can get **hige* lesson from Teresa's story ~ (→ huge)
- ③ **Now is present.* (→ The present is a present.)
- ④ Many people **reasonably* make lots of money as their goals. (→ considerably)

2) Preposition error

The second frequent errors are made in the use of prepositions like *in, of, by, for,* and *with*. Since each of these prepositions has various uses that must be learned, in context. The following examples show two troublesome prepositions that often confused the students.

- ① If you succeed **on* your job, you can make a lot of money. (→ in)
- ② I feel so blue and dissatisfied **of* my life. (→ with)

3) Conjunction error

The third most frequent errors were conjunction errors in coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions as ① and ②.

- ① If we become a doctor, ** _* a lawyer, we can earn a lot of money. (→ or)

- ② They cannot feel successful **despite* they have much money. (→ although)

4) Possessive error

A couple of possessive noun errors took place where students omitted or added apostrophe by mistake.

- ① Only the arts that consist of **artists* spirits can lead to successful works.
(→ artists')
- ② First, you cannot measure **our's* happiness by wealth. (→ our).

5) Pronoun error

The least frequent errors were pronoun errors as the examples ①, ②, and ③.

- ① They must earn money before they start a new project. Because of **them*, they spend more time earning money. (→ it)
- ② Likewise, high-raised people don't always think **themselves* live in a successful life. (→ they)

4. Syntactic Error

1) Garbled or Fragmented sentence

Some garbled sentences contain several errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics so that it was difficult for readers to understand them. Some fragmented sentences are not complete by missing verbs as shown in the examples below.

- ① For instance, Bill Gates or Mark Jukerburg *__. (→ add a verb)
- ② Many people who earn a lot of money *__ without being successful. (→ add a verb)

2) Run-on sentence

The least frequent errors in syntactic errors were run-on sentence errors. A run-on sentence is caused by merging two or more independent clauses without suitable punctuation or conjunction to separate them as in example ① and ②.

- ① While some people could consider success to be earning a lot of money, **someone could think living together in perfect harmony is success and other could regard success as happiness of oneself.*
(→ While ~, others could think ~. The others could ~.)
- ② *And it looks like a very happy, successful life because they can live in a big fancy*

house, drive a big fancy car, wear a nice dress, it looks like there are no problems in their lives. (→ And it looks ~ because ~ wear a nice dress. It also looks like ~)

5. Students' Awareness of Errors and Needs in Writing

In the first section of the survey, students responded that the style is the most difficult part, and the mechanics is the least difficult part. Style (20%) was chosen the most, with organization (14%), grammar (12%), usage (2%) and mechanics (0%) selected respectively (FIGURE 4). To define the terms used in this survey, style refers to the word/phrase choices, the proper use of conjunctions or short/complex sentences. Organization includes how to make an introduction, main ideas, supporting ideas, conclusion, along with the adequate use of transition words. Grammar means the use of correct forms. Usage means the use of correct word forms whereas mechanics means the use of punctuations.

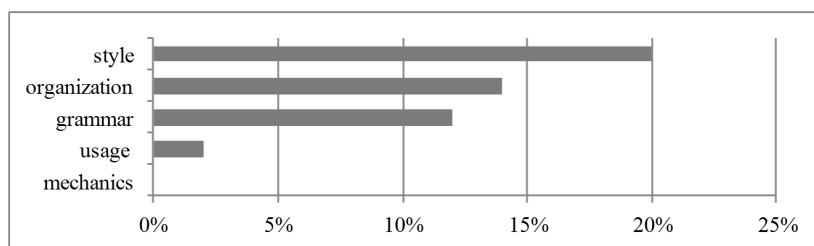


FIGURE 4 The Most Difficult Part in Essay Writing

In organization, the use of transition words (28%) is the most problematic, followed by supporting ideas (22%), conclusion (12%), introduction (10%), and main ideas (6%) in order (FIGURE 5).

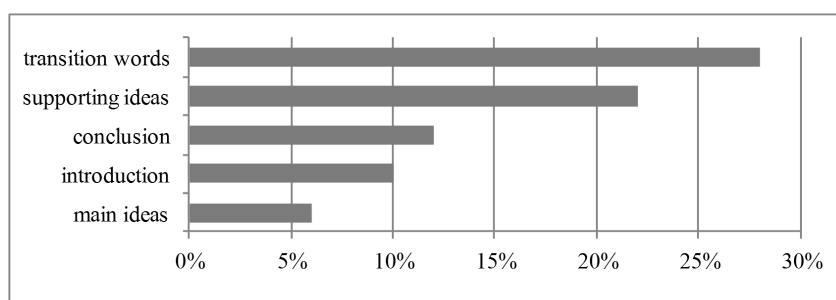


FIGURE 5 The Most Common Errors in Organization

In grammar, wrong/missing words (56%) is the most frequently committed error, followed by ill-formed verbs (34%), subject-verb agreement (30%), garbled sentence

(28%), fragment (26%), run-on sentences (14%), pronoun errors (10%), and possessive errors (10%) in order (FIGURE 6).

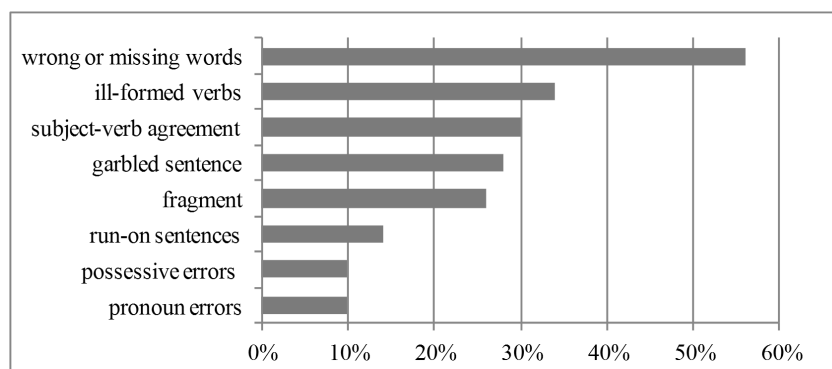


FIGURE 6 The Most Common Errors in Grammar

In usage, missing or extra article (72%) is reported to be the most frequently committed error, followed by preposition error (40%), wrong article (36%), confusing words (30%) or nonstandard word form (30%), wrong form of the word (20%), wrong part of speech (18%), determiner-noun agreement (14%), faulty comparison (14%), negation error (8%) in order (FIGURE 7).

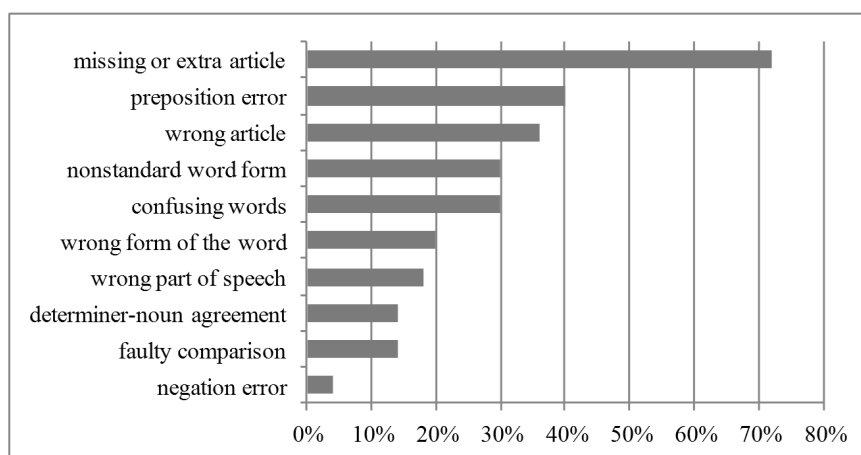


FIGURE 7 The Most Common Errors in Usage

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Among the three dimensional errors committed in this study, as proven in the previous

studies (Abushihab, 2014; G. H. Jung, 2009; Thewissen, 2013), the morphological errors were the most frequent; the lexical and syntactic errors the second and third respectively. Article errors appeared quite commonly as one of the most frequently released errors in the learners due to L1 transfer and interference despite the fact that the English article system is generally introduced in the early stages of English curriculum.

The Korean language doesn't have any specific articles placed depending on nouns appearing for the first time or for those that have already appeared beforehand, nor in front of countable or uncountable nouns. The students' limited knowledge of article use appeared to trigger the misuse, overuse, or omission of indefinite articles or definite articles in front of countable and uncountable nouns as in the examples mentioned; similar research findings have also been reported in earlier studies (Lasaten, 2014; Sompong, 2013). From the survey findings, we can ascertain that the students in the research were also aware of article difficulties when they composed. They selected articles as being the most troublesome aspect of writing and composition.

Similarly, with regards to the word form errors that were committed in the morphological section, the students had difficulties with the singular and plural forms of nouns—especially when they have different meanings such as in the example of *value* and *values*. They also demonstrated limited knowledge of pluralisms—as in *jobs* and *funds*—and parts of speech—as in *ill* and *illness*, *fast* and *fastly*, *entertainer* and *entertainment*, *weaking* and *weakening*, *dissatisfaction* and *dissatisfied*. The survey findings confirm that the students had difficulties using grammatically correct word forms and parts of speech (FIGURE 6 & 7).

In terms of the lexical errors, the wrong or missing word errors accounted for most. Timed tasks don't usually provide students enough time to proofread, but they are also sometimes careless as demonstrated in the example *happyness* (*happiness*). Furthermore, the students typed their essays on the computer and were likely to transpose the letters in *hige* (*huge*), *taht* (*that*), *cna* (*can*), and *happliy* (*happily*). In the example *hige*, the letter *i* is placed right next to the letter *u* on the keyboard. Not only were mistakes related to misspelling or typos, the wrong choice of words occurred due to a lack of the register of the word or sentence: *reasonably* (*considerably*), *now* (*the present*), *tiny* (*small*), *bliss* (*blessed*), *enormous* (*a number of*), and *discriminate* (*differentiate*), and word coinage as Dörnyei's (1995) one type of communication strategies as in *workship* (*workplace*) and *expertisers* (*experts*). As Kim (2010) discovered, wrong collocations were also revealed as in *go hard* (*work hard*) and *get my dream* (*achieve my dream*). While many wrong/missing word errors were committed by the students, they also acknowledged the difficulties from their choice in confusing words as revealed in the survey (FIGURE 7).

To discuss the result of the preposition errors that were placed as the second lexical error, Morgan's (2014) preposition error types were applied. The result shows that 12 confusion,

9 omission, and 5 insertion preposition errors were committed out of 26 in total. The preposition *in* was the most frequent error, *for*, *with*, *without*, and *to* were placed second, and *on*, *by*, and *from* followed next. This result bears a likeness to Jurafsky and Martin's (2008) seven most problematic prepositions: *of*, *in*, *for*, *to*, *with*, *on*, and *at*. Also, they are mostly compatible with the nine most frequent prepositions *on*, *of*, *to*, *in*, *for*, *with*, *at*, *by*, and *from* in British National Corpus (BNC).

In terms of conjunction errors, they could be due to interlingual transfer from Korean where one connector stands for two or more connectors in English such as *despite* and *although*. In Mahmoud's (2014) research, Arab university students also failed to differentiate between *although*, *even though*, *despite*, and *in spite of*, and *like* and *as* for the same reasons as Korean students. In his research, he also mentioned the students' overuse of *and* due to negative transfer from the first language. In our research, the students used *and* (201 hits out of the token 10,838) the most as a conjunction and a transitional word.

Syntactic errors are also common in L2 writing because students have lots of ideas, but they didn't seem to have enough language to express what they intended to say in a comprehensible way (Myles, 2002). In this research, verb, conjunction, or punctuation omissions caused garbled sentences, fragment sentences, or run-on sentences. Notably, this result is coupled with the students' choice of transitional words as the most difficult part in essay organization as has been mentioned in the survey findings. Given their choice, presumably, the syntactic errors might have been less likely to occur if the students had known more about how to use transitional devices in their writings because the students used 55 correct transitional words, such as *and*, *but*, *because*, *for*, *however*, *first*, *secondly*, *always*, *therefore*, *never*; and highly relied on *and*, *but*, and *because* with 201, 76, and 64 hits respectively out of the token 10,838. This result is consistent with Ahn's (2014) research and further evidence to support this view could be adduced from Purdue writing center's 141 transitional words in 10 subcategories (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/574/02/>).

This study, however, is not immune from research limitations. Readers are asked to use their caution when interpreting the findings as the present study analyzed only 36 student essays and thus any attempts to generalize the results should be discouraged. As Coder (1974) suggested, learner errors can be invaluable resources that indicate to teachers how language is processed and can help them predict possible errors to some extent; this will eventually help minimize student learning problems as reported in D. J. Lee (2008). Thus, it is suggested that teachers train students with a list of error codes to avoid making errors and help them become more conscious about language items that they are learning. Teachers should also look to promote an environment for the learners that is conducive to learning from their own mistakes. To do this, teachers have to make careful decisions on which mistakes to correct, when to correct and how much to correct in order to maximize

the benefit of error correction.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire on Students' Awareness of Errors

1. What do you think is the most difficult part in essay writing?
 - a. organization
 - b. grammar
 - c. usage
 - d. mechanics
 - e. styles

2. What do you think is the most common error in **organization**? (Can choose more than one)
 - a. introduction
 - b. main ideas
 - c. supporting ideas
 - d. transition words
 - e. conclusion

3. What do you think is the most common error in **grammar**? (Can choose more than one)
 - a. fragment
 - b. run-on sentences
 - c. garbled sentence
 - d. subject-verb agreement
 - e. ill formed verbs
 - f. pronoun errors
 - g. possessive errors
 - h. wrong or missing words

4. What do you think is the most common error in **usage**? (Can choose more than one)
 - a. determiner-noun agreement
 - b. missing or extra article
 - c. confused words
 - d. wrong from of the word
 - e. faulty comparison

- f. preposition error
- g. nonstandard word form
- h. negation error
- i. wrong part of speech
- j. wrong article

Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Levels: Tertiary

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