

# An Analysis of Common Errors Made by Grade 7 Students in Writing English Paragraphs at a Secondary School in Hanoi, Vietnam

Le Vien Lan Huong\*

Faculty of Foreign Languages, Vietnam Military Medical University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Ngo Thi Tuyet

Faculty of Foreign Languages, Vietnam Military Medical University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Do Thi Thuy Van

Foreign Languages Department, Trade Union University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Tran Hong Ngoc

Trung Nhi Secondary School, Hai Ba Trung District, Hanoi, Vietnam

**Abstract**—Error analysis is a technique that identifies and classifies the inappropriate forms that foreign language learners produce (Crystal, 1987), and it is considered a useful tool for helping them improve their writing skills. The study investigated the secondary students' common errors in writing English paragraphs. During the first term of the school year 2023-2024, 43 grade 7 students from a secondary school in Hanoi participated in a descriptive quantitative research project. The participants were asked to complete three writing tests at three different times to generate their written errors based on Ferris' (2014) model of error analysis. The findings indicate that the types of errors that grade 7 students made are lexical errors, syntactic errors, morphological errors, orthographical errors, and paragraph errors. Lexical, syntactic, and orthographical errors are greatly committed by the students. Accordingly, it comes to the conclusion that secondary students in general and 7<sup>th</sup> graders in particular struggle with writing English paragraphs. The results of the research would also give the secondary teachers of English some implications, such as focusing on grammatical patterns, emphasizing irregular instances, offering adequate practice opportunities, implementing explicit instructions, and engaging students in interactive exercises, visual aids, collaborative activities, authentic materials, etc. to mitigate the students' written errors.

**Index Terms**—error analysis, common errors, secondary students, English paragraphs, writing skills

## I. INTRODUCTION

English language teaching (ELT) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Vietnam has undergone constant revision in order to maximize the effectiveness for language learners in achieving their desired degrees, particularly at the general education level. At this level, the learning objectives aim to equip secondary school students with a certain level of proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing English as a language of communication. This will enable them to meet their basic and practical communication needs on topics related to school, leisure activities, and future career paths. Secondary ELT continues to build and strengthen core English language knowledge, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Secondary school students are expected to employ a variety of learning strategies to organize their time for learning, use technology for learning and self-study, bolster their methods and self-evaluation, accept accountability for their learning outcomes, and develop a lifetime love of learning. When evaluating the aforementioned goals, the fundamental principles are to mandate that secondary school students learn English in order to facilitate cross-cultural contact. Writing abilities consequently appear to be limited.

Writing is actually very distinct from other skills in that one must possess understanding of the morphological, lexical, syntactical, and mechanical aspects of language in order to have a well-written product. If written errors in terms of those aspects are ignored, it could hinder the learners' ability to become proficient in the language. The fact that errors made by learners may have significance for comprehending the process of learning a second language. For this reason, error-handling skills are essential for ELT. According to Brown (2014), error analysis is important and should not be disregarded while teaching language. Error analysis provides a foundation for determining language learners' grammatical merits and drawbacks. One aspect of the research on the language learning process that is methodologically similar to the study of mother tongue acquisition is error analysis (Corder, 1975). This helps to paint a

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\* Corresponding Author.

picture of a learner's linguistic growth and provide hints about the learning process. Error analysis can be utilized to track and evaluate the language usage of learners, as it is anticipated to reveal a plethora of issues within the ELT. It can also confirm the efficacy or inefficacy of the teaching strategies a teacher uses in the classroom; therefore, error analysis ought to be used as a foundation for curriculum and ELT material development.

Written error analysis appears to be rather common at the higher education level; however, despite its exceptional importance, not much research has been done at the general education level. In fact, a specific study on errors made by grade 7 students in writing English paragraphs at the secondary school where one of the researchers works has not yet been conducted. The research project is carried out to fulfill this research gap.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### A. Paragraph Writing

According to Corder (1975), a paragraph is made up of connected sentences arranged in a certain order. The subject matter of these sentences must be identical. The purpose of the writer determines how long the paragraph should be. Oshima and Hogue (2006) define a paragraph as a basic writing unit of organization that develops one main idea through a series of connected sentences. One sentence or ten sentences can make up a paragraph. Although the length of the paragraph is not crucial, it should be sufficiently extended to effectively convey the major topic. A group of sentences that are all connected to one idea constitute a paragraph (Briesmaster & Etchegaray, 2017). The goal of assembling these groupings of sentences into a paragraph is to make sure that the readers can comprehend the arrangement of the ideas.

Atmaca (2016) divides paragraphs into four main categories: informative, descriptive, narrative, and persuasive. A paragraph that provides information serves as an example of an informative paragraph. A descriptive paragraph provides a detailed description of something or someone. The readers are presented with the objects under description in a manner that enables them to see, feel, taste, smell, and hear them. The sentences that give background information contain specific facts about the subject or object being described. Another type of paragraph is a narrative paragraph that provides a description of an event that previously occurred. A persuasive piece of writing is effective in achieving its goal of persuading the reader to support a viewpoint. This kind of paragraph primarily focuses on the writer's perspective on the subject matter (Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014). It is typically brought up in a topic sentence. Each of the other participants offers justifications and evidence to support their positions. A persuasive paragraph should have a firm tone that is polite enough to compel the reader to take action.

When it comes to well-written paragraphs, coherence and cohesion are two of the most important traits. According to Ohma and Hogue (2006), coherence refers to how easily the ideas are related through the use of suitable transition signals and how the supporting sentences are arranged in a logical manner, making the paragraph easy to read and comprehend. By utilizing coherence, Wood (2017) claims that the reader or listener is presented with all of the missing pieces and components of the picture that are not included in the text. However, the text does not contain these elements and components. Additionally, the term "coherence" refers to the state that occurs when the ideas are structured in a way that is seamless and clear from one sentence to the next and when all of the components of the text link to one another in a way that is both logical and intentional. Coherence refers to the manner in which a text is able to transmit to its readers a sense that is both logical and straightforward (Atmaca, 2016). This is accomplished by the arrangement of the text's material, as well as the relevance and clarity of its concepts and ideas. Therefore, a paragraph is considered to be cohesive when the sentences inside it are interconnected with one another and address a single concept as a unified piece of writing, as opposed to being a collection of distinct sentences (Amara, 2015).

The use of terminology and grammatical structures in a way that is both logical and purposeful in order to logically and purposely build links between the concepts contained within a text is referred to as cohesion. Any piece of writing can benefit from its flow and sequence, which helps readers better understand what they are reading. The idea of cohesiveness encompasses the grammatical and/or lexical relationships that exist between the various components of a text. These relationships might be either lexical or grammatical relationship. One example that might be used to illustrate this would be the relationship that exists between a number of sentences or between the many components that make up a sentence. Cohesion is defined by Lastres-López and Manalastas (2017) as the logical links that exist inside a text at the sentence level within the text. The employment of connectives and conjunctions, as well as the grammatical and lexical links that exist between the components of written output, are all included in this phenomenon.

For the sake of this investigation, the researchers would like to quote a paragraph that serves as the definition of Corder (1975). This definition makes it abundantly obvious that the sentences that make up a paragraph must be connected to one another and convey information to the audience about the same subject. Beside the correctness of terminology and grammatical structures, a good paragraph includes five elements: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, a concluding sentence, coherence, and cohesion (Oshima & Hogue, 2006).

### B. Error Versus Mistake

Edge (1997) provided a straightforward definition, stating that an "error" occurs when a student is unable to self-correct a mistake in their English, but the teacher believes that the correct form is known to the class. In contrast, Corder (1967) regarded "errors" as regular, systematic, deviant forms of language that second language learners at the

competence level make for linguistic reasons. According to Corder (1967), learners consistently generate deviant language forms because of their deficient competence in specific elements of the target language, rather than due to carelessness, lack of attention, etc.

In writing, a grammatical mistake is any instance in which a word or piece of punctuation is used in an inappropriate manner. To put it another way, it is a departure from the rules of grammar that have been established (Atmaca, 2016). As a result of the fact that grammar rules are designed to make writing simpler for readers to comprehend, a writer runs the danger of their work being misunderstood if they commit any of the typical grammar mistakes listed below, as well as any other grammar mistake. However, it is essential to keep in mind that not all sentences that deviate from the norms of grammar are considered to be mistakes. It is possible that a phrase or word choice that is commonly used today was once considered a grammatical mistake in the past. This is because language is constantly under development (Ferris, 2014). Moreover, there are situations in which disregarding the rules of grammar actually results in an improvement in one's writing. As students grow their writing skills, it might be helpful for them to have an understanding of the most prevalent grammar mistakes, the reasons why we make them, and the corrective methods for them (Corder, 1975). This can help them traverse the ever-changing language and effectively break rules.

As part of the process of learning a language, it is vital to discern between errors and mistakes in order to get a deeper grasp of the technical differences that exist between these two phenomena. Contrarily, the term "error" is sometimes used to refer to a type of pattern that a native speaker considers undesirable due to a lack of linguistic competence. This is because the native speaker is unable to comprehend the structure. Consequently, an error is the outcome of having insufficient knowledge. In the context of the target language system, the term "error" refers to any persistent deviations from the rules of the language system that occur throughout the process of language learning. In addition, errors might be attributed to a lack of understanding about the target language or to an inaccurate notion regarding it.

"Mistake" is a performance problem that can be either a random guess or a "slip" in the sense that it expresses itself as an inability to appropriately exploit a known system, as stated by Brown (2014). The term "mistake" refers to a performance fault that can be either of these things. Speakers of both their first and second languages are likely to make mistakes as a normal part of the process. This is true regardless of the language they are using. Native speakers can identify and fix mistakes since they do not stick to perfection in the process of producing speech. This is not because they are unable to communicate effectively; rather, it is because they are unable to adhere to the standards of perfection. The speakers are able to self-correct to the correct condition of correct language usage anytime they make a mistake in their usage of the language (Brown, 2014).

Errors and mistakes can be distinguished from each other according to the likelihood of correction; in other words, mistakes are not able to self-correct if the speaker is aware of the divergence. In spite of this, the line between a mistake and an error appears to be hazy at times, particularly when the learner's capacity for self-correction is taken into consideration. Amara (2015) suggested that a substantial number of performance errors may be a signal of a lack of habit in the utilization of language skills, and subsequently, a lack of second language competence on the side of learners. This is because learners may not have developed a habit of using language skills. Despite the fact that they are able to correct their mistakes, he claims that due to the fact that the English as a foreign language learner is not familiar with the target language, they continue to make the same mistakes in their actual performance.

### *C. Error Analysis*

A great number of linguists working in the field of second language acquisition have made an effort to recognize the typical errors that second language learners make when writing and have emphasized the significance of error analysis. By gaining an understanding of the causes of errors, teachers will be better able to identify the challenges faced by their students and implement effective instructional methods to improve the learning experience of English as a foreign language student (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012). It was in the 1970s that Corder and his colleagues laid the groundwork for the study of error analysis, which is a subfield of applied linguistics. In 1967, Corder made the case that errors give teachers feedback, reveal to them the effectiveness of their lesson plans and methods, and let them know which areas of the curriculum need further work. In accordance with the assertion made by Corder (1967), error analysis is a crucial data source for educators and can be regarded as an essential instrument for language instruction. Corder (1967) deemed the study of errors to be a necessary component of applied linguistics, which provides evidence to support the findings of contrastive investigations. Because it was able to provide predictions of contrastive analysis that were either correct or invalid and because it offered information about the psycholinguistic processes involved in language learning (Corder, 1981), error analysis evolved into and became an experimental technique. As a consequence of this, error analysis was defined as an experimental method for testing the transfer theory, which provides information regarding the psycholinguistic processes involved in language learning (Corder, 1981). Ellis (1985), who was in agreement with Corder (1981) regarding the significance of error analysis for educators and researchers, outlined the process as a process that entails the collection of learner language samples, the identification of selection errors, the description of these errors, the classification of these errors according to their hypothesized causes, and the evaluation of the severity of these errors.

Error analysis is a method developed in the field of linguistics that aims to discover, analyze, categorize, and explain the inexpedient patterns that are produced by second language learners. Error analysis gives teachers information about

what students are capable of and reveals the level of competence that students have achieved (Sinha et al., 2009). In response to the increased interest in error analysis research, academics working in the field of second language acquisition provided a substantial number of definitions, which are detailed in the following text (Sinha et al., 2009).

According to James (1986), error analysis is an approach that compares the language generated by learners of a second language to the standard norms of the target language in an effort to provide an explanation for the errors that are present within the language of the learners of the second language. In later years, he referred to blunders as “unsuccessful language” in order to identify them. In his explanation of error analysis, Brown (2000) defined it as “the process to observe, analyze, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second languages and then reveal the systems operated by learner”.

Error analysis was an approach that was defined by Gass and Selinker (2008) as a method for examining and explaining errors that were made by second language learners. Error analysis has been challenged by a number of scholars due to its unwavering reliance on errors and its exclusion of information such as accurate language, complexity, and linguistic diversity. This criticism is made regardless of the efficiency that has been detailed above. In addition, it is frequently difficult to differentiate between errors and mistakes and to pinpoint the underlying causes of each. Because of this, they suggested that in order to acquire a whole picture of a learner’s linguistic behavior, it is necessary to take into account both errors and non-errors (Gass & Selinker, 2008). A type of linguistic research known as error analysis compares errors produced in the target language and in the teaching language itself, with an emphasis on the errors that students make (Sawalmeh, 2013). Khansir and Pakdel (2014) distinguished between error analysis and common analysis. They brought out the significance of both the first language and the learning mechanisms that students employ when they are making mistakes. Additionally, they emphasized the significance of having a clear understanding of the distinction between errors and mistakes when it comes to the process of discovering and evaluating errors.

#### *D. Error Classification*

Gavigan and Citarella (2006) identify twenty typical errors found in English writing. These include errors related to subject-verb agreement, verb tense, pronoun-antecedent agreement, noun agreement, pronoun case, idioms, parallel structure, comparisons of adjectives/adverbs, ambiguity/indefinite referent, redundancy, wordiness, double negatives, misplaced modifiers, dangling modifiers, commonly confused words, usage of “who/which/that” pronoun shifts, sentence structure, and active/passive voice. Ferris (2014) categorizes writing errors into four types. The initial category comprises morphological errors, encompassing issues with verbs (such as tense, form, and subject-verb agreement) and errors associated with nouns (including articles/determiners and noun endings). The second category is lexical errors, encompassing problems with word choice, word form, informal usage, idiom errors, and pronoun errors. The third type encompasses syntactic errors, covering issues with sentence structure, run-ons, and fragments. The final category is mechanical errors, involving problems with punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.

The error analysis in the present study involves the following common types of errors:

##### *(a). Lexical Errors*

The lexical category includes errors in the usage of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, modals, and copulas. A noun is a lexical category that denotes the designation of an individual, location, object, occurrence, or concept. A verb is a linguistic unit that conveys a certain condition of existence or activity. An adjective is a modifier that describes nouns and pronouns, while an adverb is a modifier that modifies verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. To indicate competence, ability, or necessity, one uses a modal, an auxiliary verb. In English grammar, the copula meaning “to be” is by far the most common.

##### *(b). Syntactic Errors*

In relation to this issue, article errors might have an impact on the syntactic category. This phenomenon occurs because English language learners may occasionally omit the usage of articles as a result of influence from their native language. Furthermore, the absence of articles in a text serves as evidence for the direct application of first language grammar rules to second language ones. This discrepancy arises from the presence of definite and indefinite articles in English, whereas languages such as Vietnamese do not possess a distinct word for the definite article. The arrangement of words is a crucial matter when examining syntactic issues. Atmaca (2016) found that learners frequently make numerous unintended syntactic interlingual errors in relation to word order when constructing short sentences. These errors are believed to happen because of the influence of their first language habits.

##### *(c). Morphological Errors*

Practically, another phrase that can be used instead of morphological errors is grammatical errors. Most of the errors include things like improper use of tenses, forms (singular and plural), negative markers, participle endings, and subject-verb agreement. Upon scrutinizing this region, three often encountered errors include ones in tense markers, multiple and singular markers, and subject-verb agreement. The significant disparities between first language and second language can be attributed to sentence structures, incorrect verb forms, and the use of tense indicators, as mentioned by Lastres-López and Manalastas in 2017. Most people believe that while learning a second language, first-language learners make the most common error: failing to properly align subjects and verbs. In addition, students’

inability to effectively use English morphology and the detrimental influence of their mother language are linked to the absence of plural forms. Nevertheless, learners do not readily perceive plurality indications, despite a discernible tendency to mistakenly miss the plural morpheme 's', even when unambiguous plural quantifiers are present.

*(d). Orthographical Errors*

Orthographical errors, often known as mechanical errors, mostly pertain to spelling, capitalization, and pronunciation. Orthographical errors typically produce strings that are phonologically identical or have a strong resemblance to the proper ones. Orthographical errors are particularly common in proper names, rare words, and borrowed terms. Spelling errors can be considered cognitive errors that occur when a person replaces the right spelling of a term with an incorrect one due to a lack of knowledge, forgetfulness, or misunderstanding. Similarly, Briesmaster and Etchegaray (2017) emphasize that native speakers of any language primarily possess implicit knowledge of the orthographic structure of words. As native speakers, they are typically presumed to possess the ability to accurately spell or pronounce words without consciously understanding the underlying rules governing their spelling or pronunciation.

*(e). Paragraph Errors*

According to Briesmaster and Etchegaray (2017), there are approximately five paragraphs of errors that are frequently seen in sentences. To begin, a significant number of students compose paragraphs as small as one to three sentences. On the other hand, this is not correct because a paragraph signifies the completion of an idea, and it is not possible to reach a conclusion with just two or three phrases. This volume can be utilized to convey some problem or notion, and in order to accomplish this, one must stretch a paragraph to at least four to five full sentences that are intricate. Sentences that are too short are not counted. Second, another common error is creating paragraphs that are excessively lengthy. Students need to keep in mind that their essays will be viewed by someone when they are writing them. In most cases, a reader loses focus and is unable to follow the idea after eight to nine sentences have been written. Long sentences are a source of frustration for readers since they distract them from the main purpose of the paragraph, which in turn makes reading dull and uninteresting. Another potential issue is the absence of the structure, which is the third point. It is possible for students to think of a paragraph as a very focused and brief essay that is dedicated to a single little idea. In light of this, it is necessary for each paragraph to contain the following sentences: the introductory statement, numerous sentences from the main body, and the concluding sentence. In the fourth place, another common problem that occurs in paragraphs is the absence of a topic sentence. When writing a paragraph, each student should think of a particular idea that they are going to discuss within the paragraph. Similar to a thesis statement in an essay, a topic sentence in a paragraph serves the same purpose. It illustrates the fundamental concept of a unit. It is important for students to keep this in mind and to ensure that their essays are centered on the topic phrases. Whenever this occurs, the paragraphs will be more concentrated. In conclusion, another issue that arises while creating a paragraph procedure is the lack of subject matter emphasis. In the event that students do not arrange the essay and do not adhere to this approach, each paragraph may consist of a variety of thoughts that are not connected to one another. On the other hand, if students compose paragraphs that are of the required length, include a topic sentence, and structure their paragraphs in a suitable manner, the paragraph will naturally be focused on a specific theme.

A paragraph consists of three major structure parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). The primary idea of the paragraph is expressed in the topic sentence. In addition to naming the paragraph's subject, it restricts the topics to one or two that can be fully covered in a single paragraph. The controlling idea refers to the particular location. The topic sentence is developed by supporting sentences. In other words, they provide justifications, instances, data, figures, and quotations to elucidate the main idea. A paragraph usually ends with a concluding sentence that highlights key ideas for readers to keep in mind. A good paragraph has the components of unity and coherence in addition to its three structural parts. Paragraph errors in the present study refer to paragraphs that do not meet the above criteria.

### III. METHODS

#### *A. Research Setting*

The research is conducted at a secondary school in Hanoi, Vietnam. There are seven teachers of English in this school. All the teachers graduated from universities of foreign languages. They are good teachers and have taught English for years. Grade 7 students at the secondary school are learning basic English with the new text book named *Tiếng Anh 7* [English 7] by Van et al. (2020). This text book is theme-based, which includes 12 units and 4 Test Yourself sections. Each unit has its own topics and is divided into 7 sections: Getting started, A closer look 1, A closer look 2, Communication, Skills 1, Skills 2, and Looking back. The book focuses on writing paragraphs (descriptive paragraphs) for writing skills.

#### *B. Research Design*

The study was designed to examine a sample of 43 grade 7 students at a secondary school in Hanoi, Vietnam. The quantitative approach was used to categorize and describe the errors in the written discourse of the participants, based on Ferris's (2014) error analysis model. The written errors identified in the participants' tests were divided into (1)

lexical errors, (2) syntactic errors, (3) morphological errors, (4) orthographical errors, and (5) paragraph errors. In this study, three writing tests were carried out from October to December 2023.

### C. Participants

The study sample comprised 43 grade 7 students from a class at a secondary school in Hanoi, Vietnam. This was done during the academic year of 2023-2024, with a total of 43 individuals from a class. Regarding the duration of learning, learners have been studying English since the third grade. In terms of proficiency, they often encompass fundamental grammatical categories and cultivate foundational abilities in reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Typically, the entire group had similar characteristics in terms of age, cultural background, and proficiency in both their native language and English. In general, their proficiency in English is at a pre-intermediate level.

### D. Data Collection

The researchers employed the quantitative method in this study, utilizing three writing tests as a viable means to obtain insights into the study's issues. The writing assessments consist of three paragraph writing tests whose topics come from the text book:

Writing test 1: Write a paragraph of about 100 words about the eating habits in your area.

Writing test 2: Write a paragraph of about 100 words about the traffic problems in your town or city.

Writing test 3: Write a paragraph of about 100 words about your favorite film.

The researchers explained the purpose of the writing tests as the progress tests as usual so as to ascertain that the participants would seriously take the writing tests. The participants were instructed to write within a designated 30-minute timeframe.

### E. Research Procedure

The participants took three writing tests at different times during the 2023-2024 school year. After the tests were collected, the researchers read the students' writings and classified their errors according to the research design. Next, quantitative data was imported into Excel. The error categories made by the students were added up, expressed as percentages, and shown in tables.

## IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Paragraph Writing Test 1

The students completed the first test by submitting paragraphs as per its requirement. Table 1 shows that the total number of errors recognized across 43 students was 584, meaning that each student made an average of 13.58 errors in writing a paragraph for this test, with syntactic errors (25.00%) being the most common type, followed by lexical errors (23.80%) and orthographical errors (23.29%), then paragraph errors (19.01%) and morphological errors (8.90%).

TABLE 1  
DISTRIBUTION OF THE ERRORS IN PARAGRAPH WRITING TEST 1  
(N: Number of Errors)

Lexical errors		Syntactic errors		Morphological errors		Orthographical errors		Paragraph errors		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
139	23.80	146	25.00	52	8.90	136	23.29	111	19.01	584	100

### B. Paragraph Writing Test 2

Out of a total of 43 students, 41 completed and submitted their paragraphs. The remaining 2 students left their papers blank or only wrote an incomplete sentence and were therefore excluded from the analysis. The total number of errors recognized across 41 students who completed the test (out of 43) was 581. Each of the students made an average of 14.17 errors for this test. It can be seen from Table 2 that there were 145 lexical errors (accounting for 24.96%), 138 orthographical errors (accounting for 23.75%), 130 syntactic errors (accounting for 22.38%), 96 paragraph errors (accounting for 16.52%), and 72 morphological errors (accounting for 12.39%). For the second test, lexical errors were the most prevalent, and the students made the fewest paragraph errors.

TABLE 2  
DISTRIBUTION OF THE ERRORS IN PARAGRAPH WRITING TEST 2

Lexical errors		Syntactic errors		Morphological errors		Orthographical errors		Paragraph errors		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
145	24.96	130	22.38	72	12.39	138	23.75	96	16.52	581	100

### C. Paragraph Writing Test 3

For the last test, students were asked to write a paragraph of about 100 words about their favorite film. There were 42 students taking the test. One student was absent since he was ill. 42 eligible paragraphs were submitted and available for analysis. Across these 42 paragraphs, a total of 652 errors were identified, resulting in an average of 15.90 errors per

student. This was the highest average error rate across the three tests given. The high error rate may be attributable to the significantly longer length of the paragraphs produced for this task, as the prompt asked students to write about their favorite film—a topic they likely have strong personal feelings and opinions about, unlike the previous prompts focused on meals and traffic problems. As shown in Table 3, the most common error types were orthographical (26.38%), followed by lexical (24.85%), syntactic (20.86%), paragraph (14.57%), and morphological (13.34%) errors.

TABLE 3  
DISTRIBUTION OF THE ERRORS IN PARAGRAPH WRITING TEST 3

Lexical errors		Syntactic errors		Morphological errors		Orthographical errors		Paragraph errors		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
162	24.85	136	20.86	87	13.34	172	26.38	95	14.57	652	100

#### D. General Findings and Analysis

The study examined various types of errors made by Vietnamese 7th graders learning English, including lexical, syntactic, morphological, orthographic, and paragraph errors. In three tests, there was an average of 14.42 errors per paragraph. The findings in Table 4 indicate that the most prevalent errors of the participants include lexical (24.55%), syntactic (22.67%), and orthographical (24.55%) errors. There were fewer problems in paragraph structure and morphology in all three tests (16.62% and 11.61%, respectively).

TABLE 4  
DISTRIBUTION OF THE ERRORS IN 3 PARAGRAPH WRITING TESTS

Lexical errors		Syntactic errors		Morphological errors		Orthographical errors		Paragraph errors		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
446	24.55	412	22.67	211	11.61	446	24.55	302	16.62	1817	100

Lexical errors, particularly those related to nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, were prevalent due to differences between the Vietnamese and English languages. Noun errors involved issues with pluralization, proper noun usage, and singular/plural confusion. Verb errors included incorrect forms, subject-verb agreement problems, tense inconsistencies, and auxiliary/modal misuse. Adjective errors encompassed the wrong form usage, irregular comparative/superlative errors, and misplacement or omission. Adverb errors involved incorrect forms, misplacement, and confusion with adjectives.

Orthographic errors were observed in the incorrect use or omission of punctuation in "a.m." and "p.m."; capitalization errors; spelling errors; and improper use of spaces. Syntactic errors, such as incorrect subject-verb-object arrangement, modifier misplacement, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, etc., were also common. These errors hindered clear communication and comprehension. Mainly due to differences in English and Vietnamese grammar, teachers need to clearly explain the differences and irregular cases and let students apply them in their exercises.

Paragraph errors appeared with the lack of coherence and logical flow within paragraphs, the absence of clear topic sentences or concluding sentences, and the lack of appropriate transitional phrases and connective words to link ideas. Morphological errors included improper tense markers, incorrect verb forms, singular/plural marker issues, subject-verb agreement problems, etc. Morphological errors appear less frequently, demonstrating that students have acquired knowledge about tenses, number agreements, and verb forms.

#### E. Implications

It can be seen from the findings that the Vietnamese secondary learners still make lots of common errors in writing English paragraphs due to the differences between English and Vietnamese. This implies that secondary school teachers should focus much more on students' writing skills by guiding them to use correct grammar, vocabulary, and context. Particularly, teachers should pay attention to the most common errors relating to syntax, lexis, and spelling to help their students avoid making them.

English teachers could revamp the way they really teach English writing by focusing on issues that students are interested in and concerned about and immersing students in writing exercises like self-editing, peer-blind correction, or critiquing classmates' paragraph writing. To raise students' awareness of how to address their frequent and chronic writing errors, teachers' follow-up written corrective comments are crucial.

In addition to educators, the school can help students develop their writing abilities by planning English composition competitions or providing information on national and international tests. Furthermore, in order to provide English teachers with the tools and techniques they need to support and mentor their students in writing, trainings and observations aimed at enhancing their writing practices are also required.

English teachers in secondary schools should use process writing approaches to help students write more successfully and build their writing skills as a result. Students gradually master writing skills when they get habituated to the process writing technique, even if it takes a lot of work and effort.

## V. CONCLUSION

The types of errors that grade 7 students made in the investigation are lexical errors, syntactic errors, morphological errors, orthographical errors, and paragraph errors. Lexical, syntactic, and orthographical errors are greatly committed by the students. Therefore, it is evident that secondary students, especially 7<sup>th</sup> graders, are not good at writing English paragraphs. Simple errors, including poor subject-verb agreement, improper noun, verb, adjective, adverb, modal, and copula usage, as well as misspellings, are also frequently made by the participants. By examining three writing assessments, it is also evident that a number of students struggle with composing English paragraphs. They are unable to understand the fundamental arrangement and structure of paragraphs, which results in a lack of cohesion, coherence, and unity.

Vietnamese secondary students' English learning is most likely hampered by variations in syntax, vocabulary, and sentence structure between Vietnamese and English. This is demonstrated by the frequency of lexical errors (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) and syntactic faults (sentence structure). Teachers can help these students improve their English proficiency by focusing on grammatical education, emphasizing irregular instances, and offering adequate practice opportunities. Additionally, implementing explicit instruction, targeted practice opportunities, contrastive analysis between Vietnamese and English structures, and providing clear explanations and examples are crucial in mitigating lexical, syntactic, morphological, and orthographic errors. Engaging students in interactive exercises, visual aids, collaborative activities, and authentic materials can reinforce their understanding and application of English grammar and usage.

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**Le Vien Lan Huong**, who received her Ph.D. in Linguistics in 2023 from Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, is currently a lecturer of English at Vietnam Military Medical University. She has written multiple scientific papers published domestically and internationally. Her major research interests include Cognitive Linguistics, Contrastive Linguistics, and English Language Teaching and Learning.

**Ngo Thi Tuyet**, who received her Master's degree in Linguistics in 2015, is currently a lecturer at Vietnam Military Medical University. She has published multiple scientific works in the field of linguistic studies.

**Do Thi Thuy Van** is a lecturer of English at Trade Union University, Hanoi, Vietnam. She received her Bachelor's Degree in English Language Teaching from University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU-HN), her Master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from Southern New Hampshire University, The United States of America, and her Ph.D. in Linguistics from Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam. Her research interests include Contrastive Linguistics and English Language Teaching and Learning.

**Tran Hong Ngoc** is a teacher at Trung Nhi Secondary School, Hai Ba Trung district, Hanoi, Vietnam, and currently a master student at Hanoi Open University. She received her Bachelor's Degree in English from University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU-HN). Her research interests include Contrastive Linguistics, and English Language Teaching and Learning.