

## ***Full Length Research***

# **Assessing the Common Errors on Essay Writing Level: In Case of Second Year English Language and Literature Students at Kebri Dehar University**

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The focus of this study was on the investigation of the common errors on essay writing level. The participants were second year English language and literature students as well as English instructors of the department. The students were selected by using available sampling technique and the instructors using random sampling technique. To conduct this study, the data were collected from both students and instructors using questionnaire. Interview and test. The data were analyzed by qualitative and quantitative methods. Based on the findings of this study the students are not interested to write an essay and they are weak in practicing to improve their essay Writing. The errors of the students found from their test are spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, fragment, subject-verb agreement, and the weakness of creating thesis statement and weakness in creating introductory paragraph.

**Keywords:** transcends, global language, Military power, political power, economic power.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

According to colpeper (1997) a language was called a "global language "when it achieved the official position and education preference in every nation, that language would finally came to be used by more people than any other language. Alamirew, G. (2 000). The essential reason to might a language global or international is the power of its people. The power includes the power military, politic and economic. Military power, political power and economic power were the three essential

factors to might a language global and to keep its status.

Reynolds (1983) states that many students in universities, colleges and in other work places after graduation, have lacked of ability to communicated. Specifically, the four language skills, namely, listening, speaking, writing and reading.

As education the important of essay writing was it involved or helps students to have critical thinking which was a purpose full and reflective analysis used to reached conclusion. To demonstrated understanding of material that essays serve as a tool test the students'

knowledge by assessed their arguments, analysis and specific examples.

According to Brown, (1986). It also helps the students to structure and organized any written material. The another values of learning how to wrote a good essay transcends University learning in to real life applications outside of academic things

Langan (2005) states that to communicated effectively, writer must constantly adjust their writing essay or text. Although writing was processed that involves a series of steps, most students failed in writing in English language and this leads them to wrong communicating.

Schulz, C. (1992). The purpose of essay writing was to persuade, entertain, and inform the targeted readers. Aargaw, S. (1 995). When we looked at different kinds of articles that we found in a magazine and newspaper, each type has its own particular purpose and characteristics, some articles would be written to inform some were to entertain, some to persuade. When we wrote essay we must match the topic and the purpose of the type of essay that must effectively expressed the idea. Memoring, Dean. (1990). In order to achieve the objective essay writing the wrote should constructed essay with clear disciplined way of thinking of words and phrases that were accurate for the topic. The choice of word and phrase for particular topic in a particular essay would be significant to make an essay would be organized to have unity and coherence.

According to Langan (2005) many students failed to communicate their idea through writing because the students would be affected by different errors which cause to their failing at essay writing. Many researchers have been conducted research, for example G/Mariam (2001) conducted research about paragraph writing skill in Addis Ababa moreover, Abdulrablm Mohamed (2012) conducted research about sentence writing skill. Based on the founded of this study the researcher has gave conclusion and recommendation. The founded show that some error appeared in the student's paragraph writing were comma splice, faulty parallelism, choppy sentence, shift in point of view and faulty agreement So, this problem motivated the researcher in order to assessed the common errors in essay writing in the case of second year students of English language and literature in Kebri Dehar University.

The general objective of this study would be assessed the common errors which students make while essay writing.

The specific objectives of this study would be;

- To identified the common errors committed by the students.
- To found out the problem that affect students' essay

writing. This study answers the following research questions

- What were the common errors that students commuted?
- What was the problem that affected students' essay writing?

## METHODOLOGIES

This section dealt with the research design, subject of the study, sampling techniques, data collection tools data analysis and interpretation.

### Research Design

Descriptive survey design was employed in this study. As the nature of the study is describing teachers 'practices in teaching essay writing and to explore to what extent they use proper essay writing and descriptive survey design is felt to be appropriate.

### The Target Population of the Study

The target population of this study was second year English language and literature students in Kebri Dahar University and English Instructors. The reason the researcher selected second year students is because the researchers believe that it is obvious that first year students may do errors simply because they are not well aware on essay writing for that more or it is new to them and the researcher believe that second year students took the course of essay writing as a major course, so it is dominantly seen making errors when writing an essay. Considering this the researcher selected second year students.

### Sample and Sampling Technique of the study

The total number of students is 28. So, the researcher took all of them as samples using a Comprehensive sampling technique. As their number was manageable, though one teacher, in the department, are delivering the writing course, the researcher took one of them who taught the writing courses to the students using purposive sampling technique. The researcher took one instructors as a sample who taught the writing courses to the students specially those who taught major courses using purposive sampling technique.

### Instruments of data collection

To get reliable and effective data from students and instructors the researcher used instrument questionnaire, interview, and test.

**Questionnaire: -**

The researcher prepared both open ended for the questions, which needs explanation and close ended for the questions, which are answered saying yes or no and so on. It was designated for both students and instructors.

**Interview**

Interview was used to get depth width information about questions, which were asked using structure interview .as more information is needed from the students, it was only for them.

**Test on Essay writing**

This is the most effective and reliable instrument of data collection. It was used to know the errors directly from the essays were written by the student. It was also done by giving text to students to write an essay in one of the giving topics. The given topics were five in each of essay type and the researcher analyzed 11 essays.

**Method of data analysis**

The data, which was collected from primary and secondary sources, is analyzed using qualitative and quantitative method of data analysis. This means, the researcher analyzed the data, which was collected by questionnaire and tests in term of percentage using quantitative method. Whereas the data collected through interview was also analyzed using qualitative method of data analysis.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

This chapter presents and analysis the data collected through questionnaire and test from students and interview from both students and teachers. So this chapter treats the analysis of students' responses for the questionnaires in the first part followed by teachers' response. The students' test and interview is also in the second part. The analysis is presented using table and Percentage, but the analysis of students' interview is in the qualitative form.

**Analysis and interpretation of students' questionnaire**

**Analysis of students' close- ended questions**

**Table 1.** students' response to their interest essay writing.

| No | item                                 | Response | No of Response | Percentage |
|----|--------------------------------------|----------|----------------|------------|
| 1  | Are you interested in essay writing? | Yes      | 16             | 57.%       |
|    |                                      | No       | 12             | 42.%       |
|    |                                      | Total    | 28             | 100%       |

Source: survey own (questionnaire, 2013) E.C

As it is stated in the above table 57. % of students responded that they do not have interest to write an essay. But 42. %of the respondents replied that they have interest to write an essay.

Generally, this table shows that most of the students have no interest to write an essay. This is because the student's interest was to study other fields. They joined the department by the influence of the university.

**Table 2.** Students response whether they attend basic writing skill course properly or not

| No | Item   | Response | Number of respondent | percentage |
|----|--|----------|----------------------|------------|
| 2. | Do you attend basic writing skill course properly? | Yes      | 18                   | 64.2%      |
|    |  | no       | 10                   | 35.8%      |
|    |  | Total    | 28                   | 100%       |

Source: survey own (questionnaire, 2013) E.C

According to the above table 64.2 % of the students answered that they attend basic writing course properly. 35.8 % of the students. Replied that they do not attend basic writing skill course properly. Therefore, the researcher understood that the majority of students have attended basic writing skill course properly.

**Table 3.** Student's response on essay writings practically lectures class.

| No | Item  | Response | Number of response | percentage |
|----|---|----------|--------------------|------------|
| 3. | Do you learn essay writing practically in your lecture class? | Yes      | 15                 | 53.6 %     |
|    |   | No       | 13                 | 46.4%      |
|    |   | Total    | 28                 | 100%       |

Source: survey own (questionnaire,2013) E.C

As it indicated in table 3 the majority 53.6% of students said that learn essay writings practically in their lecture class. Whereas 46. % of students do not learn essay writing practically in their lecture class.

**Table 4.** Students' response on the English is your second language.

| No | Item  | Response | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|----|---|----------|-----------------------|------------|
| 4. | As English is your foreign language, does it have any effect on your essay writing? | Yes      | 20                    | 71.4%      |
|    |   | No       | 8                     | 28.6%      |
|    |   | Total    | 28                    | 100%       |

Source: survey own (questionnaire, 2013) E.C

According to the above table 4 the majority 71.4% of the respondent stated that English is their foreign language. So, it effects on their essay writing while they remained 28.6%of students responded that even though English is their foreign language, it does not have any effect on their essay writing.

**Table 5.** students' response whether they ask other for comment on their essay writing or not.

| No | item  | response | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|----|---|----------|-----------------------|------------|
| 5  | Do you ask others for example your friends or instructors to commit your essay writing? | Yes      | 11                    | 39.2%      |
|    |   | No       | 17                    | 60.8%      |
|    |   | Total    | 28                    | 100%       |

Source: survey own (questionnaire, 2013) E.C

As the above table, showed that, 60.8% of the respondents said they do not ask others. For comment their essay writing, but. 39.2% of the respondents said that they ask others, for comment, so most of the students do not ask others for commit on essay writing. This is because they assume themselves as if they are right.

**Table 6** student's response on essay writing skill in the class room.

| No | Item   | Response   | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|----|--|------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 6. | How often do you learn essay writings in the class room? | Always     | 3                     | 10.7%      |
|    |  | Usually    | -                     |            |
|    |  | Some thing | 16                    | 57.1%      |
|    |  | Rarely     | 9                     | 32.2%      |
|    |  | Never      | -                     |            |
|    |  | Total      | 28                    | 100%       |

Source: survey own (questionnaire, 2013) E.C

As can be understood from the above table 57.1% of the respondents answered that they learn essays some times. And 32.2% of the students replied that they learn essay rarely. And 10.7% of the students responded that her or she learn easy always therefore, majority of the respondents learn essay writing in the class some time.

**Table 7.** Students' response about family influence to learn English in break time.

| No | Item   | Response | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|----|--|----------|-----------------------|------------|
| 7  | Do your family influence you to learn English in break time? | Yes      | 10                    | 35.7%      |
|    |  | No       | 18                    | 64.3%      |
|    |  | Total    | 28                    | 100%       |

Source: survey own (questionnaire, 2013) E.C

According to the above table7. 64.3% of the respondents stated that their family does not influence them to learn English in break time. 35.7% of the respondents that their family influenced them to learn English in break time, so the researcher understood that most of the respondents replied that their family does not influenced their children to learn English in break time.

**Table 8.** student responses whether they have back ground competence in essay writing or not

| No | Item  | Response | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|----|---|----------|-----------------------|------------|
| 8  | Do you have background academic competence in essay writing | Yes      | 10                    | 35.7%      |
|    |   | No       | 18                    | 64.3%      |
|    |   | Total    | 28                    | 100%       |

Source: survey own (questionnaire,2013) E.C

According to table 8, 64.3% of the respondents said that they have not back ground competence in essay writings where as 35.7%of the student replied that they have back ground competence in essay writing. From this result, the researcher concludes that most of the respondents have not background competences in essay writing.

### Analysis of Student Open- Ended Questions

1, Does your family influence you to write in break time?

The majority of the students stated that their family does not influence them because they do not know how it is necessarily for them in addition. The family has lack of awareness, low economy and lack of language academy around the area are other reasons the students put why their family does not influence them to learn English in break time.

2. If you have not back ground academic competence in essay writing, please specify your reason?

Most of the respondents said that they haven't back ground competence because they have not talent of writing. Encouragement to write, and low awareness about its usefulness in lower grades. In addition to this the students underline that they were consideration English only as means of communication they sold that it is only after joining the university or college that they know English has others benefits beyond communication such as literature, linguistic and, the like.

### Analysis and Interpretation of Instructors' Questionnaire

#### Analysis of instructor's close-ended questions

**Table 9**, instructor's response whether their students have problem or not to express their idea in English.

| No | Item  | Number of response |   | Percentage |
|----|---|--------------------|---|------------|
| 1  | Do students have problem to express their ideas when they write in English? | Yes                | 2 | 100%       |
|    |   | No                 | - |            |
|    |   | Total              | 2 | 100%       |

Source: survey own (questionnaire, 2013) E.C

According to the above table 9, 100% of the instructors said that their students have problems in expressing their idea when they write in English. This implies that students have problem to express their idea through writing in English. This is related to the finding in the students' questionnaire and interview with their test which shows that the students have problem in expressing their idea in English.

#### Analysis of instructors open ended questions

1. If students have problem in expressing their ideas when they write English, please specify what those problem are?

According to the responses of the instructors, the problem of their students in writing is lack of basic knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, enough knowledge about the techniques used to write an essay, proper sentences construction, spellings, computations, punctuation. nonuse of transitions words. And ignorance of introductory technique and problem of starting clear thesis statement. They also responded that the students do not follow the steeps to write an essay such as free writing, baring storming, organizing editing and revising.

2. If they have problems, what kind of solution do you give them to minimize these problems?

The instructors suggested that they advise their students to read frequently, to use authentic materials to see how language is used in a real context. To make practices supporting by the proverb which show that practice makes perfect. The another advice of the instructors to their students is listening English news, reading English newspapers, magazines, novels, short stories and the spelling of words together with their meaning and using the words. It is also the instructor suggestion that students have to do above stated solution to improve their essay writing ability.

3. Why do you think students write make error in their essay writing?

According to the instructor's response, making error is natural but because of being uninterested to writing English and lack of making practice during their high school life the problem become worth. In addition to this the teachers emphasized the students low habit of reading as, another reason for making errors in their essay writing, not only this but also because they read and write only for the purpose of getting good marks rather than knowledge, they make mistake in their essay writing.

### Analysis of student's test

**Table 10.** result interval of student's test

| No | problem        | Response        | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|----------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | Spelling       | Error           | 4         | 80%        |
|    |                | Non-error total | 1         | 20%        |
|    |                |                 | 5         | 100%       |
| 2. | Capitalization | Error           | 2         | 40%        |
|    |                | Non-error       | 3         | 60%        |
|    |                | Total           | 5         | 100%       |
| 3. | Punctuation    | Error           | 4         | 80%        |
|    |                | Non-error       | 1         | 20%        |
|    |                | Total           | 5         | 100%       |
| 4. | Fragment       | Error           | 2         | 40%        |
|    |                | Non-error       | 3         | 60%        |
|    |                | Total           | 5         | 100%       |
| 5. | Comma-Splice   | Error           | 3         | 60%        |
|    |                | Non-error       | 2         | 40%        |
|    |                | Total           | 5         | 100%       |

|     |                                 |           |   |      |
|-----|---------------------------------|-----------|---|------|
| 6.  | Subject-verb agreement          | Error     | 2 | 40%  |
|     |                                 | Non-error | 3 | 60%  |
|     |                                 | Total     | 5 | 100% |
| 7.  | Coherence                       | Error     |   | 80%  |
|     |                                 | Non-error | 4 | 20%  |
|     |                                 | Total     | 5 | 100% |
| 8.  | Unity                           | Error     | 4 | 80%  |
|     |                                 | Non-error | 1 | 20%  |
|     |                                 | Total     | 5 | 100% |
| 9   | Completeness                    | Error     | 3 | 60%  |
|     |                                 | Non-error | 2 | 40%  |
|     |                                 | Total     | 5 | 100% |
| 10. | Creating thesis statement       | Error     | 4 | 80%  |
|     |                                 | Non-error | 1 | 20%  |
|     |                                 | Total     | 5 | 100% |
| 11. | Creating introductory paragraph | Error     | 4 | 80%  |
|     |                                 | Non-error | 1 | 20%  |
|     |                                 | Total     | 5 | 100% |

Source: survey own (test, 2013)

As it is stated in the above table 10, 80% of the respondents have the problem of spellings but 20 % of the students have no problem spellings; this means most of the students have the problem of spellings. Example of spelling error committed by students 3 like to increases your professional's value and improves communication skill. Here the student used increases instead of increase and students 1 said learning English is use full because English is a worldwide language and a gain the student used learning instead of learning.

The 60% of the students have not the problem of capitalization but 40% of the students have the problem of capitalizations. So most of the students have not the problem of capitalization, some error of capitalization committed by the students like A good teacher, should be prepared enough her the students used A instead of in the middle of the sentences.

The 80% of the students have the problem of punctuationsand20%oftherespondents not the problem of punctuation. this means; most of the students have the problem of punctuation. The errors committed by the students are ignoring full stop in the end of complete

sentences and missing the comma between dependent and independent sentences. The 60% of the students do not have the problem of fragment and 20 % of the students have the problem of fragment. This shows that most of the students have not the problem of the fragment.

Some example of error committed by the student the second quality teaching students propels by students 6 instead of the second quality is teaching students proper

The 60% of the respondents have the problem of comma splice and 40 %of them does not have the problem of comma splice, so most of the students have the error of comma splice.

For example, one of the errors committed by the students of finally coming to class on times in the third quality of good teacher instead of finally coming class on time is third quality of good. Teacher

The 60% of the students have not the problem subject and verb agreements, but 40% of the students have this problem. This shows that most of the students have not this error.

From the error committed the students there are three



qualities of good teachers instead of there are three qualities of good teachers. Another problem is that 80% of the respondents have the problem in making their essays coherence but 20% of the respondents do not have the problem of making their essays coherent, so most of the students are not good on coherence. The 80% of the student's essays has unity but not the 20% of the students. This shows that the essay of most respondents have unity of the idea. The 60% of the responds essay has the characteristic of completeness. But 40% of the respondent's essays is not complete. The essay of most respondents has the characteristics of completeness. This means that someone of student test were finished or completed with their conclusion.

The 80% of the respondents have the problem of creating effective thesis statements but 20% of them do not have problem of creating an effective thesis statements. This shows that most of the students are unable to create an effective thesis statement in their essays writing. And 80% of the respondents are weak creating an introductory statement but 20% of the respondents are not weak in creating an introductory paragraph. So most of students are weak in creating an introductory paragraph.

### **Analysis of Student's Response Through Interview**

1. What are the sources of the problems when you write an essay?

As most of students said that the source of their problems are as English is their second language, lack of vocabulary, grammar knowledge, and background competence .and the other sources of their writing problem are their weak motivation toward the subject matter, and the teachers 'weak practice to encourage their students to write an essay.

2, what type of mistakes do you mostly commit when you write an essay?

According to the response of the students they make errors mostly like run on, comma splice, fragment, and mistake on subject verb argument, faulty parallelism, spelling, capitalization and punctuation .in addition to this they said that make mistakes such as missing topic sentences, supporting sentences to the main ideas and conclusion. they also said that they are weak in keeping adequate development, unit and coherence of an essay.

3, what do you think to improve your essay writing ability?

As the students suggested that if they make practice continuously for any essay writing in English and if they

read different strategies of writing skill, they can improve their writing ability .and also if they share ideas with their friends through writing and if they evaluate these texts they can improve their essay writing.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis and the interpreted data, this study has come up with different findings. These findings are that the students are not interested to write an essay and most of them do not have background competence of essay writing and they are weak in practicing to improve their essay writing in English.

Some of the errors committed by the students are spelling, capitalization, punctuation, of grammar errors, subject verb disagreement, coherence, the weakness of creating effective thesis statement, and weakness in creating introductory paragraph.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Since English is thought as foreign language in our country, everyone can realize that students as well as teachers may not express themselves in English accurately, even those learners who learn English as their first language have problem in teaching learning process.

However, major students of English are expected to have better writing skill as it is their profession. As a result, the researcher believe that it is more useful if the students use the necessary attempts to improve their essay writing as it is process that one can get improvement on.

Students should feel confident while they asked to write any writing in the class. As major students of English, they should have the habit of editing their written material. asking others for feedback or comment.

Finally, the researcher wants to recommend that students should start practicing essay writing in English from the class since writing is a skill which need further practice.

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