From Errors to Accuracy: Teacher-Peer Assistance as a Strategy for Enhancing Spelling and Punctuation in Writing

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I. Focus Area and Specific Problem

Writing is a productive skill that demands the systematic development and presentation of ideas, as well as the graphic representation of speech (Meisani, 2022). Writing is one of the four macro skills students have to master in the language learning process (Meisani, 2022). Speaking focuses on the fluency and pronunciation of the language whereas listening and reading help develop comprehension and vocabulary skills. Writing, on the other hand, helps improve analysis skills especially in decoding what and how to write (Callora and Suñas, 2023). Therefore, according to Genç-Ersoy and Göl-Dede (2022), of the four language skills, writing is the most complex and challenging to master because it involves cognitive, affective, physiological, and social processes. It was further stated that since writing is a complex activity which demands it is indisputable that teaching writing at all levels is essential and crucial, especially when it comes to the application of advanced skills that encompass literacies beyond alphabet writing.

The act of writing is not as easy as we speak, what's on the mind of an individual, and not as easy as picking up a pen to produce what the students want to write expressing their thoughts and feelings; thus, students must be able to think critically, to read and comprehend (Sabat & Slamet, 2019). This requires students to delve into a deeper understanding of what they write and how they compose. This has also been a crucial part among the students since it has become a cyclical problem.

An extensive body of literature outlined the characteristics necessary for successful writing, including good content, organization, language use, grammatical use, and mechanical consideration (Meisani, 2022). Unfortunately, the most common error made by students in their essays is language mechanics primarily in spelling and punctuation. This has been extensively

widened even in a simple three-sentence essay by a student. Wasilewsky (2022) defined mechanics as a term concerned with the rules of how to communicate clearly within a language's structural conventions. As much as grammar is important in writing, it is also essential to focus on the intricate mechanics of a language in order to better communicate ideas and pave the way for self-reflection, peer expression, and intellectual evaluation.

The predominant errors in writing, specifically in mechanics, have been observed in several studies. Learners recursively encounter challenges with writing errors, such as spelling and punctuation. According to a study by Delibas (2023), these errors have been aforementioned and evident with the students and could be even fossilized if this turns to "to the rigidity of mind and habit which is caused by continuous false input and methods." Additionally, it is essential to know and comprehend when and how particular punctuation will be used and to put correct spelling in written works. Therefore, it enables the students to re-track and rebuild new vocabulary learnings as this applies to its specific aspect. In another study conducted by Calonaga (2019, as cited in Meisani, 2022), the study revealed that the students displayed very poor skills in the effective use of grammar and writing mechanics. To this effect, more incidental lessons were incorporated to enhance their general language proficiency, focusing on such areas as punctuation, capitalization, and grammatical accuracy. For instance, Yuliah et al. (2019) also investigated the grammatical and mechanical errors made by students across the three levels of writing ability. Among the results of their study, it was found that the most common mechanical error was punctuation by around 21.6 %.

The Philippine educational system encompasses students' proficiency in verbal or written English, impacting both primary and tertiary education. Likewise, the New Enhance Basic Education Curriculum offers three English subjects: Reading and Writing Skills, English for

Academic Purposes, and Oral Communication in context. Paurillo (2019) emphasized that in the K-12 Curriculum, academic writing is a crucial part of the continuous summative assessments in most academic subjects in the senior high school which are, but not limited to essay writing, critique papers, project plans, marketing ideas, scientific inquiry process, draft experiments, and other such assessments. Moreover, Paurillo (2019) mentioned that students will not be admitted to college starting 2018 without having a satisfactory College Readiness Standards (CRS). This now entails the need for Senior High School students to master writing in order to handle college-level courses. However, in the study of Callora and Suñas (2023), it was found that the student's writing proficiency in public senior high schools is still developing wherein they were able to grasp knowledge but not enough to sustain learning. In the same study, results indicated that students use lower cases and upper cases incorrectly, as well as the proper use of apostrophes ('), commas (,), and periods (.). In further research by Hikmah, et al. (2019), the writing skills of Grade 8 students, it was identified that common errors in mechanics included punctuation marks such as commas, periods, colons, semicolons and capitalization of proper nouns and opposite for common nouns.

The aforementioned studies indicate the prevailing problems on writing competency, specifically in the mechanical skills of students, especially Filipino learners. The recursively emerging challenges stated above have been identified through observation in a classroom setting. Also, these problems are inevitable among students because of the need for more monitoring and supervision of individuals. With the present lack of local studies focusing on practical actions addressing the decline in writing skills, the present research will be designed and implemented to fill in the gaps in the literature by administering action research. Nonetheless, this study aims to produce a practical action to help learners improve their writing skills through cycles, starting by

creating a foundation and an application, expanding and refining the factors that present academic and personal learning responsibilities.

II. Description of the Current Situation

The study aims to counter the mechanical errors observed in Senior High School students, particularly punctuation and spelling found in their English written outputs. Pratiwi and Ramalia (2022) states that there were three punctuation errors found in students' writing: Omission, wherein there is an absence of punctuation in the student's writing; Addition, where students apply punctuation inappropriately; and Misinformation, where students commit both Omission and Addition in English Writing.

Similarly, in the Philippines, there were also categories of errors in punctuation that were found: Omission, which refers to leaving out words or letters in a sentence; Addition, which refers to including irrelevant elements in a text; Substitution, wherein incorrect words replaced an appropriate word, and Permutation wherein words in sentences were disorderly expressed (Gildore et al., 2023).

Spelling is the art of correctly manipulating or assembling words from letters. It is also one of the most fundamental aspects of a child's life to success. It helps him or her in reading and writing, and it gives the child the ability to be able to convey their thoughts into words (Soquita, 2021). Being able to spell correctly and efficiently paves the way to good communication with other people and it also aids readers and writers to be able to improve their comprehension skills as mentioned by Costa and Arias (2021).

Mechanical errors in writing are the common issues among the written output of senior high school students. In the study of Garduce and Baluyos (2023), Grade 12 students were shown to have spelling mistakes, misplaced punctuation and capitalization errors on their activities

particularly on their written application letters. These errors of writing can have underlying causes and one of them is the difficult nature of writing. According to Dunn (2021), the US National Assessment of Educational Progress for Writing found that 75% of learners cannot write at a basic level due to various reasons such as lack of focus, effect of technology, physiological reasons, etc.

According to Siskawati (2020), spelling errors were also evident in the higher grade levels aside from the lower grade levels. According to the study conducted by Omongos and Villarin (2023), spelling is one of the semantic errors made by first year Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) with specialization in English students in writing a descriptive essay. Out of the 86 respondents they tested, seven (7) were found to have reoccuring spelling errors in their essays.

This evident dilemma that was observed by the researchers poses issues regarding the readiness of Senior High School students in entering the tertiary level concerning their writing competency.

III. Causes of the Problem

There are several factors that affect the writing skills of students. In the study of Larasati (2015), factors that affect the writing skills of students include a lack of motivation in writing, a lack of knowledge about vocabulary, grammar, and organization, traditional or teacher-centered ways of teaching writing skills, and a lack of creative teaching media for teaching writing. According to Brookes and Grundy (2017), motivation is one of the crucial factors in improving writing skills. Motivated learners exhibit greater interest in writing, encouraging them to write more, participate in class activities, and demonstrate an eager interest in honing their writing abilities. In the article by Larasati (2015), he first discussed the first factor which is the lack of motivation in writing. He mentioned that students perceive writing as a difficult task; therefore, students are reluctant to do tasks related to writing. This low level of motivation results in students

having limited sources of ideas and it takes them a long time to brainstorm on concepts or ideas to write. According to Larasati (2015), the student's inability to generate ideas is due to their unwillingness to write.

Another factor that contributes to the writing inefficiency of students are vocabulary, grammar, and organization which are the essential aspects of writing effectively. Vocabulary, grammar, organization, spelling and punctuation are interconnected ensuring clear and effective communication. Vocabulary is one of the key aspects in effective writing that provides greater scope of words to express ideas. It influences spelling, as unfamiliar words are often harder to spell correctly. Larasati (2015) found that students are struggling to differentiate between the meaning of words, and there is a reliance on direct translation of words from dictionaries without considering the appropriate words for the context. Conversely, grammar is a crucial aspect of the English language that ensures communication that is clear and effective. He added that some serious problems associated with grammar were lack of ability to utilize the correct tenses. The study revealed that sometimes, students used the past tense to describe the present event and use the present tense to describe the past event. Furthermore, the students often misuse grammatical rules related to subject-verb agreement to change the tenses. They could not consider which tenses they shall use leading to an unstructured writing style. Moreover, these difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, and organization consume much of students' time finding the right words which results in slow writers.

The 21st century is an era of technological advancement in which many of its innovations contribute to the academic field, specifically digital platforms that enhance learning. With the advancement of technology and easy access to the internet, students can utilize various platforms to help with their academic endeavors. However, the convenience of technology comes with

disadvantages. According to Alhusban (2016), technology limits students' learning of English language skills, particularly in areas like grammar and writing. Many students rely on tools like spell check and auto-correct in programs such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, which can lead them to perceive skills like spelling, grammar, and sentence structure as less important, assuming technology will handle these aspects for them. When students use these programs to complete assignments, they may pay little attention to spelling since auto-correcting will address any errors.

Software tools with auto-correct functions reduce students' attention to mastering essential skills like spelling, grammar, and sentence structure, as they come to depend on technology to correct their errors. This dependence weakens their ability to fully express ideas and critically engage with their writing (Alhusban, 2016). By bypassing the learning process involved in writing, students lose out on understanding language rules, which stunts their development in both communication and critical thinking. Increasing reliance on technology for writing assignments appears to diminish students' overall writing abilities. As (Alhusban, 2016) argues, this dependence may interfere with students' capacity to independently develop ideas, as technology often masks misunderstandings that will otherwise encourage deeper learning.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is another factor that contributed to the learning of students. In an article by Lu (2023), he asserted that the pandemic has caused the Philippines to suffer from an extreme 'learning poverty' .According to the World Bank, lack of ability to read and understand simple text by age 10 is learning poverty. In a study conducted by Zhdanov et al. (2022), they found that students lose more information during the pandemic compared to the course of a normal school year.

The pandemic also affected the way teachers give writing instruction which contributes to enhanced writing skills. According to Merga et al. (2021), the disadvantage of the COVID-19 pandemic among teachers is having less opportunities to give feedback and provide a differentiated writing instruction. Differentiated learning and feedback is an integral part of learning which contributes to the development of students. Merga et al. (2021) further discussed that these components were not practiced during the pandemic consequently advancing the existing gap in writing performance.

Writing skills is one of the important skills that the learners need to grasp. With the description and causes presented, this study aims to provide substantial insights into how using a teacher-peer assistance method can improve students' writing skills, with a focus on mechanical aspects, particularly spelling and punctuation. By conducting an action research, it seeks to determine the effectiveness of this method in improving the writing skills of Grade 12 HUMSS students. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

- a. How is teacher-peer assistance method effective as an intervention in improving the writing skills of students, particularly:
 - a.1. Spelling
 - a.2 Punctuation
- b. Is there a significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test results in terms of:
 - b.1. Spelling
 - b.2 Punctuation

Chapter 2: Discussion

A. Description of the Plan

Creation of the Pre-Test

The researchers will create a feature article with 18 mechanical errors, mainly punctuation and spelling. This assessment aims to determine the student's capabilities to pinpoint mechanical errors in writing. A target which can help the researchers see the percentage of students who will be affected and impacted by this study.

Pre-Test

The researchers shall utilize a proofreading activity to be administered to grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students and conducted during the homeroom period of the chosen respondents. The identified errors will serve as the foundation for implementing the intervention.

A pre-test will be used because it is a valuable assessment tool that offers several benefits for both educators and learners. A pre-test is an assessment before starting a new topic or course which teachers can use to gain insights into students' prior knowledge and identify areas where additional instruction may be needed. As a result, teachers can use the pretest information to modify their teaching strategies and techniques adapting to the student's need for effective learning. According to the study conducted by Latimer et al. (2019), pretest is an effective way to expose learners to the content of a lesson that enhances retention. The pre-test was proved to be effective on written materials and on video-based learning as well. Moreover, the harder the pretest questions, the bigger the improvement on retention, which is crucial for the usage of grammar rules.

Teacher-Peer Assistance

After the pre-test, the corrected papers will be returned. Afterward, proofreading lessons will be conducted as an intervention in improving the use of punctuation and spelling in writing. The students will enrich their knowledge and improve their writing skills through individual and collaborative work with peers and teachers.

Peer and teacher assistance are valuable tools for improving the spelling and punctuation of students as peers can provide new point of views or fresh ideas, and catch errors that might be overlooked. Working and learning from each other can provide the support they need in developing a deeper understanding of how punctuations work as well as the right spelling of words. On the other hand, teachers can offer expert assistance like feedback on areas for improvement. Numerous studies have confirmed the positive effect of social support (Xie & Guo, 2022). Moreover, proofreading offers a detailed examination of the content of the text. Surface level errors, often overlooked, can be rectified. For this reason, proofreading is crucial and beneficial as it eliminates errors and ensures clarity, readability, and accuracy (Osmond, n.d).

Post- Test

The same activity utilized on the pre-test shall be administered again to serve as the basis for the result of the intervention implemented by the researchers. Through the utilization of the same tool, the researchers will determine the effectiveness of the intervention implemented on the chosen participants.

Post-tests are assessments given when a topic or lesson is finished testing the retained knowledge, developed skills, or deepened comprehension of the students. Hence, the teacher

would be able to indicate the student's strengths and weaknesses allowing for scaffolding, such as additional support or adjustment of instructions. Also, the post-test can also be a tool for motivating the students when it comes to accomplishments and the recognition of progress. The whole point of the pre and post-test is not for the guidance of students, or the content of the lesson, but also to monitor student progress and their growth (Holly, 2019).

B. Details of Implementation

The study will be conducted in an educational institution in Baguio City, Benguet. The target participants of the study will be the Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students during the school year 2024-2025. It will involve two classes consisting of at least 40 students. The strand of the participants in this study were chosen for the reason that writing is one of the most vital skills needed in the HUMSS strand considering that the HUMSS curriculum covers a variety of subjects that focus on the deeper understanding of culture, politics, literature, arts, and society. As such, learning activities are often directed towards the learners' development on oral communication, critical thinking, and comprehension of media and information. Hence, academic writing is now a vital part of the continuous summative assessments in most academic subjects in the senior high school which are, but not limited to essay writing, critique papers, project plans, marketing ideas, scientific inquiry process, draft experiments, and other such assessments (Paurillo, 2019).

The implementation of the research will be conducted from (January 2025) to (May 2025). The researchers will conduct an action research to find a solution regarding the learners' writing skills, particularly in spelling and punctuation, through a pre-test consisting of the mechanical aspects of grammar and structure, especially the errors in spelling and punctuation. Secondly, the researchers will have teacher-peer assistance, allowing the students to be catered to meticulously,

as this will enrich their knowledge and improve their writing skills. Lastly, implementing the posttest will serve as an intervention for the students seeking to know if there are changes or improvements in their writing skills.

C. Description of how to measure/evaluate/assess results and tools to be used

The study will utilize a quantitative method to determine the effectiveness of conducting a teacher-student assistance in improving the spelling and punctuation problems of Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students from an educational institution in Baguio City, Benguet. A purposive sampling will be used in the study wherein it involves choosing participants based on their relevance to the research objectives (Makwana et al., 2023). Additionally, a total population will be used in the data gathering of the study. Total population sampling is a type of purposive sampling that chooses an entire population with specific characteristics relevant to the research study (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.) It is applied in situations where the population is small and holds certain traits or qualities critical to the study's objectives. Researchers aim to collect all-inclusive insights and not miss any data considered important through including all the members of the population.

The pre-assessment will use a worksheet created by the researchers. Same tool will be used for the post-assessment. Pre-test is conducted before an intervention or treatment to measure the participants knowledge, attitudes, or behavior relevant to the study (Stratton, 2019; Alessandri et al., 2017). This tool will help the researchers to determine the percentages of spelling and punctuation errors of the participants. Post-test on the other hand is conducted after the treatment or intervention to measure any changes that may have resulted from the intervention (Alessandri et al., 2017; Malik & Alam, 2019).

The results of the pre-assessment and post-assessment shall undergo frequency and percentage. Afterwhich, it will be analyzed using descriptive and prescriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis involves organizing and summarizing data to provide a clear view of the results with the use of the different measures of central tendency (Manjunatha, 2019). Frequency analysis will help the researchers identify the occurrence of spelling and punctuation errors in the data set (Laurencelle & Cousineau, 2023). The study will also use prescriptive analysis wherein, the analysis will integrate possible actions based on the garnered data (Lepenioti et al., 2020). After the implementation, the results of both assessments will undergo data comparison in order to see the significant difference of the result to see the effectiveness of the intervention utilized.

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ENCIRCLE the punctuation errors.

Appendix

From Errors to Accuracy: Teacher-Peer Assistance as a Strategy for Enhancing Spelling and Punctuation in Writing

Name (optional): Grade and Strand:	Date:
Pre-Assessment	
Instructions: Read the feature article carefully. <u>UNDERLINE</u> the spellin	g errors and

Threads of Tragedy: Unweaving the deceptive cloth of Philippines' War on Drugs

A gripping, saga unfolds in the shadows of the Philippines' soaring skylines – the enigmatic

War on Drugs. Thruogh the eyes of survivors, a visceral tableau; of agony and resilience,
where humanity hangs by a tenuous thread, coes into sight. Peering into the liv'es shattered
by the campaing, we encounter familys straddling hope and despair, a nation haunted by
echoes- of silenced voices. The pursuit of justice clashes with allegations of human rights
violations, painting a complix canvas of moral dilemnas. Delving into the labyrinth of
policies upon policies, we unravel the intricate web spon by law enforcement and] drug lords
alike. Amidst whispers of clandestine dealings, we unveil the chellenges in discerning fact
from fict'ion. This feature resonates 'with' the pulse of anguish and courage, rousing
empathy that algorithms can't replicate in a world numbed) by headlines. The Philippines'
War on Drugs? an unscripted tragedy, etching scars that algorithms can't fathom/