

Linguistics in Social Media: An Analysis on the Writing Conventions of Students' Blog Posts

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the writing conventions of students' blog posts as to mechanics, usage, and sentence formation. The blog entries of college students taking a language class served as the sources of data in this mixed-methods study. Content analysis was used in order to determine the errors in the text. Each sentence was analyzed to identify the errors committed by the students. These were then categorized according to the indicators found in the framework. The quantitative data were treated using the frequency and percentage of the errors committed by the students. The mechanics category had the highest number of errors, according to the findings. The errors made by the students as to mechanics were in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling; on usage, they were in verb tense, word order, and S-V agreement; and on sentence formation, they were in simple, compound, and complex sentences. The act of writing is incredibly difficult and requires adhering to the correct grammar rules, selecting the right words, utilizing the correct punctuation, and organizing ideas into the appropriate sentences. This study suggested that the language teacher may offer power point games, worksheets, and online games on verb tenses; students may trade assignments with their peers so that they can proofread one another's entries; and students may be given an infographic on "Writing Online: Improving Writing Skills through Blogging" to help them identify the typical mistakes made while writing online and advice on how to avoid them.

Keywords: blog posts, social media, writing conventions, errors, blogging

Introduction

Making use of technology in schools to aid learning and instruction has become crucial for engaging the diverse and young pupils of the twenty-first century. Due to the accessibility

of devices like Android phones, iPads, netbooks, as well as a variety of applications and instructional software, including engaging social media platforms and gaming apps, teachers and students have found that technology is one of the most efficient means of communication. According to Camilleri, Ford, Leja, and Sollars (2007), sending messages via group chats, email, Android phones, and other platforms has changed how individuals connect and write, as well as how frequently they write and maybe what they write about. New online genres have consequently gained recognition in the area of academic discourse. The utilization of the conventional methods of communication among university groups has been impacted by the introduction of this cutting-edge electronic format into the educational environment. Email is the most widely utilized computer-mediated communication method among university authorities, staff, and students in state universities and colleges in urban regions. However, because it is believed that such communication is very formal and is primarily relevant for instructors, email doesn't seem to suit the demands of university students (Yus, 2011 as cited in Perez-Sabater, 2013).

At Jose Rizal Memorial State University, students' learning is evaluated based on their outputs under a system known as outcomes-based education. The lack of time teachers have to cover all aspects of writing is one of the difficulties this plan presents. Additionally, pupils only have one (1) hour to write texts with a paragraph length. Reasonably, there isn't enough time left to teach ideas and concepts related to metacognitive thinking and idea creation due to time restrictions (Kixmiller, 2004 as cited in McGrail and Davis, 2011). English professors increasingly emphasize that the conventional approach of covering all the rules and mechanics of writing will result in graduates who struggle to construct complete and logical sentences. According to Cali and Bowen (2003), fifty years of research on grammar confirms what the majority of our language teachers have long believed, namely that traditional grammar training is no longer successful when it comes to developing students' writing. Traditional grammar education was actually thought to be the least effective method for improving pupils' writing abilities.

The use of blogs in classrooms as a fresh technique and tactic in training students to enhance their writing skills is the new trend in teaching writing. An online diary or educational website called a "blog" (short for "web-log") presents its articles in reverse chronological order, with the most recent ones appearing at the top. It serves as a forum for writers or groups of writers to discuss a certain subject (Minaev, 2021 as cited in Cantina, 2022). The use of innovative teaching methods and writing instruction encourages beginning writers to consider their readers' perspectives, which may be very helpful for our young writers as they learn how to adapt their writing with their readers in mind (Holliday & McCutchen, 2004 as cited in McGrail & Davis, 2011). The newest method of teaching writing in classrooms involves using blogs, which can be updated and improved upon on a regular basis. Because writing can now be viewed by everyone, readers can react and leave comments, so writing continues to evolve on its own, blogs can offer a different degree of dynamism in the classroom if the language teacher wants to track the students' writing development (Boling, 2008 as cited in McGrail & Davis, 2011). This blogging platform might help elementary school instructors by giving beginning writers access to a greater range of involvement opportunities from a larger audience. Blogging can give aspiring authors the freedom to create ideas that appeal to both them and their audience without being constrained by time if it is organized carefully. The approach could involve readers acting as external reviewers or critics who could

offer insightful criticism about what needs to be improved or could offer extra information to support the writing (Torrance, 2007). In light of the idea that blogging gives students writing chances, it is important to look at some of the posts made by students and teachers who engage in this genre of writing (Camilleri et al., 2007).

According to Zabala (2014), as reported in Sahagun (2020), the prevalent faults were tense, SVA, and word order. The most frequent errors, according to a survey by Aperocho (2017), were linguistic in nature. The misuse of the verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and the usage of auxiliary and connecting verbs were the mistakes that were discovered. Other mistakes came from the mechanical side, including poor spelling and grammar.

The research of Ray and Hocutt (2006), which was mentioned by Camilleri et al. (2007), supports the value of blogs for social networking, classroom debate, and reflective writing (Khourey-Brown, 2005). (Efimova & de Moor, 2005). The advantages that blogs could offer in secondary school and college are the only ones that are discussed intellectually when it comes to their incorporation as computer-mediated communication channels (Boling, 2008; Williams & Jacobs, 2004). However, little research has been done to examine the mechanics, syntax, and other elements of blog entries.

This study intends to examine the writing styles used in the blog entries that the second-year BSED students in the course "Teaching and Assessment of the Macro Skills" created. It specifically identifies the grammatical, usage, and sentence-formation mistakes in the students' blog postings. Additionally, it chooses the characteristics of the students' blog postings. The results of this study will give students and teachers a general understanding of the main mistakes made when writing blogs. Additionally, the research will help students who use blogging as a tool to enhance their writing avoid making such mistakes. The study's research results may serve as the foundation for an infographic on "Writing Online: Improving Writing Skills through Blogging."

Theoretical Consideration

The sociolinguistic theory of William James, as cited in Cantina and Alvarico, serves as the foundation for this work (2022). Sociolinguistic theory offers a dynamic perspective that recognizes change as it occurs. Where "language," or "the linguistic," meaningfully engages with "society," or "the social," is at this intersection. Social linguistics is interested in how language use interacts with, or is affected by, social factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, or social class, for example. According to James, the key social characteristics influencing language use are social class, social networks, sex and gender, ethnicity, and age.

The Cognitive Process Theory of Writing by Flower & Hayes (1986), which Yao (n.d.) cited, serves as the foundation for this study. This theory describes the writing task as "a set of unique thought patterns which creators compose or arrange during the conduct of arrangement, and these operations have a various leveled, highly embedded organization." The basic argument is that writing stages overlap, writing is guided by goals, and authors produce significantly from novice writers—all of which are immutable truths in the process paradigm.

This school of thought is suitable for this research as it emphasizes on how the creators construct and symbolize the more complex meanings of complicated statements by making use of their pre-existing learning, attitudes, and competencies. This communication process gives beginning writers a range of options to communicate their ideas systematically and to play around with terms and expressions to better convey their thoughts.

Methods

This study utilized a mixed-method research design. In a mixed method design, qualitative and quantitative research are combined or integrated within the investigation (Creswell, 2014 as cited in Cantina and Alvarico, 2022). To minimize variations, the corpus is solely restricted to the blogging posts of the BSED second year students enrolled in Teaching and Assessment of the Macro Skills during the Academic Year 2019-2020 of Jose Rizal Memorial State University who happened to be the students of the researcher.

Prior to the development of the students' blog, the instructor gave an overview about blogging, provided a sample of blogging, and gave the advantages of blogging as a new form of communication and a new strategy in writing. She also directed the students to create a web page at www.wordpress.com. To make the project more understandable to the students, the instructor created a blog post and sent the link in the group chat, and asked them to read and give their comments. The students were free to express their views and ideas about the blog post. Then the students created their own blog posts.

The primary sources of the data were the blog posts of the students. The researcher selected thirty blog posts purposively as corpus of the study. To determine the writing conventions of students' blogs, the researcher looked into the following — mechanics, usage, and sentence formation. These indicators in writing were adopted from the framework of Cali & Bowen (2003). Content analysis was used in order to determine the errors of the text. To be able to determine the errors of the students' writing, the researcher looked into each sentence and identify the errors committed by the students. These were then categorized as to the indicators found in the framework. Through review of the literature was also conducted to determine the category of errors. Two language teachers who are expert in the discipline were tapped to validate the analysis of the study. The quantitative data were treated using the frequency and percentage of the errors committed by the students.

Result and Discussion

Table 1

Frequency of Errors

Writing Conventions	F	P
Mechanics	111	49.55%
Usage	60	26.79%
Sentence Formation	53	23.66%

Based on the analysis and calculation made on data, it was revealed that the greatest number of all error categories was on the mechanics. Most of the respondents made common errors in punctuation, capitalization some were very confused about the correct spelling of the word. This type of mistake demonstrated pupils' lack of understanding of the fundamental principles governing written standards, such as capitalization, punctuation, and typography, which do not apply to spoken English. Since pupils already have a rudimentary understanding of how to use language to communicate when they join school, usage may be simpler to teach than mechanics, claim Cali and Bowen (2003). When learning to utilize spoken language, kids experiment with usage and discover what is expected and appropriate through practice.

Errors Committed by the Students as to Mechanics, Usage and Sentence Formation

Mechanics

The mechanics are the rules of print, such as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, that do not apply to spoken language. Students must deliberately understand how mechanics work in written language because they do not appear in vocal language (Cali & Bowen, 2003). The study revealed that as to mechanics, the students committed errors on punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. The study showed that 37.95% of the mistakes were punctuation-related and were made by the learners and these are comma, hyphen, apostrophe, quotation marks and period. Based from the findings, the students do not know the proper use of comma, hyphen, and apostrophe, and some had omitted the use of period. Lot of students make mistakes when employing punctuation, which highlights their weak writing skills. This implies that the instructors may develop worksheets on the particular errors on punctuation in order for the students to understand that the use of appropriate punctuation marks provides sensible meanings to sentences.

Similar to the findings of Salamin, et al(2016) .'s study, the most frequent mistakes in punctuation marks made by 157 university students taking English as a second language were, respectively, commas, semi-colons, periods, quotation marks, and hyphens. Furthermore, Catabay (2016) found that punctuation mistakes accounted for 83.9% of all mechanical errors. Grammatical mistakes involving verb tenses and structural mistakes involving sentence fragments were the next most frequently committed errors. The results disproved a study by Salamin, et al. (2016) that claimed that wrong capitalization was the most common error type in the study.

Another significant finding of the study is that the respondents had difficulty in writing the correct word in a sentence (10.26%) and capitalizing (1.34%) them. The spelling mistakes were primarily the result of carelessness and phonological awareness. By using the words' sounds as a guide, the participants write out the terms. They frequently use words like "their" and "their," "your" and "you're," "loss" and "loose," which have the same pronunciation but distinct meanings and orthography, interchangeably. Culbertson (2020) asserts that errors in grammar and spelling reduce the likeability of blogs. Correct spelling and punctuation are important, especially in the realm of blogging. A grammar or spelling error slows down the reader every time they find one. If there are many inaccuracies, there will be many speed bumps, and your reader is likely to abandon that "road." The less language or spelling errors the blog has, the more probable it is that someone will love that fantastic blog post because people on the Internet have short attention spans. This implies that the instructors in writing courses may also integrate lessons on the use of homonyms, ask students to read out loud the work, then proofread the writing before posting it.

Here are some examples of errors on mechanics that were found in the writing task:

Punctuation

- a. Even though we love each other well but there are times that we might got broken.
(*well, but*)
- b. I believed there is always a room for everyone to improve and that nobody is perfect.
(*improve, and*)

- c. In this short film, it talks about the very heart aching film Inlove with a guy. (*heart-aching*)
- d. I am a mother of a 10 month old boy and it would change your whole life. (*10-month-old*)
- e. I myself can really say that its really hard to become a mother at this young age. (*it's*)
- f. So thats all guyses. (*that's*)
- g. We have to decide our life. There is no mistake in it as long as we know the consequences of our action. This tells that...
 "We have to decide our life. There is no mistake in it as long as we know the consequences of our action." This tells that...
- h. Thank you (*you.*)

Capitalization

- a. We should not let our heart decide because it can destroy you, we should always listen to our parents' advices. (*you. We*)
- b. But overall, I love and I was empresseed by the unexpected plot twist, there is a suspense, thrilled, a very moving portrayal, the quality of the film starring visual effects. (*twist. There*)

Spelling

- a. But overall, I love and I was empresseed by the unexpected plot twist. (*impressed*)
- b. There love, care, support and guidance could really help a lot for their child. (*Their*)

Usage

Usage refers to verb tenses, subject-verb congruence, word formation, and other spoken and written word standards. Because students already know how to communicate using language when they join school, teaching usage may be simpler than teaching mechanics (Cali & Bowen, 2003). The findings revealed that the students committed errors in usage particularly on verb tense (18.30%), S-V agreement (7.14%), and word order (1.34%). The students made numerous mistakes with regard to the verb tense, specifically with regard to the past tense, present perfect tense, present perfect continuous tense, and the proper use of present tense after the modal verbs can and could. This means that students lack understanding of what appropriate verb tense shall be used in the written composition. They are unsure of which tense form to use when expressing past events, past facts, the duration of an action, and the verb form to use with modals. They also struggle with expressing the idea that one event occurs before another. This implies that the instructor may provide power point games, worksheets, online games on verb tense, particularly on these types to help the students lessen the errors on these types of tenses. Moreover, the instructor may ask the students to exchange work with their classmates to read one another's posts for errors.

The results are consistent with those of Hawa, Sukmaningrum, and Carascalao (2016), who found that the students made mistakes with verb tense, word order, subject, pronoun, spelling, capitalization, preposition, article, and fragment. Verb tense (28.2%), subject-verb agreement (21.74%), and fragment (10.62%) make up the majority of errors. The mistakes

were made as a result of the students' poor English proficiency. Here are some examples of errors in usage that were found in the writing task:

Verb Tense

- a. In the 6th of December 2019, I've been watched two films. (I watched)
- b. Have you consider yourself putting in a situation whom believes that someone you love for so... (Have you considered)
- c. Forsaken is a short film were it can melts your heart, and makes you scream. (can melt)
- d. Teenage pregnancy is one of the major factors that could leads depression to teenagers. (could lead)

Word Order

- a. Even though we love each other well but there are time that might we got broken. (we might get broken)
- b. The film which is entitled "Forsaken" was directed by Ms. Mary Reagen Apostol. (Ms. Mary Reagen Apostol directed the film titled, "Forsaken")

SV-agreement

- a. More often individuals who are victim on it they tries to get abortion. (They try)
- b. She kill herself without any doubt. (She kills)

Sentence formation

The structure of sentences, including how phrases and clauses are employed to create basic and complicated sentences, is referred to as sentence formation (Cali & Bowen, 2003). Based on the analysis, the students committed errors on complex sentence (8.93%), compound sentences (7.14%), and simple sentence (7.59%). This indicates that as students started to express their ideas in writing, their sentences grew longer and more complex without concern for the grammatical errors they would make. This implies that the instructor may remind the students to avoid writing sentences with a lot of commas. If this happens, they may encourage them to break those sentences up. The use of simple sentences to express ideas is more appropriate for novice bloggers. Soard (2014) asserts that trying to avoid using commas can result in weird writing faults because they are misleading to most readers. Run-on sentences and sentence fragments can be avoided by knowing when and where to use commas.

Here are some examples of errors in sentence formation that were found in the writing task:

Simple Sentence

- a. In a short film, it talks about the very heart aching film who is deeply madly in love with a guy. (The short film talks about a girl who is madly in love with a guy)
- b. They are very happy and contented to each other, after that one day... (They are very happy and contented.)

Compound Sentence

- a. My most favorite scene was when one of her make up artists entered one room but she found out that their client was dead already. (room, and)

- b. Yes, they may filled with so much love and happiness. The truth is they did not gain true love and real happiness. (happiness, but)

Complex Sentence

- a. They didn't know what to say, they fled away. (Because they didn't know what to say, they fled away)
- b. It was really painful to see, the guy ran away after the accident. (Since it was really painful to see, the guy ran away after the accident).

Conclusion

Students made mistakes when writing blog posts because writing requires a wide range of skills and requires a lot of different actions to be completed. Applying the right grammar rules, picking the right diction, utilizing the right punctuation, and structuring ideas into appropriate sentences are all part of writing skills.

Recommendation

To help the students learn that using the proper punctuation gives sentences logical meanings, language instructors may create worksheets on the specific punctuation errors. To help the students reduce their errors with these kinds of tenses, the language teacher may offer power point games, worksheets, and online games on verb tenses. In addition, the teacher might ask the students to trade assignments with their peers so that they can proofread one another's entries. The language teacher may advise the students to refrain from using too many commas in their sentences. They might advise them to break up those sentences if this occurs. The students may be given an infographic on "Writing Online: Improving Writing Skills through Blogging" to help them identify the main mistakes made when writing online. There may be guidance in the text on how to avoid them.

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