

## THE STUDENT'S ERRORS INVESTIGATION IN USING PUNCTUATION, CAPITALIZATION AND SPELLING IN WRITING BUSINESS LETTER

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**Abstract :** *This study aims to investigate the errors committed by students in using punctuation, capitalization and spelling in writing business letter. This is descriptive study. The sample of this study was the students of English for Professional Business and Communication Program Academic Year 2021/2022. The finding of the research showed that the common errors committed by students in writing business letter from the highest to the lowest occurrence were spelling, punctuation and capitalization. The errors occur because of omission, addition, misformation and misordering.*

**Keywords:** *Errors, Punctuation, Capitalization, Spelling and Business Letter*

### INTRODUCTION

Error investigation of students' performance in foreign language acquisition has long been a discussion of many researchers. Some of them argue that analyzing errors does not give potential impact to the language learner.

Truscott (1999) in Shaffer (2005) suggest that showing students'

error is not necessary and it should be deserted. Cohen & Bobbin's (1976) in Karim (2018) supports giving correction on students' error is not effective for students. While, the rests revealed that finding error correction contribute and aid students in language learning better.

Ellis (2009) states that finding students' error then giving correction on it is beneficial to build their understanding and comprehension of students as well as

the teacher. Amara (2018) add feedback from the error correction is necessary for language learners because they need the errors to be notified. Thus, by finding the errors of the students, they know what part in the language acquisition can be enhanced. For example, it can be seen in writing. Students have such knowledge to find what errors they committed in punctuation, capitalization spelling that they can fix them and learn from them.

While understanding the use of punctuation, capitalization and spelling play important part in sentence structure building a paragraph and letter. It helps the readers comprehend and concentrate idea (Lauchman: 2020). So, it makes the writing more meaningful.

Thus, by considering the importance of errors to see the understanding of students in using capitalization, spelling and punctuation and to find what appropriate strategy to overcome them, it is necessary to conduct an investigation errors committed by students in using punctuation, spelling and capitalization in writing business letter.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED**

## **LITERATURE**

### **Errors**

To analyze error produced by the language learner, there must be clarified mistake and error first. Brown (2000) states that mistake is executing error caused by the learner does not have any brief knowledge about the system. On the other hand, error is a noticeable deviation from the language learner grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner. Fang and Jiang (2007) support that this recognition process is followed by the error description process. We compare learners' sentences with the correct sentences in target language, and find the errors.

According to Richards and Smith (2002) errors is result of faulty or deficient instructional process. Erdogan (2005) supports that errors occur when the learner accumulate the idea about the target language by their limited experience. Fang and Jiang (2007) add malfunctioning and defective learning of the target language instead of language transfer cause intralingual errors. Thus, limited knowledge and learning process cause students' error in acquiring target language.

According Dulay and Burt (1982) there are some causes of errors ;

#### 1. Omission.

Omission is marked by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance.

2. Addition

Addition is shown by the presence of an item which must not exist in a well-formed utterance.

3. Misformation

Misformation is signed by the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure

4. Misordering

Misordering is shown by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance.

6. When an abbreviated title comes after a name, punctuate as indicated below.

7. When you abbreviate United States (as an adjective), use periods.

8. Abbreviations of states require periods if you're not using U.S. Postal Code abbreviations.

9. Use periods after abbreviated Latin terms

10. A few words about abbreviations and "formality."

Comma separates idea which is logical, systematic and consistent (Lauchman: 2010). He adds that there some use of comma;

1. Using a comma to separate two words or numbers that the reader might mistakenly connect on the first reading.

2. Using a comma to separate two or more adjectives when (1) the adjectives precede the noun and (2) you could substitute and for the comma.

3. Omitting the comma between cumulative adjectives.

4. Using commas to make plain that a word, phrase, or clause is parenthetical (not essential to the intended meaning of the sentence).

**Punctuation**

The first punctuation is period. A good writer uses period more than other punctuation. Lauchman (2010) states that period ends the sentence while by outlaying it, it can make the reader focuses on the idea. He adds that period can be used as follow;

1. The period ends a declarative sentence.

2. Put the period inside quotation marks.

3. There are differing rules for using the period with abbreviations.

4. The abbreviations of most units of measurement do not take a period

5. American usage calls for the period after abbreviations of address.

5. Not using commas around any words that are essential to your meaning.
6. Using commas to set off contrasting elements.
7. Using commas to set off interrogative tags.
8. Using a comma when you connect two independent clauses with and, but, or, so, or yet. Put the comma before the conjunction.

The next punctuation is colon. Colon can be used to announce a summary statement, to establish a list, to convey ratio or to follow a salutation line. There are some rules in using colon according to Lauchman (2010):

1. Use a colon between two sentences when the second sentence answers the question raised by the first
2. Use a colon before a final clause, phrase, or word that explains, amplifies, or summarizes the preceding expression
3. When you use a colon to introduce a list, make sure to write a complete thought first
4. Use a colon to introduce a vertical list when the list consists of sentence fragments

5. Use a colon to express direct ratio
6. The colon is often used after the salutation line in correspondence.
7. Don't put a colon after a verb.
8. In text, skip two spaces after the colon.

The last punctuation mark is apostrophe. It is used to form contraction and show possession. Apostrophe for contraction is an omission for several to be and auxiliary. One of them is that "are" becomes " 're". This is only for informal conversation situation. It doesn't belong to standardized rule. Meanwhile, apostrophe is also used for showing ownership. According to Lauchman for possession, there is omission of h and i. His becomes 's. *John his boat becomes John's boat.*

### Capitalization

Capitalization is also important part of in the structure. Lauchman (2010) states that:

.....Every time you communicate in writing, you need solid capitalization and punctuation skills. As you noticed in comparing the two paragraphs, these skills help you get through

to your reader. Proper punctuation ensures that your message and meaning will be delivered without confusion. To clarify your meaning even further, proper use of capital letters draws attention to words that need to be emphasized

He adds some use of capitalization in writing

1. First word in a sentence.
2. First word in a direct quotation
3. Greetings and closings in letters
4. He personal pronoun I and interjection O

### **Spelling**

Good spelling makes students writing not confusing. According to Stilman (1997) A good writer should spell every word in correct way, but should have an eye for when something doesn't look quite right, and the common sense to check dictionaries for the correctness of spelling. There are some common errors in spelling

1. Interchanging -ant and -ent endings, orange and -ence
2. Interchanging -able and -ible endings
3. Interchanging soft c and s, and soft g and j
4. Omitting a silent letter
5. Confusion over double consonants

6. Spelling words the way they're mispronounced

### **METHODOLOGY OF STUDY**

Descriptive research method was used to compile this study. The aim is to find the students' errors in punctuation and spelling in writing business letters.

In this study, the sample was the first year of English for Business and Professional Communication Program students Academic Year 2021/2022. They were 27 students taking the writing business letter test.

Writing test was used as the instrument of the study. The test was conducted to the students. They were asked to write business letter to measure their errors in punctuation and spelling. The indicators to see the errors are (period, comma, colon, apostrophe), capitalization and spelling.

The data were analyzed by using descriptive technique. It was calculated into percentage in order to know the numbers of the errors in using punctuation, spelling and capitalization in writing business letter. It is suggested by Sugiyono (2008)

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where P = The percentage of the error

N = Total respondent

F = Frequency

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

After gathering data from the field, the data were analyzed by using descriptive technique. There are some common types of errors committed by students. The errors in using punctuation, capitalization, and spelling can be seen by categorization.

The first indicator is the students' error in using punctuation (period, comma, colon, and apostrophe). The data description of the students' error in using punctuation can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. The Percentage of error in Punctuation.

Indicators	Numbers of error	Percentage of errors
Period	19	15%
Comma	29	21%
Colon	22	20%
Apostrophe	20	18%

From the table, it can be seen that the first rank for most frequent error committed by students is using comma in writing business letter with the total number is 29. The percentage is 21%.

The second rank for the most frequent error committed by students

is using apostrophe. The total number of error is 29 and the percentage is 18%. The next rank for the most common error committed by students is that using period.

The total number is 19 and the percentage is 15%. The last rank for the most common errors committed by students is that using colon. The number is 22 and the percentage is 20%.

The next indicator is the students' error in spelling. The data can be shown in the following table

Table 2. The Percentage of error in Spelling.

Indicator	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
Spelling	78	23%

From the table, it can be seen that the number error of spelling in writing business letter. The percentage of error is 23 % in spelling in writing business letter.

The last indicator is the students' error in capitalization. The data can be shown in the following table.

Table 3. The Percentage of error in Capitalization.

Indicator	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
Capitalization	28	15%

From the table it can be seen that the number of error in capitalization is 28. The percentage is

15% in capitalization in writing business letter.

The data of causes of errors in using punctuation, capitalization and spelling can be seen as follow;

Table 4. The percentage error caused by omission

Indicator	Number of Error	Percentage
Punctuation	33	36,7%
Capitalization	12	42,9%
Spelling	28	35,9%

Based on the table, the number of errors in using punctuation in writing business letter caused by omission is 33 and the percentage is 36,7%. Next, the number of errors in using capitalization in writing business letter caused by omission is 12 and the percentage is 42,9%. Then, the number of students errors in spelling in writing business letter caused by omission is 28 and the percentage is 35,9%.

Table 5. The percentage error caused by addition

Indicator	Number of Error	Percentage
Punctuation	29	32,2%
Capitalization	16	57,1%
Spelling	20	25,6%

Based on the table, the number of errors in using punctuation in writing business letter caused by addition is 29 and the percentage is 32,2%. Next, the number of errors in using capitalization in writing business letter caused by addition is 16 and the

percentage is 57,1%. Then, the number of students errors in spelling in writing business letter caused by addition is 20 and the percentage is 25,6%.

Table 6. The percentage error caused by misformation

Indicator	Number of Error	Percentage
Punctuation	28	31,1%
Capitalization	0	0%
Spelling	12	15,4

Based on the table, the number of errors in using punctuation in writing business letter caused by misformation is 28 and the percentage is 31,1%. Next, the number of errors in using capitalization in writing business letter caused by misformation is 0 and the percentage is 0%. Then, the number of students errors in spelling in writing business letter caused by misformation is 12 and the percentage is 15,4%.

Table 7. The percentage error caused by misordering

Indicator	Number of Error	Percentage
Punctuation	0	0%
Capitalization	0	0%
Spelling	18	23,1%

Based on the table, the number of errors in using punctuation in writing business letter caused by misordering is 0 and the percentage is 0%. Next, the number of errors in using capitalization in writing business letter caused by misordering is 0 and the

percentage is 0%. Then, the number of students errors in spelling in writing business letter caused by misordering is 18 and the percentage is 23,1%.

In conclusion, based on the most frequent error from the highest to the lowest occurrence committed by students in writing business letter is spelling, punctuation and capitalization. The highest number of errors was caused by omission. Then it was followed by addition, misformation and misordering.

### **Discussion**

Based on the finding it can be concluded that some students committed error in punctuation because students did omission, addition and misformation. This finding is supported by Awad (2012), it is stated that most student committed error in punctuation; the overuse of comma is the most common errors occurred. Salamin and Farrah (2016) add that the most frequent error committed by students is in using punctuation. They further explain that comma, semicolon, period, quotation, hyphen, apostrophe, and the question mark respectively from the highest to the lowest occurrence.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusions**

Based on the finding the most common error committed by students in writing business letter is spelling. It is followed by punctuation and capitalization. The errors committed by students in spelling, punctuation and capitalization were caused by omission, addition, misformation and misordering.

### **Suggestion**

It is suggested to the students to learn from the error they committed that they can revise it. This process can make them more understand and have better competence in English. Furthermore, the teachers can design such some learning strategy that they can minimize the errors in the future.



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