ASSESSING FINAL YEAR SECRETARYSHIP AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WRITNG PROFICIENCY IN GHANAIAN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES

by

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DECLARATION

I, Gifty Serwah Mensah, hereby declare that the thesis for PhD studies at the University of Venda, hereby submitted by me, has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other institution, that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all reference material contained therein has been properly acknowledged.

Signature: 

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ABSTRACT

Academic writing plays an important role in the academic discourse community. In all higher education across the world, writing plays an indispensable role because students need to write assignments, examinations, academic reports and field or laboratory reports. Writing is a fundamental skill that underpins students' academic success in university studies. It is, therefore, expected by lecturers that final-year university students demonstrate adequate writing competences but unfortunately, in Ghana and beyond, many final-year university students are unable to exhibit high levels of competence in their writings. This is because many of them lack the abilities needed to successfully communicate in writing. The primary aim of the study was to assess the academic writing proficiency of final-year university students. The multiple case study design was used for the study. In-depth interviews were used to elicit data from four lecturers and forty final-year students of Secretaryship and Management Studies from four selected Technical Universities in Ghana. Additionally, test scripts were analysed. In analysing the data, thematic content analysis and document analysis were used. Error Analysis, Cognitive Processes Theory, Schleppegrell's (2004) model of academic written language, and Halliday and Hasan's framework on cohesion undergirded the study. The interpretivism and constructivism paradigm underpinned the study, and the research approach was qualitative. The study's sample consisted of four (4) lecturers who taught Secretarial English from the Secretaryship and Management Studies Department, forty (40) final-year students conveniently selected from the Department, and sixty (60) examination scripts purposively selected from the same Department of the four selected technical universities. It was found that final- year university students in technical universities in Ghana were not proficient in their academic writing. They committed grammatical, mechanical, content and structural errors. It is recommended that students be given the necessary interventions needed to overcome the challenges identified. Universities and educational systems should integrate academic writing interventions directly into their curricula to effectively address and overcome the widespread challenges students encounter in academic writing.

Key words: Academic Writing, Assessing, Ghana, Proficiency, University Students

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved mother, Madam Agnes Kwenin for the countless sacrifices she has made for me.

My dearest husband, Reverend Francis Mensah and my cherished children: Gifty-Darlene Mensah and Francis Kwame Mensah

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CR:	Contrastive Rhetoric
CSP:	Communication Skills Programme
EA:	Error Analysis
ESP:	English for Specific Purpose
FL:	Foreign Language
L1:	First Language
L2:	Second Language
LOLT:	Language of Teaching and Learning
RGS:	Rhetorical Genre Studies
SFL:	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SLA:	Second Language Acquisition
TL:	Target Language
WCF:	Written Corrective Feedback
UHAS:	University of Health and Allied Sciences
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
MCQs	Multiple Choice Questions

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Existing research on academic writing in Ghana largely centres on comprehensive universities and Colleges of Education (Boakye & Adika, 2020), with limited focus on final-year students in technical universities—an area that remains significantly underexplored. Improving academic writing proficiency in Ghanaian technical universities is momentous, as it significantly influences students' academic performance, professional preparedness and meaningful engagement within their fields of study. The theoretical frameworks that underpinned the study were Error Analysis, Schleppegrell's model, and Halliday and Hasan's cohesion framework.

Writing is a form of communication where a writer conveys his or her ideas and thoughts to readers through written words (Nurcahya & Sugesti, 2020). Nurcahya and Sugesti (2020) add that writing is a powerful form of communication that allows a writer to express his or her ideas, thoughts and emotions to readers through the medium of written words. Napitupulu (2021) avers that writing is a crucial skill because it serves as a vital tool for communicating with others. Napitupulu (2021) explains that writing allows individuals to clearly and effectively articulate their thoughts, ideas and emotions. Through writing, we can share information, tell stories and convey messages that educate, inspire, and connect people across different cultures and periods. Whether through books, articles, emails, or social media posts, writing enables us to reach a wide audience and make a lasting impact. Writing is an indispensable tool for learning, and as Papashane and Hlalele (2014) contend, academic essays, laboratory and field research reports, among other duties, all involve writing.

Academic writing broadly entails communicating ideas, information, and research findings to the wider academic community (Smith, 2022). Academic writing proficiency is marked by writing conventions, which among others include: observance of

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academic writing style and application of appropriate diction in line with disciplinary-specific orientation (Fang, 2021). Competency in these academic writing conventions is critical for academic success for university students (Aksakallı, 2024). Academic writing "is a product of numerous considerations: audience, purpose, organisations, style, flow, and presentation," claim Swales and Feak (2004:7). According to Hartley (2008), academic writing is a form of expression that scholars employ to outline the intellectual limits of their respective fields of study and their particular areas of competence. Whitaker (2009) postulates that academic writing is simply the writing that college students are required to complete for their courses. Academic writing is also writing that is 'clear, concise, focused, structured and backed up by evidence and it aims to help the reader's understanding' (University of Leeds, 2019). On the part of Sadeghi and Alinasab (2020), academic writing which is also referred to as scholarly or scientific writing is a multidimensional activity deeply embedded within cultural contexts. Sadeghi and Alinasab (2020) add that recognising academic writing as both a "multidimensional activity" and a "culturally loaded event" highlights its complexity and the crucial role that culture plays in shaping how knowledge is produced and communicated. This perspective encourages a writer to be aware not only of the technical aspects of writing but also of the cultural contexts that influence his or her work. By recognising these dimensions, a writer can enhance his or her effectiveness in academic communication and contribute more meaningfully to scholarly discussions. Chauhan (2022) defines academic writing as an art, a science, and a craft. Chauhan explains academic research as an art because the academic writer expresses his or her ideas and thoughts which are not the same. Johnson (2016) cited in Chauhan (2022) aver that academic writing is a science because, in citing sources and formatting academic texts, the writer uses a particular style. As a craft, Johnson (2016) cited in Chauhan (2022) advances that academic writing is a skill or set of skills that help the writer to write texts suitable for academic contexts.

In academic writing formal language is used, there is no direct reference to people or feelings and the information presented is factual. Academic writing can be divided into four primary categories: descriptive, analytical, persuasive and critical (The University of Sydney, 2019). In descriptive academic writing, the main aim is to give facts or

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information on a subject area. For example, a report on an experiment's results is descriptive academic writing. Academic writing is not solely descriptive but also analytical. Analytic writing has some form of descriptive writing, but it also needs the writer to describe into categories, groups, parts, types, or relationships. Mostly, in academic writing, the writer does not stay at analytical writing alone but move a step further to persuasive writing. Persuasive writing has all the characteristics of analytical writing (information plus re-organising the information) plus the writer's point of view. The point of view in academic writing includes an argument, recommendation, interpretation of findings, or evaluation of others' works. Finally, critical writing contains all the characteristics of persuasive writing together with an additional feature of at least one other point of view. That is, while persuasive writing demands that the writer has his/her point of view on a topic, critical writing requires the writer to consider at least two points of view, including the writer's own.

There are many genres in which academic writing is used. Some of them are books, essays, research papers or research articles, notes, reports, conference papers, examinations, academic journals, and dissertations/theses. Valdes (2019) states that most academic disciplines have their stylistic convention but some features are shared by all academic writing. According to Valdes (2019), academic writing should have a clear and constrained emphasis, a logical framework, arguments that are supported by evidence and an impersonal tone. Academic writing is used in universities worldwide, and technical universities are not an exception. Students use it for assignments, essays, research papers or articles, conference papers, dissertations/theses, and it is central to their success in the academic discourse community.

It is required of university students to improve their writing skills because it is a critical part of their academic growth. Once more, writing is regarded by educational institutions as a vital skill for the creation and transference of information within any disciplinary discourse. It is important to remember that the evaluation of students' academic performance in academic settings depends on their capacity to communicate their information and thoughts. Writing assists students in completing

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important assignments, developing their capacity for critical thought and growing their cognitive performance and functioning (Graham & Perin, 2007). The ability to write in the language of teaching and learning is a very important and useful skill for a university student. To succeed academically and to secure reputable jobs, university students need to acquire a variety of skills, including writing. To be able to fit into the academic community, university students must have strong writing and research skills.

Kellogg (2008) posits that English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers should include writing skills in their curricula because writing is crucial to students' academic performances. It helps to strengthen grammar, promotes the usage of a broader vocabulary which improves language proficiency and also benefits other linguistic abilities (reading, listening and speaking). Regular writing practice helps to strengthen comprehension and utilisation of grammatical rules and structures.

Johnstone, Ashbaugh, and Warfield (2002) found that developing proficient writing abilities is a complex and a gradual process, and that even native speakers of the English language struggle to demonstrate a strong mastery of writing. Hayes (2012) describes writing as an extremely complex skill. Describing writing as a complex skill highlights its multifaceted nature, requiring a blend of cognitive abilities, emotional intelligence and technical proficiency to communicate effectively. Choudhury (2013) espouses that writing is the hardest skill for second and foreign-language learners to acquire out of the four fundamental language abilities (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Writing is an extremely complex process that requires originating and organising ideas as well as turning them into coherent sentences that are legible (Choudhury, 2013). Yasuda (2024) supports the claim that writing is the “most elaborate and complex work” and the “most difficult of the language talents to learn”. In her study, Yasuda discusses the challenges students face in mastering writing, supporting the claim by Johnstone, Ashbaugh and Warfield (2002) that even native speakers struggle with high levels of proficiency in this skill. Yasuda (2024) highlights the importance of expressing complex meanings over merely using complex grammatical structures, reinforcing the notion that writing is a particularly demanding language skill.

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University students need to show that they can write in different styles for specific purposes. However, according to Coker and Abude (2012), students often have little experience with this before entering university. Similarly, Magaba (2023) states that most students struggle with their academic work primarily due to language barriers, and more specifically, because of poor writing skills. This demonstrates that among the four English language skills, writing has historically been seen as the most difficult (Hengwichitkul, 2006; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013; Phuket & Othman, 2015). Reza (2019) perceived that writing is the largest and most multifaceted of the four fundamental language skills.

Extant literature shows that many students continue to have challenges in their academic writing. University students display weaknesses in their academic writings in terms of language use, structure, content, incompetence in written English, lack of synthesis in writing, inadequacy in using academic writing styles and limitations in using reporting verbs as highlighted in (Chokwe, 2013; Mwangi, 2017; Agor, 2018; Banini, 2021; Fenyi & Morrison, 2023; Partwary et al., 2023)

1.2 Statement of the Problem

After several years of teaching students the rudiments of academic writing from primary school to the university level in Ghana, students ought to produce quality academic writing. Studies in the comprehensive universities in Ghana and beyond depict that students from these universities are not proficient in their academic writing, and certain interventions have been made (Amoakohene, 2017; Agor, 2018; Boakye & Adika, 2020; Gupta et al., 2022; Asafo-Adjei et al., 2023). Based on the readings of the researcher, extant literature deals predominantly with comprehensive universities and even Colleges of Education in Ghana, but studies on technical universities are virtually non-existent. In other words, studies that assess students' writing in technical universities are rare. Even though academic writing has been a requirement for students in Ghanaian technical universities for a considerable length of time, there have been virtually no extant studies that have documented students' academic

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writing and its potential strengths and weaknesses in the tertiary universities in Ghana. This situation could culminate in masking critical details that could be utilised to help students perform appreciably within the academic discourse community in Ghana and beyond. There is a pressing need to study academic writing proficiency in Ghana's technical universities due to limited research on their unique challenges, leaving educators without the data needed for effective, targeted interventions. The study's findings provide clear insights into the specific challenges that final-year technical university students encounter in academic writing, grounded in the firsthand experiences and perspectives of lecturers and students. These insights enable curriculum developers to pinpoint gaps in writing instruction that might be overlooked in imported or generic programmes. This ensures curriculum developers create more relevant, effective and contextually appropriate writing instruction aimed at improving academic writing proficiency in technical universities in Ghana.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The study aimed to assess final-year university students' academic writing proficiency in technical universities.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Explore the writing proficiency of final-year students' academic writing in Technical Universities in Ghana;
2. Examine the challenges encountered by Technical University final-year students in their academic writing; and
3. Explore the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year university students in the Technical Universities in Ghana.

1.5 Research questions

Here are the research questions that form the foundation of this study:

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1. How is the writing proficiency of final-year students' academic writing in Technical Universities in Ghana?
2. What are the challenges encountered by Ghanaian Technical University final-year students in their academic writing?
3. What are the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year university students in the Technical Universities in Ghana?

1.6 Significance of the study

The study could help lecturers of English language and Communication Skills in Technical Universities and other tertiary institutions to know specific areas of difficulty that students have when it comes to academic writing. This might help the lecturers to highlight those areas when teaching. The study might also help the lecturers modify their teaching strategies to meet the needs of the students so that appropriate pedagogical approaches can be employed to improve students' performances.

This study might also assist Technical University students identify specific challenges in academic writing, enabling them to take targeted measures to prevent recurring errors. By identifying common challenges—such as limited vocabulary, grammatical issues, lack of coherence, and struggles with paraphrasing or organising ideas—students can become more aware of their weaknesses and seek appropriate resources or support to address them. Such awareness not only empowers students to enhance their writing skills but also allows institutions to tailor interventions and academic development programmes that better support student needs. Eventually, this improves academic performance and alleviates the frustration often associated with writing tasks.

The research findings might be helpful for educational policymakers, including university administrators, curriculum developers and government officials by providing them with concrete, evidence-based insights into the specific writing challenges faced by university students. This information is key when it comes to planning and curriculum development, as it allows policymakers to design targeted remedial syllabi and support programmes that directly address students' most common difficulties. By

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grounding their decisions in genuine data from the research, educational leaders can allocate resources more effectively, implement interventions that are geared towards students' needs, and eventually improve overall academic writing outcomes. Curriculum developers will be afforded the opportunity (through the findings and recommendations of this study) to provide the apposite support in the areas of germane course content, appropriate teaching and learning materials, appropriate pedagogical methods and appropriate policies to help improve upon the overall writing standards of Technical University students.

1.7 Delimitation of the study

The study was delimited to final-year university students enrolled in Secretaryship and Management Studies programme who take English as a course in Technical Universities in Ghana.

1.8 Organisation of the thesis

The research is organised into the following chapters:

Chapter One provides a broad introduction to the study, the problem description, the study's aims, research objectives and questions, significance, delimitation and its organisation.

Chapter Two presents a detailed review of academic writing proficiency and a review of empirical studies.

Chapter Three discusses the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study including Error Analysis, the Cognitive Processes Theory, Schllepregrell's 2004 model of written language, and Halliday and Hasan's framework on cohesion. Relevant literature related to the two theories; the model and the framework is also reviewed.

Chapter Four details the methodology and data collection procedures. It covers the research approach and design, data gathering procedures, population and sample strategies and data analysis procedures.

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Chapter Five presents the evaluations of the data that were gathered and their major conclusions. Based on the goals that were defined, the results are given.

Chapter Six provides the interpretation of the results of the study, a review of its important findings, its conclusions, and suggestions for further research.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a general overview of the whole study. As the foremost chapter of the study, it introduced the background to the study, the research problem, the research objectives and the research questions. Additionally, it outlined the significance and the delimitation of the study. The chapter concluded with a presentation of the organisation of the thesis.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The orientation of the thesis was presented in the previous chapter. This chapter reviews relevant literature on academic writing proficiency. The evolution and development of academic writing proficiency under contrastive rhetoric, writing as a process, error correction and genre studies were discussed. The following main areas were also covered: prospects of teaching academic writing in higher education, main issues in teaching academic writing, interference of first language into English as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT), academic writing as the main tool for summative evaluation and components of academic writing. The rubrics for assessing academic writing proficiency in Technical Universities in Ghana end this chapter.

2.2The English Language

Over the last four decades the English language has witnessed increasing prominence as an 'academic lingua franca' (Crystal, 2003). English language is an academic language for most universities worldwide and Africa is not an exception. The English language functions as both the medium of instruction and a core subject of study at all educational levels in schools, colleges, and universities across Africa. Ghana, a richly multilingual country with approximately forty-five indigenous languages, officially adopted English as its sole national language following independence (Anyidoho & Dakubu, 2008).

Owu-Ewie and Eshun (2015) highlight that in Ghana, English serves as the sole medium of instruction starting from primary school level four (ages 8–9) in public schools and continuing through all higher levels of education. Consequently, writing proficiency becomes essential, as inadequate skills can result in lower-quality written assignments, thereby negatively affecting overall academic performance. In Ghana, academic language proficiency is developed in primary school rather than at the university level (Weiderman & Van Dyk 2014). Since the English language is both a teaching subject and a language of instruction from primary school, students are

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expected to develop full competence by the time they get to tertiary institutions. Guerini (2007) postulates that possessing strong English language skills is essential for gaining admission into secondary schools or higher education institutions in Ghana, as well as across West Africa. Agor (2018) asserts that, as English is the main language for knowledge creation and dissemination, all applicants to higher education institutions in Ghana are required to demonstrate a reasonable level of proficiency in written English. English has established itself as the dominant language in academic writing, profoundly influencing how research is conducted, disseminated, and acknowledged on a global scale. This prevalence can be attributed to various factors, such as the extensive volume of scholarly works published in English and its function as a universal language within the international academic community.

2.3 Evolution and development of academic writing proficiency

There has been considerable debate in studies on academic writing proficiency regarding the criteria that indicate a student has attained the necessary writing standard (Fang, 2021; Teng & Wang, 2023). To test the level of academic writing proficiency is an arduous task that demands purposive striving by academic staff who are responsible (Barua, 2022; Patwary et al., 2023). For more than five decades the discussion on academic writing proficiency has been going on but the most appropriate method to be applied has not been concluded yet (Raoofi et al., 2014; Raoofi et al., 2017). Researchers persist in examining and debating diverse methods, theories, and pedagogical approaches, underscoring the intricate and evolving nature of academic writing. The ongoing discourse can be attributed to factors such as the varied needs and backgrounds of student populations, the dynamic progression of academic disciplines and research, shifting expectations and standards for academic writing, the multifaceted nature of writing processes and cognitive development, and the influence of contextual elements like culture, language, and technology (Hart, 2018; Fink, 2019).

Academic writing proficiency has undergone several stages throughout the period but the outcome shows that more studies need to be conducted to assist students who have enrolled in tertiary institutions. For instance, in a study by Zohaib et al. (2021) on

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the development of academic writing skills in English, the study found that students were weak in essay writing under academic writing at the pre-actional phase level and later improved their competence and performance after the intervention of teaching practices through a content-based approach. The scores of the essays increased in each category of the assessment gradually. The study encourages further detailed research in this area.

In the United States of America, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia where English is either taught as a first or second language, many studies in the field of academic writing in English as a Second language (ESL) have been conducted (Lumley & Mckay, 1992; Carder, 2008; Christie, 2013; Fang, 2021). Similar studies have also been conducted in countries such as Japan, China, and Malaysia where English is taught either as a second language or a foreign language (Jiang et al., 2022; Loo, 2023; Hosseini et al., 2023). There are relatively few studies conducted in African countries, particularly in Ghana. Lamptey and Dumavor (2021) note that it is challenging to focus on the study of writing in West African countries, as writing is intricately embedded within the broader study of the English language. The study focuses on the evolution and development of academic writing proficiency under contrastive rhetoric, writing as a process, error correction, and genre studies.

2.4 Contrastive Rhetoric

According to Nordquist (2020), contrastive rhetoric examines how the rhetorical structures of an individual's first language can interfere with their attempts to write in a second language (L2). Broadly considered, contrastive rhetoric examines differences and similarities in writing across cultures (Connor, 2001). The argument for research in this field is that the writing styles of students from different countries vary due to the cultural thought patterns of the countries which the students come from. In Northern American universities, where non-native English speakers from Europe, South Africa, Asia, and Africa meet to study in different fields, several studies have been conducted (Kaplan, 1966; Connor, 1996; Swales, 2004).

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Contrastive Rhetoric theory played a significant role in shifting the paradigm from teaching ESL as a communicative activity to a writing activity. The studies that were conducted earlier on ESL writing concentrated on controlled composition as a yardstick to check if students' writing levels are improving (Quinn, 2012). Also, ESL researchers based their studies on theories and models that were initially proposed for native English speakers. Hence practitioners for contrastive rhetoric are pioneers who proposed a theory based on the writing styles of ESL students to develop a model for ESL writers. They aimed to identify the differences in writing styles, conventions, and rhetorical strategies between native English speakers and non-native English speakers. Some notable pioneers in contrastive rhetoric include Kaplan (1966) known for his work on the theory of Contrastive Rhetoric and its application to ESL writing, Swales (1990) who developed the concept of genre analysis and its relevance to ESL writing, Connor (1996) who expanded the scope of Contrastive Rhetoric to include cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspectives.

2.5 Early studies on Contrastive Rhetoric theory

Contrastive rhetoric as a theory of writing in ESL started with the publication of Kaplan's (1966) seminal work. The publication revived the debate on how to teach writing in ESL and inspired many researchers to propose a model that can be used to teach non-native English speakers. For instance, Swales (1990) developed the Genre Analysis model, which focuses on teaching writing genres and conventions to non-native English speakers. Similarly, Connor (1996) proposed the Contrastive Rhetoric and Intercultural Rhetoric models, which consider cultural and linguistic differences in teaching writing to non-native English speakers. Also, Leki (1996) advocated for a process-oriented approach to teaching writing, emphasising the significance of scaffolding and feedback for non-native English speakers. Hyland (2019) also proposed the Social Contextual model, which focuses on teaching writing as a social activity and considers the role of audience, purpose, and context. Finally, Casanave (2013) developed the Socio literate Approach, which emphasises the role of social and cultural contexts in teaching writing to non-native English speakers.

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Vigorous research on analysing and comparing the rhetorical patterns and syntactic styles of students' written work was conducted by Kaplan (1966). The research showed that students from different cultural backgrounds have different writing patterns on the texts. The reason is that ''different languages and cultures have different writing patterns''. He concisely postulates that the linguistic conventions of students' First Language seriously interfere with writing in English as a second language, which is the main challenge that non-native speakers of English face. The essays revealed that the logic and rhetorical pattern in these essays differ from the English style of writing after a thorough synthesis of the essays. He asserted that some characteristics denote total immersion of English rhetoric and culture which should appear in a standard paragraph written by native English speakers.

Kaplan (1966: 14) broadly describes what is expected in an English paragraph written by a native English speaker:

> The thought patterns that speakers and readers of English appear to expects as an integral part of their communication is a sequence that is predominantly linear in its development. An English expository paragraph usually begins with a topic statement and then, by a series of subdivisions of that topic statement, each supported by examples and illustrations, proceeds to develop that central idea and relate that idea to all the other ideas in the whole essay, and to employ that idea in its proper relationship with other ideas, to prove something, or perhaps to argue something.

It was observed by Kaplan that Chinese students' essays that they write spiral around the point but there is a zigzag format presentation from those students from semiotic languages. Also, Roman and Russian rhetoric are displayed as lines heading downwards veering off at varied angles which is different from the English linear style. The findings displayed that different logic and writing patterns are used by students from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Out of the six hundred essays studied by Kaplan, not even one of them was written in a linear sequence which is regarded as the accepted formula for writers of native English. Lecturers and teachers need to be given proper training to assist students in having control over the logic of

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writing in English to diminish the challenges of writing paragraphs that are not in line with the English style. Another in-depth study by Kaplan (1967) on the genesis and history of different languages and their influence on students' L2 writing, the study helped enlighten college lecturers and researchers to understand that students must be taught all aspects of a language thoroughly rather than expecting them to write a second language proficiently by only being taught the mechanics of a language. After scrutinising the rhetorical patterns depicted by students coming from different language backgrounds at immersion schools in American universities, Kaplan argued that while a student may have mastered the phonology and syntax of a second language, it is not reasonable to assume that they can automatically write proficiently in that language. Each language must be understood as a unique entity with its internal logic. Therefore, students need to be taught the 'logic' inherent in the rhetoric of the language, just as they have learned the 'logic' embedded in its grammatical patterns.

It was realised by Kaplan that there is a high drop-out of ESL students because they struggle to cope with academic discourse. Many tertiary institutions and researchers did not know that students are to be taught every aspect of a language, more importantly, the logical pattern of a second language before you expect them to produce a written text that is proficient. The English language, which served as the medium of tuition in American universities, does not follow the logical pattern followed by the students who took part in the study. These students attempt to translate information from their first language, which follows a different logical pattern, to English. According to Kaplan (1967), students find it difficult to apply the same writing strategies they use in their first language when writing in a second language. Writing is a laborious activity that requires students to learn the preferred discourse style of the target language as well as the culture of the tertiary institution, unlike speaking, which they can learn informally at home or while playing. The publication made it clear to academics and researchers that writing in a second language is hampered by the linguistic and rhetorical norms of the first language.

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The findings of Kaplan's two studies (1966 and 1967) revived the discussion of how students' writing styles are influenced by their culture. Numerous studies in this area have been carried out since then, and some researchers have criticised Kaplan for giving essays written by native English speakers undue advantage. Matalane (1985) admonished contrastive rhetoric researchers to critically review and analyse ESL students' written work from multiple angles. She argued that to effectively study contrastive rhetoric, it is essential to understand the hierarchical relationship between culture, language, and rhetoric as well as their inevitable symbiosis. This understanding forms the foundation for analysing how different cultures use language and rhetorical strategies to communicate. Being an American writer who was working in China, she found out that there are many factors that researchers must take into consideration before studying the rhetorical patterns of different languages. She found that there is a direct opposite of the American style of writing and that of the Chinese style of writing in that Chinese writers rely on the memorisation and manipulation of textual forms that emphasises group values over individual goals.

Kaplan (1990) postulates that a text, in its essence, remains devoid of meaning until it is engaged with by a reader. It is through the act of reading and interpretation that the text comes to life, its significance shaped by the perceptions, experiences, and context of the reader. This interaction between the text and the reader is what breathes meaning into the words, transforming them from mere symbols on a page into a rich tapestry of ideas and emotions. The reader must synthesise the author's intention while assessing the paragraphs' logical structure for the text to take shape and acquire meaning. Two decades after Kaplan’s Doddles paper publication, to correct some claims made by Kaplan in his seminal studies, Connor and Kaplan (1987) made an intensive study of compositions that ESL students wrote. They acknowledged that the level of research has increased after twenty years and they proposed that ESL writers must have enlightenment on the idea that writing is a social phenomenon that involves some skills. They emphasised in their study that in contrastive rhetoric, the focus should be on using linguistic text analysis as an instrument that can provide analytic techniques for comparing written work composed by native and non-native English

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speakers. In the same vein, Connor and Johns (1990) proposed detailed methods appropriate for analysing the discourse superstructure texts than concentrating only on rhetorical structures and culture.

Contrastive rhetoric was brutally criticised towards the end of the 1980s because it followed reductionist and prescriptive principles. This pushed Kaplan to modify his first research findings and he accepted that the model must take a new direction. In Kaplan's concession, he agreed that the concept of linguistic relativity has a serious bearing on analysing the written works of students. He adds that there were very few written texts at the time he published his seminal work in 1966 and he oversimplified the differences between languages and for giving undue privilege to English. As a solution to keep contrastive rhetoric as a useful model in ESL writing, Connor (1993) eventually proposed a new paradigm to help contrastive rhetoric survive the challenges posed by the writing process movement. This new paradigm aimed to integrate the strengths of Contrastive Rhetoric with the insights of the writing process approach. According to Connor (1993), the principal features of this new paradigm include emphasising the significance of cultural and linguistic contexts in shaping writing styles and conventions (contextualisation), encouraging teachers to adapt Contrastive Rhetoric to meet the needs of diverse student populations and writing tasks (flexibility), incorporating writing process strategies, such as drafting, revising, and peer review, to complement the contrastive analysis of rhetorical patterns (process-oriented approach), encouraging students to critically evaluate their writing processes and rhetorical choices, as well as those of others (critical thinking and reflection) and providing practical teaching strategies and materials to support the integration of Contrastive Rhetoric with writing process approaches (pedagogical implications). Connor (1993) further advances that proposing this new paradigm ensures the continued relevance and effectiveness of Contrastive Rhetoric in teaching writing to non-native English speakers.

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2.6 New Contrastive Rhetoric

After contrastive rhetoric was criticised by process movement researchers (Berlin, 1992; Bizzell, 1992; Elbow, 1998) for focusing on the product than on the process of composing, a new phase in its study emerged. Leki (1991) in an attempt to review the challenges and prospects encountered by contrastive rhetoric, made a textual analysis of contrastive rhetoric from 1966 to 1991. He distinguished between the results of the studies that 'early contrastive rhetoric researchers' and 'modern contrastive' researchers conducted. The distinction was made to defend contrastive rhetoric from criticism from process approach researchers that contrastive rhetoric is obsolete because it mainly focuses on the product. In repositioning contrastive rhetoric, according to Leki (1991), acknowledging the cultural influence on writing preferences will help prevent stereotypes from arising. He adds that Kaplan's seminal work has set the basis on which modern researchers ought to commence their projects. To broaden the scope of contrastive rhetoric, a thorough study of written essays produced by students from various countries such as China, Iran, Finland, Poland, etc. was conducted by Connor (1993). These were students who were enrolled in American universities where English is used as the media of teaching and learning. When these students were interviewed by Connor, on the challenges they encountered, they mentioned that most of the time before they write in English which is their second language, they translate or attempt to translate, first-language words, phrases, and organisation into English (Connor, 1993:3).Because every language has distinct rhetorical conventions that do not apply to another language, the written discourse will not have the same meaning if students think in their first language and then translate the information into English. Again, every statement that is logical in their first language will not be marked as correct when translated to English due to the different patterns.

Connor (1996) states that contrastive rhetoric has undergone a paradigm shift since the beginning of 1990. The focus drifted from exploring cultural thought patterns and paragraph structure to looking at the essays from a broader perspective. She briefly defines contrastive rhetoric as a research area where second language acquisition problems encountered by ESL students or writers are identified and in attempting to

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explain them there is a focus on the theoretical strategies of the first language. She advanced that ESL students at different tertiary institutions have different writing conventions from those of their First Languages because the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of their first language interfere with their writing in a second language. Practical applications that can be used to design a new contrastive model specifically aimed "for the description of cross-cultural writing in academic and professional situations" were suggested by Connor (1996: 6). To her, the new concept should be more inclusive than the earlier version which only focused on essays written by first-year university students. Connor (1996: 18) reiterated that the new contrastive model must formulate a "broader definition that considers cognitive and sociocultural variables of writing". Connor's research output had a valuable impact in building a comprehensive new model of contrastive rhetoric that focused on a variety of fields. Connor (1996) further suggested that the new contrastive rhetoric has added four areas which are: contrastive text linguistics, the study of writing as a cultural and educational activity, classroom-based contrastive studies, and contrastive genre analysis. To save contrastive rhetoric from criticism of the limitation seen in Kaplan's original theory, Connor argued these four areas can help. In building a detailed new model of contrastive rhetoric which merged academic writing and professional writing from different angles, her research output therefore had a significant impact. Getting to the end of her monograph, Connor (1996) stressed that contrastive rhetoric has serious challenges in its design and these challenges have a serious impact on Contrastive rhetoric as a model and finally put limitations on its prospect of building a comprehensive theory.

Contrastive rhetoric researchers cannot claim that the theory can give ESL writers enough solutions to their writing challenges due to the serious lack of a universal theoretical model. Liu (1996) analysed previous research on contrastive rhetoric and issued a warning regarding the over-generalisation of language and culture in it. This encompasses the standard by which investigators chose study participants. Researchers studying contrastive rhetoric should steer clear of assigning students based solely on their cultural background to classes with varying levels of exposure to the language. Leki (1997) also cautions researchers who stick to the original stance

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of contrastive rhetoric which focuses mainly on the final product rather than on the processes involved during the composing process. To widen the scope of the argument, Leki (1997: 244) maintains that:

> Contrastive rhetoric is most effectively understood not as the analysis of internally driven, culturally specific rhetorical patterns, but as the study of differences or preferences in the pragmatic and strategic choices writers make in response to external demands and cultural histories.

The reason is that contrastive rhetoric researchers aim to examine, compare, and contrast how texts written in different languages are composed. They are of the view that cultures are different and the historical background of a particular language plays a major role in guiding how students write in that particular language.

Contrastive linguists view writing as a social activity that can be influenced by the unique rhetorical structure of a particular language. Contrastive rhetoric is defined by Enkvist (1997) as the study of textual and discourse patterns in various languages with differing structural and cultural backgrounds. He posits that the focus should be on the patterns of the texts produced by students whose first language is not English. By highlighting the fact that "it considers texts not merely as static products but as functional parts of dynamic cultural contexts," Connor's subsequent research (2002: 493) gave contrastive rhetoric a fresh perspective. She reiterates that, instead of focusing solely on essay writing, the field now enhances our understanding of preferred writing patterns in various English for specific purposes contexts. The observation was made after evaluating developments and prospects of the model in the past thirty years. The study therefore assured researchers that contrastive rhetoric has taken a new direction after criticism that it is insensitive to cultural differences. Researchers began to look at a text as a dynamic social context rather than looking at it as a document on its own.

Other researchers support Connor and they suggest that in structure, contrastive rhetoric looks like a genre approach to language (Swales, 1990; Mauranen, 2012). The researchers aver that contrastive rhetoric and genre approaches share common

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ground in examining the structural and linguistic features of texts within specific contexts They see the rhetorical patterns of specific language as the most important components of the language. Canagarajah (2002) espouses that to account for textual variations, contrastive rhetoric needs to work on creating more intricate explanations. Poole (2003) also opines that in addition to being the only paradigm in which cross-cultural research was prioritised, contrastive rhetoric is the first comprehensive study of L2 writing conducted in the modern era. The two studies demonstrate unequivocally that language acquisition occurs in naturally occurring discourse, and as such, writing instructors should take students' backgrounds into account when grading essays written by ESL students.

The findings of research from several American universities closely mirror the circumstances in the majority of African universities. Despite being the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), English is not spoken as a first language by the majority of students enrolled in African universities. Students' inability to write essays that demonstrate their command of English rhetoric and syntactic structure presents a significant obstacle in the academic setting. For example, in a study conducted by Henning, Gravett, and Van Rensburg (2005:1) at the University of Johannesburg on the level of writing produced by students in South African universities they found out that “many students still copy directly from their sources, usually due to lack of trust in their writing performance”. The students try to gather information from a variety of sources all the time but putting it in an intellectual and coherent argument they fail. Similarly, in the Vhembe district in the Limpopo province of South Africa, a study conducted by Neeta (2010), shows that there are serious challenges students face when they write argumentative essays in that paragraph structure, syntactic style, and rhetorical patterns are influenced by the First Language which the learners speak. Also, the writing styles are culturally induced and have traces of circumlocution, a writing pattern common among African languages that is directly opposite to the English writing pattern.

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Contrastive rhetoric has helped to enlighten teachers and lecturers who teach multicultural classes to realise that students have different cultural values, thought patterns, and written discourse.

Next is to look at a discussion on writing as a process that is a challenge to the original perception of contrastive rhetoric with its focus on the written product.

2.7 Writing as a Process

Attention shifted from writing as product-oriented to writing as a process as the interest in research in ESL writing grew. In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers (Murray, 1972; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Zamel, 1983; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) started focusing on writing as a cognitive activity and they put forward that writing is a process of creating and extending meaning. The writing process is the opposite of the formalist approach's belief that writing must be conducted in a silent environment and under strict time constraints. To the formalist, students must be able to produce a creative text during a specified period without evaluating the dynamic involved in producing the final product. On the other hand, the writing process became prominent as a direct response to the traditional way of writing which focused on the final product and suggested a flexible model that gives precedence to the processes involved before the final product. To be able to get to the bottom of this model, the study explored the writing process under three main models: the stage–model theory, the recursive–cognitive process, and the conversational or social constructionist model.

2.8 The Stage – Model Theory

The first move from the formalist approach to the writing process approach is the stage–model theory. In the formalist approach, teachers asked students to write regularly without giving them proper direction on how to write proficiently. They tend to overlook the fact that ESL students lack English syntactic features which come automatically to native English speakers. Getting to the end of the 1960s, several writing teachers started to propose a shift from the formalist approach with its focus on the traditional writing classrooms and stressed the importance of teaching writing as a process. Dixon (1967) argued that the new model of writing is very invaluable for

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students as it views writing as a cognitive and expressive process that writers use to share their experiences. The Stage–model theory marks a paradigm shift from the formalist approach's view that writing is an instructional affair that focuses on the final product to writing as a process that is conducted on different stages.

Murray (1972) in a study articulated that it is necessary to conduct the writing process through different stages which can be easily understood by student writers. He criticised the formalist approach for putting too much emphasis on the final product and not taking into account the steps involved in getting there. Murray (1972: 2) stated that:

> As a writer crafts their work, they are continuously making ethical choices. These decisions are not measured against a rulebook but against the realities of life. Through language, the writer uncovers truths for themselves, enabling them to share those truths with others. It is a dynamic, exciting, and ever-evolving journey.

Teaching a novice writer how to write a composition as a final product is inefficient and annoying, according to Murray (1972). When writers write, they want to find out what they have to say, so before sending their texts to readers, they should be given the chance to review and reorganise them. A model was proposed by Murray (1972) in which writing can be carried out in three fixed stages: prewriting, writing, and revision as represented below.

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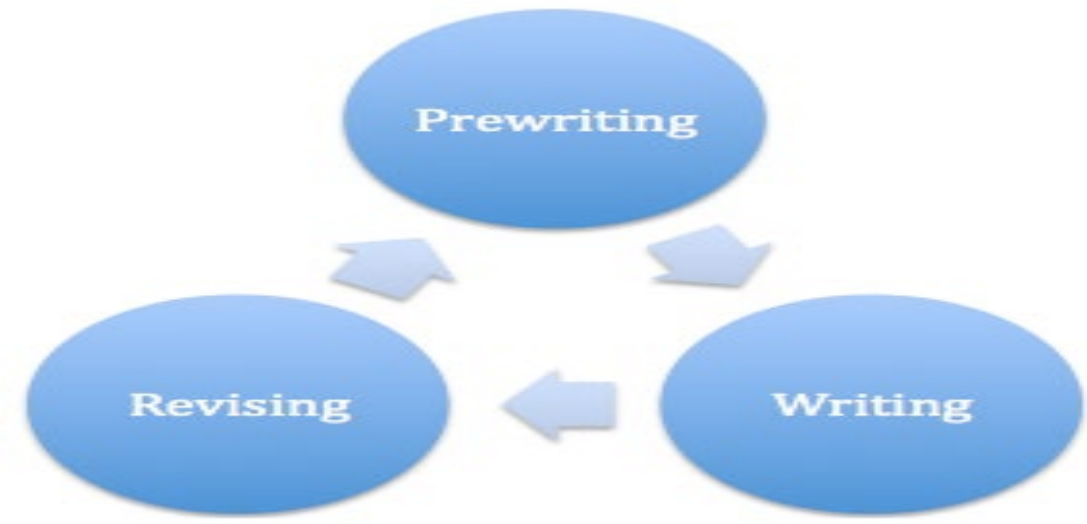


Figure 2.1: Writing as a Process Murray (1972)

Murray (1972) proposed this model, which states that the amount of time that a writer spends in each stage varies among writers because writing is the process of finding meaning through language. He does, however, go on to say that the prewriting phase, which requires the writer to devote roughly 85% of their time to it, is the most challenging part of the process. Prewriting is made up of several activities which the writer goes through before writing the first draft. The setting, the environment, and the relevancy of the topic are included in the pre-writing stage. It is required of a writer to progress from one stage to another in a fixed order. This is because going back to the previous stage is impossible.

Murray (1972) apportioned only one percent to the writing stage because he saw it as the fastest part of the writing process the author carefully employs the concepts acquired during the prewriting stage to create the first draft. Although Murray sees the writing stage as the fastest, he advances that it is the most frightening one because the writer is committing his thoughts. Thereafter, the writer must scrupulously revise the first draft, add new ideas, and remove some of the less important information. He allocated the remaining fourteen percent to the revision stage since it involves line-by-line editing and reformulation of sentences. In concluding his study, he suggested ten implications that, if writing instructors adopt the perspective that writing is a process, will aid them in responding to the work that their students produce.

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To add to Murray's (1972) three-step model, other researchers put forward that the writing process must be conducted linearly under these unique sequential steps: planning, prewriting, drafting, revising, and final product. They professed that the higher number of stages helps ESL writers to apportion the workload and work briskly from one stage to another with little or no possibility of something happening. Although the stage model of writing has chalked some successes, it faced serious criticism for focusing on the final product as the reference point, without acknowledging the composing process.

In that regard, Flower and Hayes (1977) criticised the linear stage model for modeling the growth of the written product without giving attention to the intellectual processes which students used to compose their texts. In a study conducted by Crowley (1977), she gave both freshmen and advanced students composition to write. The students were instructed to monitor their composition process by keeping their composition diaries. They were also instructed to make entries based on the four steps: preparation, incubation, writing, and revision and finally, they were instructed to record their writing process as faithfully as possible. Crowley (1977) discovered that there is little to no recursive movement in the student's writing process, which is strictly linear. After these findings, she commenced advocating for a serious change in the process of writing. Her ideals developed on the foundation already built by Emig's (1971) study that writing is a recursive, not a linear process. The next section below is focused on the recursive – cognitive process of writing as it moves forward and backward between synthesis and analysis.

2.9 The Recursive–Cognitive Process Model

Moving a step further is the recursive – cognitive process model which breaks down the rigid sequence proposed in the stage model theory. The first researcher to investigate the cognitive conception of writing processes was Emig (1971). To support her claim, she conducted a study among eight middle-class Chicago north – suburban twelve graders and also interviewed some Harvard professors about their writing style.

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The scope of writing as a series of cognitive processes was broadened by Shaughnessy (1977) when she traced the logic and history of errors that first-year college students make. She categorised writers who are weak as basic writers whose writing strategies need more attention than experience writers in her study. According to her, writing is a social act in which the writer ought to have more time to create meaning.

Perl (1979) agrees with Shaughnessy (1977) by evaluating the composing processes of five unskilled college writers. She criticised teachers who teach writing for aiming at punishing students for the surface mistakes when they write their essays. The study's findings show that teachers ought to start a research process to evaluate students' writing levels before imposing a system that will baffle them. Again, teachers must record students writing behaviours so that common features can be evaluated to help formulate hypotheses. Finally, teachers must comprehend the recursive nature of the writing process to give room to students going back and forward during the writing process.

The basic foundation that was used by writers in the early 1980s to create a comprehensive recursive cognitive process of writing was based on the three studies discussed above. A thorough study was made by Hayes and Flower (1980) in which they asserted that writing is a recursive, nonlinear cognitive process where the writer drafts, writes, revises, and edits repeatedly until they are happy with what they have produced.They establish that it will not be easy for the writing process to be effectively conducted if students are not permitted to revisit the previous stage of composing to assess if it is still 0the finest. That is, non-native students writing constructive and coherent essays under strict supervision and without constantly checking and reviewing their writing is realistically not possible.

Flower and Hayes (1981) in another study, skillfully explain how experienced writers normally go about their work before writing a final product. Rigorously, they set out the procedure in the form of a flow chart consisting of boxes with arrows showing information flow between them. They also graphically indicated how students can

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compose texts by moving forward and backward in dissimilar stages of writing before the final product. They call their invention the 'cognitive process model' which comprises three major elements: task environment, writer's long memory, and writing process. The model was distinctively designed for native English speakers (L1) but L2 researchers have adopted it and victoriously used it in their studies. The figure below gives a clear picture of how the recursive – -cognitive process model operates.

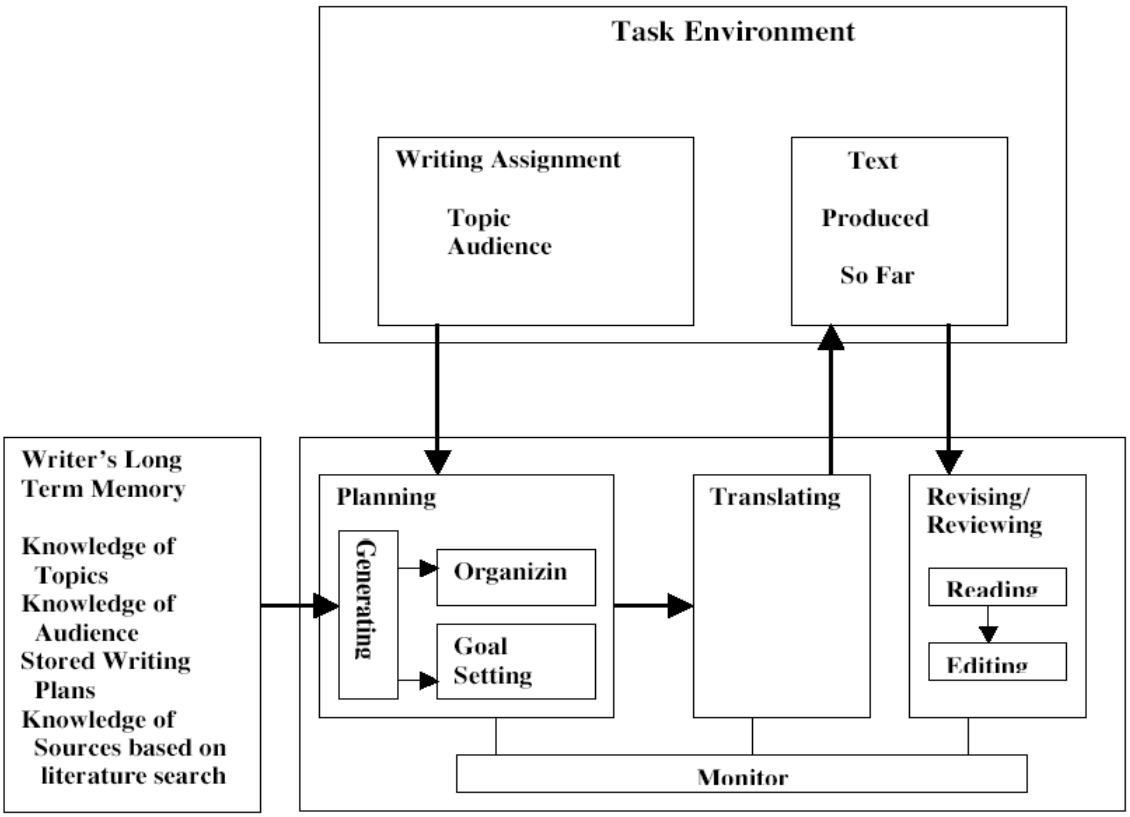


Figure 2.2: (A cognitive Process Model adapted from Flower & Hayes (1981)

According to the model, writing is a recursive process that requires the writer to go back and review each step before submitting the finished work. Experienced writers use a variety of cognitive processes in a sophisticated manner before they can complete a piece of writing. To give more details on how writers use cognitive processes when they are writing texts, Flower and Hayes (1981) used protocol analysis. In creating a protocol, a group of writers was given the task of writing a short article for a magazine. Of the basic requirements when writing the article, one was to think aloud and a tape recorder was used by the researcher to capture their spoken

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thoughts. Valuable data that were used to evaluate the processes that a writer used to compose a text were the recorded spoken thoughts, the notes of the writer, and the manuscripts. Flower and Hayes (1981) commented that the protocols used provided a bounty of empirical data on the factors that influenced the writer at the time of the composing process.

Flower and Hayes (1981: 369) affirmed that "the act of writing involves three major elements" and these are reflected in the model as the task environment, the writer's long-term memory, and the writing processes. The task environment, which is made up of the rhetorical problem and the written text gives motivation and also supports the writer to define the problem. Contrasting the cognitive process model to the stage model, the cognitive process theory model sees the audience directly involved in the process because writing is a social act. The writer's long-term memory which is the knowledge embedded in the writer's mind and the information gathered from books about the topic supplements the task environment.

The model places a great deal of emphasis on planning, which is divided into three smaller processes: idea generation, organisation and goal setting. The writer should be able to access important material from long-term memory and organise it into concepts that are useful and placed in various categories. The content should be arranged in a way that aligns with the goals the writer originally stated. After the information is gathered and organised during the planning step, it must be translated into visible language before the reviewing stage can begin. The writer needs to keep an eye on whether moving on from one step to the next is important or if something needs to be evaluated by going back to the earlier stage. Because they argued that the ability of the writer to set objectives and generate ideas is the wellspring of creativity, Flower and Hayes' (1981) model had a major influence on how the recursive cognitive process of writing was structured.

Following the success of Flower and Hayes' (1981) model, Applebee (1984) published a monograph in which writing was illustrated as a central process in learning. The findings of this research corpus were summed up in three points: that writing involves a variety of recursively operating sub-processes rather than a linear

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sequence, writers differ in their uses of processes as they fall into different categories, and the processes, they use vary depending on the nature of the writing task. By showing that the model gives students enough time to generate words, sentences, and discourse chunks and to communicate them in a new language, Raimes (1985: 252) concurs with Flower and Hayes' (1981) model's efficacy. Students find great value in this model because it allows them to move forward and backward in the writing process while using heuristic devices to find meaning.

Although the Flower and Hayes (1981) model had a significant impact on ESL writing studies, there were some criticisms of the concept. Hayes and Flower's model was questioned and criticised by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) for lacking a stated methodology and making an incorrect assumption. They proved that Hayes and Flower's (1981) extremely narrow methodology depended exclusively on inferred invariance in protocol data rather than addressing some factors. Additionally, they took issue with the model's premise that there is a single writing process that all authors may adhere to. Hayes and Flower (1987) revised their writing model and added two new sub-stages: processes and knowledge, in response to criticism from Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) and other researchers. However, neither of the two sub-stages was able to clearly show how experienced authors and new writers differ in how they put their texts together.

The ambiguity in the ESL writing process was resolved by Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) paradigm, which proposed a distinction between writing as “knowledge transforming” and writing as “knowledge telling.” Individuals lacking writing expertise but possessing rudimentary writing skills may utilise knowledge-telling assignments that do not necessitate critical analysis and integration of data. However, because knowledge transformation requires a great deal of talent and work, it is primarily employed by experienced writers. Knowledge transformation is complex because, before drawing a final decision on the work's outcome, the writers must formally and completely question the subject. While the paradigm has greatly advanced the field of

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ESL writing research, it falls short in that it does not offer guidance on moving from knowledge telling to knowledge transformation.

The recursive-cognitive model made a big impact by focusing on how students think during writing, not just the final product. It filled a gap in the recommended models for students, which often ignored the social factors that affect writers as they create their texts. This gap led some researchers to propose a move from the “process” approach to the “post-process” approach. In an attempt to bridge the gap, ten crucial traits that connect the process method with the post-process approach were highlighted by Olson (1999:7-15).

i. Writing is an act that involves several different activities.
ii. Writing tasks are usually recursive as opposed to linear.
iii. Writing is primarily a social activity.
iv. The act of writing can also be a tool for learning and exploration.
v. Writers with experience typically understand their background, audience, and goals.
vi. Skilled writers dedicate a significant amount of time to both creation and editing.
vii. Students can practise these tasks with the help of effective writing instruction.
viii. These instructions also provide plenty of opportunities for peer evaluation.
ix. Skilled teachers evaluate their students' work based on both the final product and the writing process itself.
x. The key to effective composition instruction is determining when to step in to help each student with their work.

Olson's list of 10 characteristics laid the groundwork for the transition from the process approach to the post-process approach. As the 20th century came to an end, many researchers suggested moving away from the process theory's contention that writing is primarily the result of psychological and cognitive processes and toward the post-process theory's contention that writing is influenced by linguistic and cultural factors.

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2.10 The post-process approach or Social Constructionist Model

The post-process approach also known as the social constructionist model came about as a result of some researchers professing that in the recursive process model, some inaccuracies exist and so they migrated to the post-process approach.

From social constructivism came the conversational or the social constructionist model which is an educational approach. In this model, researchers came into agreement that writing is not just a set of writing steps but social and contextual factors are involved.

They see this as a paradigm change away from the “process approach,” which places a strong emphasis on the cognitive processing of the learner, and toward the “post-process” model, which emphasises the sociocultural environment of writing.

It was during the publication of Trimbur’s (1994) review that the post-process approach gained prominence in the 1990s. To support his idea of “social turn” in composition studies, three books were reviewed by Trimbur. He saw the process approach as limited to the cognitive view of writing and he proposed a shift to post-process approach which concentrated on social issues in a larger context.

Breuch (2002) made a strong case against the process approach, saying it ignored the nuances of each writer’s writing process. He was against the process approach because it tries to teach universal notions, but writing is not a universal act. Instead of seeing writing as a body of knowledge, he says, students should see it as an action. He continued by suggesting that exercises should not be used as teaching methods, but rather arbitrary activities. In addition, he argued that dialogue rather than monologic communication is preferable when interacting with students.

Leading proponent of the post-process approach, Kent (1999), argued that since writing is a situated, interpretive, and indeterminate act, it cannot be taught. His position is in direct opposition to the school of thought that holds that teaching writing is possible if one adheres to a series of preset phases. He adds that if students are to acquire writing proficiency, then, they must be exposed to the situation in which they live. In the act of writing, they must also be allowed to involve interpretation and indeterminacy and finally, students must critically evaluate how the cultural and social

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milieu influences their style of writing. All in all, Kent (1999) sees writing as public, interpretive, and situated.

On the other hand, researchers like Atkinson (2004) and Matsuda (2003) view the stages in the process approach as the foundation of the post-process approach.

Atkinson (2004:15) admitted the following:

> In advocating a 'post-process' approach to L2 writing, I do not intend to imply that process pedagogy should be wholly abandoned in the L2 writing classroom. The value and effectiveness of process writing have been demonstrated repeatedly, and if I were to suddenly find myself leading an L2 writing class, activities such as pre-writing, drafting, feedback, and revising would undeniably remain integral to the classroom experience.

On the part of Atkinson (2004), he highly esteems the prospect of using several stages in process pedagogy but he goes ahead to suggest that the post-process approach has a heuristic value when it comes to shaping writing in L2 research. He stated that it is invaluable to evaluate the social and cultural context that influences L2 writing.

McComiskey (2000) in his definition of the post-process approach sees it as an extension of the process approach. In the process of writing, writing must involve social processes where the teachers and the students must interact.

Similar to Atkinson's, Matsuda (2003) offers a similar pedagogical philosophy regarding post-process writing. He emphasized that while "post-process" theory does not explicitly declare the demise of the process approach, it does advise researchers not to adhere to the methodical writing steps that the process approach specifies. The process approach was first introduced as a writing L2 model in the 1960s, and it follows its evolution and history up until the 1980s. The following is elucidated by Matsuda (2003: 78–79):

> Post-process might be more productively defined as the rejection of the dominance of process at the expense of other aspects of writing and writing

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instruction. If we can keep that definition in mind, the term may serve a useful heuristic purpose as the field of L2 writing moves towards the era of multiplicity.

Matsuda (2003) argued that without adding new writing processes, the process approach has long dominated the field of ESL. Therefore, he proposed that the process method needs to take into account the variety of theories that have been established for ESL writing research for it to remain significant. Post-process writing is best described as hybrid pedagogy since post-process writers usually compile written texts that are adequate for the academic level; that is, they emphasise both the writing processes and the final output that the writer produces. Post-process writers include most of the writing skills advocated by the process writers but place the main emphasis on how the social environment influences the writer.

Regarding the process approach's place inside the post-process paradigm, there are substantial differences among the architects of the post-process approach. Authors Kent (1999) and Breuch (2002) critique the process method because it sets rules for the writing act and how writing should be taught. Conversely, the process approach is credited by McComiskey (2000), Atkinson (2004), and Matsuda (2003) for providing a solid framework for the post-process approach. As a result, a theory that clearly states the tenets of the post-process approach cannot be developed. That is, the process approach's primary focus was modified in large part by the post-process approach or the social constructionist paradigm. Directions were provided to researchers to assess the potential of the actions suggested by the writing process movement. The contrastive rhetoric paradigm was also praised for its focus on the outcome.

A blend of contrastive rhetoric and the process approach is seen by some post-process theory designers as the perfect solution; nonetheless, the post-process theory was unable to generate an influential pedagogical approach that can be implemented with ease in classrooms across all grade levels.

2.11 Corrective Feedback

The process whereby teachers give written comments after marking the texts written by students to improve their writing ability is termed corrective feedback or written

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correct feedback. Corrective feedback can also be referred to as 'grammar correction', 'written error correction', 'error treatment', 'corrective feedback', and 'written corrective feedback' but it is the same idea. Researchers cannot agree on whether corrective feedback or written corrective feedback in writing, gives students opportunities to improve their writing or if it is a waste of their precious time. Researchers created the model known as "corrective feedback," or "CF," in an attempt to defend the writing process against criticism that it is unable to address some of the most important aspects of writing. According to Hyland (2003), teacher-written comments play a vital role in ESL writing classrooms because the views given by the teachers are well appreciated by the students. Two groups came with contrary views on whether corrective feedback offers students prospects or challenges in their studies. The first group proffered that CF is a vain and worthless exercise. The second group on the other hand claimed that CF offers students opportunities to improve their writing levels.

2.12 Challenges of using corrective feedback to improve writing

The discourse on whether CF offers students any prospects to improve their writing proficiency levels remains an infectious one. The main problem is that there are no clear guidelines on the types or errors that must be corrected. Across the globe, different teachers are guided by the circumstances at their workplace, the level of the students they work with, and the type of feedback they ought to give. In the 1980s and 1990s researchers in corrective feedback proved that grammar correction is ineffective and harmful. The findings of the studies conducted in several institutions where researchers concentrated on different types of error correction support that CF does not help students become better writers.

A thorough examination of the effects of the teachers' comments and responses to students' written work was made by Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) to prove that grammar correction is ineffective. They evaluated students' use of multiple drafts in composition writing while using the comments given by the teachers. From the results, it was confirmed that written corrections made by the teachers had little or no effect

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on students' writing ability. It was explicit that in some cases, the students had misread the comments or did not even understand the instructions. The study confirmed that students failed to make tremendous improvements in the final draft and in some cases, no improvements at all. Similarly, Sommers (1982) argued her case by indicating that written feedback given by teachers is vague, hence it is often misunderstood by students.

On the part of Zamel (1985), the main challenge faced by the written corrective feedback method is that comments given by teachers are mainly of poor quality. Some ESL writing teachers misread or misinterpret the students' text and, in the end, give confusing comments. In some cases, they write comments that are contradictory to students' texts as they see the texts as the final product, not as a process of generating ideas. On their part, Russel and Russel (1987) revealed that teachers gave ambiguous comments restricted on a range of errors when marking students' written work. All in all, students do not find it easy to correct their work to improve their first drafts. They make only surface-level corrections following the teacher's comments closely. The study's results provide compelling evidence that grammar correction is inefficient and wasteful.

It was towards the end of the 20th century that research on the futility of written CF gained popularity. Truscott (1996) attacked grammar correction in L2 writing classes by proclaiming that it is complex, ineffective, and wasteful. He supposed that teachers waste invaluable time which could have been used to teach by writing comments on the papers which students wrote. He continued by saying that students waste time because they struggle to interpret the comments made by teachers to enhance their writing levels. He cited several studies conducted from the early seventies until the early nineties where researchers tried to find the most suitable solution to grammar correction. After thorough evaluation and consideration, Truscott (1996: 360) ended that:

> My thesis is that grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned. The reasons are: (a) research evidence shows that grammar correction is ineffective; (b) this lack of effectiveness is exactly what should be

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> expected, given the nature of language learning; (c) grammar correction has significant harmful effects; and (d) the various arguments offered for continuing it all lacks merit.

The assertion that Truscott made above triggered a serious debate among researchers, theorists, and teachers who were in support of the idea as well as those who strongly think that grammar correction is helpful. He castigated researchers and theorists who support grammar correction for failing to advance valid reasons for continuing the practice which has serious repercussions in the educational arena. Truscott (1996: 351) argued emphatically that it is exceptionally challenging for a busy teacher to maintain consistency and systematicity in error correction, as they are responsible for managing numerous students. Again, teachers are overburdened by a comprehensive syllabus that they must complete rather than focusing only on error correction. To confirm that his idea of casting aside grammar correction is well supported, Truscott supported his argument by referring to the works done by researchers such as (Krashen, 1982; Zamel,1985; Russel & Russel, 1987; Leki, 1991). The findings from these studies confirmed that in some cases L1 students find it difficult to understand the comments given by their teachers, hence the situation in L2 classes is extremely difficult.

Following Ferris's (1999) reaction to Truscott's (1999) assertion that grammatical correction is detrimental and ought to be abandoned, Truscott (1999) reacted in an attempt to support his assertion. He adamantly disputes that grammar correction gives students any opportunities and reiterates that it has to be dropped. He cautiously refuted every accusation Ferris leveled at him by offering a counterargument to support his position. He made it clear that Ferris had misquoted him in some places and that the data she cited to back up her assertions was false.

> The only two areas, however, where Truscott (1999) and Ferris (1999) concurred were that there is a lack of research on this subject and that

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individuals who advocate for error correction should be able to provide evidence beyond a reasonable doubt.

In a lighter vein, Truscott (1999) suggested that educators be given access to all relevant information so they can form their own well-informed opinions. He views teachers as the caretakers of the classroom, continually battling the agonising task of developing proficient writers. It is unwise to undervalue teachers' capacity to conduct action research on classroom procedures. They are ultimately guided in their decision-making about which model to use for their students by their ability to assess the writing proficiency of their students.

To bring his argument to a close, Truscott (1999) affirmed that teachers must adopt a "Correction-free approach" in their classrooms which can provide a conducive environment for students to learn because anxiety and stress are decreased by a correction-free approach. Students who receive critical comments may develop a fear-based mindset and be less willing to take chances with their work. Students feel more at ease and assured in their writing skills when instruction is given without corrections. Students are more inclined to experiment with language, attempt new terminology and structure, and create their distinctive writing style when they are not afraid of being corrected.

It is the responsibility of teachers to change the attitude of students toward written corrective feedback and let the students focus on other aspects of writing. The next section presents contrary views to Truscott's claim.

2.13 Prospects of using corrective feedback to improve writing

Research on CF or error feedback is still controversial as mentioned earlier. There have been several researches conducted purposely to prove that error feedback is of much importance to students after Truscott's (1996) thesis on the futility of CF. In an attempt to show the prospects of CF, Ferris (1997) made a critical analysis of teachers' comments on the first and second drafts of 110 papers that were written by ESL tertiary students. Ferris (1997) found that there were lots of improvements regarding

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the writing levels of the students in the second draft since they made corrections depending on the comments that lecturers made in the first draft. Truscott's article was seriously scrutinised by Ferris (1999) to bring justifications for the fact that written feedback is beneficial if it is applied precisely. She blames Truscott for stating emphatically that "grammar correction is ineffective" and that "grammar correction has significant harmful effects". She further asserted that it was in haste that Truscott concluded that grammar correction is not effective without conducting enough research to back his claim. Also, she criticised Truscott by saying that his conclusions were premature and overly strong. Again, she argued that Truscott did not define the 'error correction' which tends to mislead language teachers who do not make critical reviews and so will take his views as correct. Finally, she accused him of only selecting the literature review which supports his claim just to prove that error correction is detrimental.

According to Ferris (1999), CF can assist students in acquiring grammatical accuracy if it is accurately applied. To support the effectiveness of error correction, she used her previous research findings. Using highlighting and correction codes as a means of providing feedback to students, Ferris and Roberts (2001) conducted a comprehensive study. In their study, the participants were drawn from different populations and also given different compositions. The all-embracing aim of their study was to find feasible means of improving students' essays paying particular attention to correcting grammar and sentence structure. Their findings confirmed a significant improvement in the second draft as compared to the other group without correction.

Still reacting to Truscott (1999), Ferris (2004: 49) conducted another study in which she postulated that it is not possible to formulate any conclusion on error correction. The fact that "the existing research base is incomplete and inconsistent" since there is no longitudinal study conducted in this field makes it difficult to take sides. Teachers find it necessary to give feedback always because they constantly evaluate students writing levels and come to a realisation that students cannot improve if they are not helped.

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Teachers give feedback as they constantly evaluate the writing levels of their students and realise that they cannot improve without help. As far as imparting writing instructions to students is concerned, teachers must be well-equipped.
To solve the situation, Ferris (2004) hypothesised that teachers must be thoroughly prepared to treat written errors made by students as an ideal solution to belittling errors that are treatable.

Hyland (2003), in another study, affirmed that corrective feedback is a model that is valuable because it assists students to improve their work using the teachers' written comments. Observing six ESL student writers enrolled in a 14-week university programme in a case study, it was revealed that, one developmental tool that helped students' second drafts to be better was the teachers' written responses. It was also revealed that teachers' written responses do not just help students but also help teachers because it serves as a scaffolding process that teachers use to upgrade the students' writing levels. He established that although corrective feedback has more benefits, it should be noted that some language errors are not 'treatable' through feedback. He therefore suggested it is necessary for teachers to mainly concentrate on treatable errors for the improvement of the teaching and learning process.
In their recent article, Hyland and Hyland (2006) commented that rejecting written corrective feedback because of its complexity and time consuming is vain, rather, new methods and strategies which will make written corrective feedback effective must be developed by researchers.

Early studies on error feedback mainly focused "on writing as a product" while current studies "point forward to the student's future writing and the development of his or her writing processes". Hyland and Hyland (2006) synthesised the prospects of corrective feedback by referring to numerous studies conducted on different parts of the globe. They succinctly and directly suggested in their study's conclusion that more research is needed to understand the function of feedback in fostering autonomous writing skills since the primary goal of response is to assist students in becoming independent

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writers capable of critiquing and improving their work. Their claim specifically draws attention to the possibility of corrective feedback when researchers forge a new course rather than concentrating solely on earlier research. One way to help ESL students develop their writing independence is through CF. Therefore, in my opinion, future CF research has to deliberately concentrate on developing a new paradigm that will result in competent writers with independent writing abilities.

Hyland and Hyland (2006) further put together a detailed volume that centred on how to provide effective feedback to ESL students on their writing. The volume is made up of numerous studies conducted across the globe by leading researchers with faultless credentials. Hyland and Hyland (2006: 1) outlined the basic aim of the volume by indicating that:

> Summative feedback, which focuses on evaluating writing as a final product, has largely been supplanted by formative feedback that emphasizes guiding the student toward improving future writing and refining their writing process. More broadly, there is an increasing recognition of the social and political dimensions inherent in both teacher and peer responses.

The empirical data used in most articles gives enough evidence that teachers and lecturers who judiciously use feedback techniques are doing a good job of empowering students. Leki (2006), for instance, collected empirical data from several graduate L2 students attending the University of Tennessee. The study reveals that because they were not exposed to process writing, which concentrated on corrective feedback, the respondents found it difficult to create a longer piece of discipline-specific material. “Written feedback is one form of socio-academic interaction that these L2 graduate students want, need, and deserve,” Leki (2006: 282) stated in closing.

Evans, Hartshorn, McCollen, and Wolfersberger (2010) emphasised that contemporary scholars should move beyond writing pedagogy methods designed for L1 writers, as these approaches may be less effective in L2 writing contexts. They

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argued that doing so would enhance the efficacy and practical application of corrective feedback. They came up with this idea after realizing that the techniques now employed to raise L2 student writers' writing skill levels were first developed for L1 student writers. The proposal, which offers a solid recommendation for this highly contentious issue that has been dragged out for years, is seen as a daring step in the right direction. They indicated in their study's conclusion that, although more research is needed to create new techniques tailored especially for L2 student writers, corrective feedback is beneficial.

2.14 The role of direct and indirect corrective feedback on students' writing

Some researchers concentrated on the role of providing direct or indirect feedback to revive the discussion about whether written corrective feedback (henceforth WCF) offers students opportunities or challenges. By making this change, researchers were able to evaluate how students performed when they received direct versus indirect feedback. Overt correction, another name for direct feedback, is when a teacher corrects a student's work by writing the proper spelling or phrase in the paper. On the other hand, the teacher uses indirect feedback, also known as coded error feedback, to point out errors in students' papers by underlining, highlighting, or circling the problematic area. Hendrickson's groundbreaking research (1980) clearly distinguished between direct and indirect WCF. According to him, direct WCF occurs when a teacher not only identifies the mistake in a student's script but also gives the right format. On the other hand, indirect WCF describes the circumstance in which the teacher highlights the mistake but fails to provide an accurate version of the statement. The majority of research in this area has yielded inconsistent findings regarding the necessity for teachers to provide students with WCF, either directly or indirectly. According to Lalande (1982), indirect feedback is the best strategy because it allows students time to consider the error they have identified and come up with a correct response.

Studies on direct and indirect WCF did not receive serious attention during the 1980s because of the controversial issue of whether to give correction or not to give correction. Numerous studies on this topic were conducted in the past ten years and

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the majority of researchers support the usefulness of WCF. The study conducted by Ferris and Roberts (2001) confirms that students who receive WCF from their teachers improve in accuracy over time. In a related study by Ellis (2009), two complex issues are outlined, whether or not corrective feedback should be focused on and which specific errors should be corrected by the teacher. These problems help researchers define the kinds of errors that need to be fixed and the kinds of feedback that should be applied. Baleghizadeh and Dadashi (2011) argue that indirect WCF helps students to reflect on their linguistic form and engage themselves in the process. It enables the students to be actively engaged in improving their texts mechanically rather than just copying the corrections made by the teacher in their texts.

In sum, numerous studies to date focus their attention on the impact of direct and indirect WCF rather than on whether to give or not to give WCF. It gives hope to language teachers who value WCF as a viable option for scaffolding students' writing levels to become proficient writers. As a result, WCF is a vital tool for helping students to revise their texts effectively focusing on the errors indicated.

2.15 Genre Approach to Academic Writing

The genre approach was created expressly to fill in the gaps left by the process approach's inability to effectively work with WCF. By emphasising the development of students' language skills over an extended period through the five essential stages of pre-writing, writing, revising, editing, and final product, the process approach made a significant contribution to the evolution of writing. (Hayes & Flower, 1980; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). By employing the five essential stages, the methodology's practitioners were able to create many techniques for helping students discover and enhance their writing. On the other hand, they were unable to produce a theory explaining how meanings in writing in a second language are socially constructed. Thus, the release of Swales' monograph (1981) marked the beginning of a very fruitful idea known as the genre approach.

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During the last three decades, a great deal of research has been done on the benefits of teaching ESL writers through the genre approach. Before they write on a topic related to a genre, students can gain a deeper understanding of that genre by using a genre approach. Additionally, it clarified the connection between language and community, enabling students to comprehend the norms upheld by a certain group and the writing style demanded by a specific establishment. Nonetheless, there are significant disagreements among scholars regarding the proper way to define a genre and its distinguishing characteristics. Hyon (1996) carried out a thorough investigation that fundamentally altered the genre approach to writing. The English for Specific Purpose (ESP) perspective, New Rhetoric Study, and Systematic Functional Approach are the three broad categories into which he divided genre. Although each field defines genre according to its criteria, these definitions are very similar. To highlight the differences and similarities between the various genres, a brief examination of each is provided in the section below.

2.16 Genre and English for Specific Purpose (ESP)

Although research on English for Specific Purposes (henceforth ESP) started in the 1960s, Swales' (1981) article on the subject is where the field's concentration on genre studies first emerged. According to Swales (1981), a genre is a communication event that takes place in a functional setting rather than a social or personal one and has a goal—or collection of goals—that the participants in the event understand together. Swales conducted a comprehensive examination of forty-eight (48) research article openers to find recurring rhetorical devices. He concluded, after careful analysis, that all article introductions share a common structure because they are composed of four rhetorical devices that always appear in a certain order. Each move consists of multiple steps that explicitly explain how students can use social context and cultural nuances to enhance their writing. Despite the significant influence, Swales' research had on the teaching of writing as a second language, he was unable to clearly explain the distinctions between moves one and two.

On the part of Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP is "an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's

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reason for learning". Because of its learner-centered methodology, ESP is described as an approach rather than a product, implying that curriculum planners and developers need to design the course contents that meet the needs of the students.
In the introduction to their most comprehensive volume, Paltridge and Starfield (2013) define English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language, aimed at enabling learners to use English within a specific domain. The vocabulary and linguistic rules unique to a given course must be taught to students who have registered for it. Swales (1990) underlined the necessity of teaching genre-specific discourse by critically synthesising the connections among language, culture, and the social context in which students write. He made the case that texts produced by ESL students in higher education ought to be assessed and ranked according to their language proficiency. Swales (1990: 4) clearly outlined that student writing in colleges and universities, should not be viewed solely as an individually–oriented, inner-directed cognitive process, but as an acquired response to the discourse conventions that arise from preferred ways of creating and communicating knowledge within particular communities.

The crux of Swales' argument is that writing is an abstract skill that is harder to learn than other language skills; as such, a written text that a student creates is not "individually–-oriented" but rather a collection of skills that are prescribed by a specific community. Universities and colleges must assess how the sociocultural environment affects students' writing. The genre approach to writing helps students gain sufficient control over the texts they write. Swales (1990) emphasises that a discourse community must name a genre since its members are the ones who use it. He defines a genre as a group of communicative events that share similar goals. According to him, these purposes are acknowledged by the anticipated members of the parent discourse community. Swales (2004) later revised his view, arguing that a genre's communicative function is dynamic. Due to changing conditions, the purpose may evolve, shift, and even expand or contract as needed. As a result, a text's genre classification cannot be determined by the genre's intended message. Ken Hyland, one of the primary developers of ESP in genre analysis, has written about the issue

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to draw attention to the predicament faced by ESL writers. In a nutshell, the genre is defined as “abstract, socially recognised ways of using language” by Hyland (2007: 149). The succinct description clarifies that genre can be used consistently across various discourse communities. It clarifies even more why the genre approach is more useful since it helps students comprehend the meaning and function of each genre, which eventually improves their written compositions. In line with Hyland (2007), Swales (2004) notes that a text in genre studies has a unique communication purpose that is ingrained in the organisation's conventions. Hence, students must understand that the ability to write proficiently in a second language is part of communication competence.

For ESL students who find it difficult to write texts proficiently, Hyland (2007) suggests that teaching a particular genre in ESP can be very beneficial. Over the past ten years, most researchers have viewed ESP in genre studies as a shift from the process approach, which places a higher priority on students' language skills development, to a functional approach, which focuses on discourse analysis and the context in which language is used (Hyland, 2003, 2007; Atkinson, 2004; Cheng, 2006). The genre method is highly helpful because it enables students to “participate effectively in the world outside the ESL classroom” in addition to helping them compose assignments for formative and summative evaluation in an academic setting (Hyland 2007: 149). It follows a traditional format since its goal is to provide pertinent answers to some of the most important questions on a certain subject in a suitable range and tone. Moreover, in a plenary speech, Hyland (2008) defines genre as a concept that groups work together and illustrates how writers generally employ language to respond to recurrent events. To classify works that address similar subjects and have many similarities, the phrase encompasses both social and cognitive concepts.

Researchers are constantly putting forth new strategies for positioning and maintaining this technique after many years of study on ESP genre analysis. ESP and writing are related, and in one of his monographs on the subject, Hyland (2013: 109) came to the following conclusions:

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> ESP writing instruction is essentially a practically oriented activity committed to demystifying prestigious forms of discourse, unlocking students' creative and expressive abilities, and facilitating their access to greater life chances. The fact that it is grounded in the descriptions of texts and practices, however, means that it also seeks to provide teachers and students with a way of understanding how writing is shaped by individuals making language choices in social contexts, and so contributes to both theory and practice.

The aforementioned quote makes it very evident that effective instruction in ESP writing is useful in scaffolding students to express ideas in written texts. One other benefit is that ESP writing instruction allows both the teacher and the student to better understand writing through the process of making unique language choices within their discourse communities.

ESP in genre studies has come a long way since it was founded over thirty years ago, and it continues to reposition itself to be relevant. Paltridge and Starfied (2013) conducts a comprehensive examination of important studies on genre and ESP to show the promise that this technique has produced. He points out that ESP's shift from studying language usage in general to focusing on language use in specific situations and genres has been one of its greatest contributions to genre studies. The shift to using language in a particular context is pertinent to this study since the participants are learning English as a second language and find it difficult to write texts well.

2.17 Genre and New Rhetoric Studies

Researchers from North America who primarily concentrated on the situational context in which genre occurred comprise the field of the new rhetoric genre. They gave the social goals more weight because they think that students' writing style is significantly influenced by the social actions they engage in regularly. Miller (1984), a pioneer in modern rhetoric studies, defines genre as stereotyped rhetorical activities based on recurring situations. This definition views genre as a dynamic action based on

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rhetorical structures, which is a shift from the traditional understanding of genre. Miller further argues that the focus of a rhetorically sound definition of genre should be the action it accomplishes, rather than the content or form of the discourse. According to her, the genre is a social action in which students are required to pay attention to the processes involved in creating the text rather than just the content or structure of the work. In their written compositions, students must convey how they comprehend the society in which they live.

The Systematic Functional Linguistic (SFL) perspective of the genre was supplanted by new rhetoric studies, which placed more emphasis on the social functions and cultural interpretations of language (Freedman & Medway, 1994; Devitt, 2004). By referencing ancient Greek culture to highlight the relationship between language and culture, Miller stresses the significance of culture. Miller claims that the Greeks considered cultural artifacts to be repositories of knowledge of the various dimensions of what we know as human culture, including aesthetic, economic, political, and religious beliefs (Miller, 1994). As such, there must be an effort to reconstruct knowledge by considering cultural artifacts as exemplars of specific genres.

The term Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) was created by Freedman to refer to all genre theory research conducted by North American scholars. Freedman and Medway (1994) have employed RGS for a longer time to shed light on their empirical observations of the communicative practices of students and professionals. The primary goal of RGS research is to regularly assess current trends in specific genres and how they impact language use. A common belief among RGS researchers is that, like culture, genre is dynamic and changeable. Miller (1994) asserts that genres change, evolve, and decay, emphasising the need for us to continue interpreting cultural shifts in our communities as they impact the development of the genre.
Scholars who adopt this approach prefer using ethnographic techniques for text analysis as a means of gathering empirical data and comprehending the context in which the text was written.

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2.18 Genre and Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

The origin of Systematic Functional Linguistics (henceforth SFL) in the genre can be traced to the published works of Michael Halliday (1978, 1984). Halliday was the head of the Linguistics Department of the University of Sydney from 1975 and has written extensively on the topic. Often referred to as “the Sydney School,” systematic functional linguistics to genre studies examined the connection between language and its use in social contexts (Hyon, 1996). In contrast to a system of rules that students must learn and then replicate in their written texts, researchers in this field view language as a tool for meaning-making.

Because language is intimately associated with a specific culture, Halliday and Hasan (1985) characterise it as a social semiotic activity. The semiotic system of a community is constituted by the way its members live, speak, and go about their daily lives. The University of Sydney conducted an empirical study that led to the creation of a syllabus that demonstrated how meanings are socially constructed. Language, according to Halliday (1985), is made up of several systems that give authors a range of options when expressing meaning. The argument put forth by systematic functional linguists is that humans interpret language in various ways every single day. As stated in the introduction to his edition, the goal of functional grammar, according to Halliday (1994), is to create a grammar for text analysis purposes—that is, a grammar that would enable one to make logical and helpful statements about any text—spoken or written—in contemporary English. Since people see language as a tool for socialisation, SFL focuses on text analysis to assess how people use the language daily.

Halliday (1994) delves deeper into the connection between language and context, or the world around the language. She tries to explain what is happening (the field), who is involved (the tenor), and the role language is playing (the mode) to connect the situation, and type with specific semantic and lexico-grammatical patterns.

The idea that language structure is key to social function and context has shaped many SFL research studies. Martin and Ross (2003) identify ideation, appraisal,

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conjunction, identification, and periodicity as the five main systems for detailed text analysis. These systems are practical tools for text analysts. Additionally, Eggins (2004) argues that SFL has two dimensions: an analytical methodology to clarify the systematic functional theory of language, and the theory of language as a social institution. She defines genres as discourse patterns and explains how the three meta-functions identified by Halliday in SFL—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—interconnect.

Moreover, Eggins (2004) investigates the question of language as a semiotic system by showing how a sign in a semiotic system comes to have meaning through participation in syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships with other signs. She employs a useful semiotic system of traffic lights at a crossroads where there are three distinct colors and the driver has to choose. A semiotic system is made up of the various behaviors that each of the three colours causes the driver to exhibit. For example, when the light turns red, the driver needs to stop; when it turns green, the driver needs to proceed; and amber alerts the driver to stop. Social conventions create semiotic systems that are meant to convey meaning. As a result, language is thought of as a complex semiotic system since sentence construction requires the writer to make deliberate word choices.

Bitchener's (2009) study had a significant influence on the value of systematic functional genre in writing. He carefully reviewed a large number of theses and dissertations submitted by master's, doctoral, and honors students at one university in New Zealand. He concluded that the best way to help students grasp what to write in a given chapter is to use the genre approach. Bitchener (2009: 3) summarised the prospects of using the genre approach as:

> The advantages of the genre approach are several: it focuses on the very issues identified by supervisors and students as potentially problematic; it can provide explicit understanding of how target texts are structured and why they are written the way they are (purpose & function); it can demystify the

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requirements and expectations and empower students to approach the writing of a thesis or dissertation with ease and confidence.

The genre approach has several benefits because it puts the student and the supervisor in a position where they must try to solve a problem together. It provides a clear explanation of the objective, significance, and role of every chapter in a thesis or dissertation. It also debunks the misconception that only exceptionally bright students are capable of writing a thesis or dissertation, which is a difficult task. Additionally, the genre approach gives students the confidence they need to confidently write their theses or dissertations. Finally, students are more knowledgeable about the subject and can organise information in chapters in a logical manner.

Only if students are placed through multiple writing programmes starting in their first year and continuing through their degree completion will they be able to fully develop their writing skills at the university level. Storch (2009) found that there is very little improvement in the written work of ESL students at the University of Melbourne who did not participate in the university's formal language support programme. The writing abilities of 25 international students who were concurrently enrolled at the university served as the basis for the study. They were given various assignments, and to confirm the findings, they were carefully assessed using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. After just one semester of coursework, these students were unable to exhibit linguistic accuracy and complexity in their written assignments, even with the combination of formal study and immersion experience. Nonetheless, a different cohort of international students who participated in the university's language support programmes demonstrated a tenfold increase in the linguistic precision and intricacy of their written assignments. This demonstrates how teaching academic writing through a systematic functional genre gives students more chances to succeed academically.

2.19 The Process Genre Approach

Early in the 20th century, some academics were forced to suggest the process genre approach to writing instruction due to the disparate theoretical viewpoints employed

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in the three research areas: contrastive rhetoric, process approach, and genre approach. To scaffold the writing levels of ESL students, Badger and White (2000) contended that the genre approach must be inextricably tied to the product and process approaches. They argued that certain elements of all three strategies help ESL students develop academic writing skills. Further stating “that the three approaches are complimentary,” Badger and White (2000 :153) suggested a “process genre model” as a workable solution. Yan (2000) provided strong support for the concept by emphasising that the process genre approach's steps must be incorporated into the genre approach for it to work. Students have plenty of opportunity to use both macro and micro level writing in their written texts according to the process genre approach. Using the phases in the three models, Badger and White (2000) proposed six helpful actions that the student and the teacher should follow: planning, preparation, modeling and reinforcement, joint construction, independent construction, and revision. Since the six processes took valuable inputs from the three models, they offer an inclusive model of writing in ESL. According to Badger and White (2000 :158), a written piece of work is intended to accomplish a certain goal that arises from a particular scenario since writing is inherently rooted in a social context. The rhetorical organisation of writers’ texts is significantly influenced by the social context in which they arrange their writings. Because of this, genre studies help ESL writers arrange their content so that readers may quickly identify well-known examples that fit into a given genre. Furthermore, Bathia (2004) offers a multifaceted method for genre studies by identifying a common ground that all three techniques can utilise. According to her, genre approaches share traits that can occasionally overlap, therefore identifying a text’s structural aspects should take precedence over focusing on various theoretical issues. Bathia (2004) makes an argument regarding the intricacy of genre theory in a different monograph, referring to it as a “socio-pragmatic space” where the majority of academics and professional experts spend their daily lives. Therefore, combining Bathia’s (2004) suggestion with Badger and White’s (2000) can aid in finding a tenable solution that can bring the three approaches together.

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Because of this, lecturers need to be able to take into account the language and cultural diversity of their students to choose appropriate methodological variables that can be used in a given scenario. All students need to receive sufficient support to improve their poor writing skills. They also need to realise that various ESL writers will benefit from different models in different circumstances. The most beneficial learning occurs when lecturers actively involve their students through a range of needs-based tactics.

2.20 A summary of the salient views of the four writing theories

Four theories dominated writing in ESL for forty years, beginning with the publication of Robert Kaplan's groundbreaking work in 1966. These theories include a genre approach to writing, written CF, contrastive rhetoric, and writing as a process. While all of the theories provided valuable insights into ESL writing, none of them could adequately teach students all of the skills they need. Because it is so difficult, writing in English as a second language is not a skill that can be acquired quickly or through social interaction. Because of this, writing in ESL requires combining various theories. Furthermore, Connor (1996, 2002) made a significant contribution to the survival of contrastive rhetoric and the modification of its paradigm from the original one developed by Kaplan in 1966.

Beginning in the early 1970s, ESL scholars suggested a paradigm change from the product-oriented approach to the process-oriented approach. Researchers like Flower and Hayes (1981) later stated that the writing process should be undertaken in recursive stages, refuting the pioneering findings (Murray, 1972) that writing must occur in distinct linear stages. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) distinguished between writers who were experienced and those who were not. They contended that while professional writers utilise the "knowledge transforming process," which necessitates extensive planning, rookie writers use the "knowledge telling process," which does not. Other researchers suggested that written corrective feedback may be used in conjunction with the process technique during the period when it was being widely used. Many studies on the potential of providing corrective feedback have been carried out since the 1980s; nonetheless, scholars such as Truscott (1996) made a compelling case for the elimination of WCF. In response, Ferris (1999, 2004) carried

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out a couple of research on WCF to demonstrate its importance in helping low-proficiency ESL writers improve as writers. The primary obstacle is that the majority of studies were carried out without a control group, which would have allowed researchers to compare the outcomes of their discoveries. When used correctly, WCF can be used in conjunction with the process writing technique by concentrating on specific linguistic elements. The genre method of writing emerged as a result of severe disagreement in WCF and inconsistencies in the writing process. Based on a groundbreaking study by Swales (1981) on the introduction of 48 articles, the methodology was developed in Australia. Halliday (1994) contributed to the approach's increased popularity with his functional grammar notion. The model immediately became well-liked in Australia because it allowed students to create essays that were cohesive and intelligible, based on subjects they knew well. The strong relationship between language and its social roles is emphasised by genre theory. It is defined by Kress and Knapp (1992) as a goal-oriented, staged social process because it concentrates on social processes that are common in a given culture. The model is now used all around the world since researchers contend that it presents students with more opportunities than difficulties. To raise the writing proficiency of ESL students worldwide, the theory by itself is ineffective. Therefore, adopting a specific theory that may give students the necessary skills to write successfully is out of the question for ESL teachers and practitioners. This is mostly because writing requires a variety of talents, which teachers cannot simply teach their students. It is not only a matter of rules and regulations. In summarising the discussion, Hyland (2002:2) notes that several theories are “perceived as complementary and overlapping perspectives, representing potentially compactable means of understanding the complex reality of writing.” Since ESL authors may use social processes and incorporate elements of genre orientation while concentrating on the finished output, the theories complement one another and overlap. Thus, a teacher can conduct a reflective assessment of the techniques, supplies, and processes to employ in the classroom by combining specific elements of several theories.

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2. 21 Prospects of teaching academic writing in higher education

One contentious issue at institutions of higher learning is the teaching of academic writing among students who study through ESL. There are lots of arguments by researchers regarding academic writing and these arguments centre on whether academic writing helps students to fit in well in the academic community or if it just wastes students' time because they need to find their means of adjusting to academic discourse. The following subtopics give the prospects on why academic writing ought to be taught in higher education rather than assuming that students can acquire it through an osmotic process.

2.22 Main issues in teaching Academic Writing

At the tertiary level, teaching academic writing for ESL students must be preliminary to all the courses that students register for. It is a necessity for students to be taken through different writing skills that will aid them in bringing out their potential at an academic level. Henning et al. (2005) postulate that "writing is an integral part of the research process", and as part of their studies, students at the tertiary level are expected to research. It is required of students to be able to organise ideas, evaluate critically, all the sources consulted, and write according to the academic style required. Hence, students ought to be well grounded on how research is conducted, how to use referencing techniques, and how to effectively practice academic writing as a way of introducing them to the academic style of writing. There have been several studies conducted all over the globe on writing in ESL and these studies have unveiled the challenges faced by students at the tertiary level (Tshotsho, 2014; Bychkovska & Lee, 2017; Dansieh, 2018; Singh, 2019; Acheampong, 2023). Giridharan and Robson (2011: 578) emphasised the important attributes of academic writing by stating that:

> The capacity to write well academically at tertiary levels is a plausible expectation of university students. Academic writing is often developed in students through formal instructional settings, although proficiency in academic writing may be influenced by cognitive development, educational experiences, and overall proficiency in a second language for ESL students.

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This quotation by Giridharan and Robson (2011) clearly shows that differences exist between how secondary school students and tertiary students write. In the university too, without formal instruction, students are not expected to adapt to the expected academic level of writing. This makes it very necessary for a specific university to ensure that non-native speakers of English who are using English as a medium need to be taken through a programme to help them meet the tormenting demands of academic writing. In South Africa, students are to be taught to write effectively as a way of improving the quality of graduates that universities produce every year. In that regard, Hattingh and Van der Walt (2005) conducted a study in which they stated that "writing demands a higher degree of accuracy than oral production and remains an essential component of competence in a second language". They made this quotation because they realised some institutions do not teach writing and highlight mainly oral communication competency. The findings of the study by Hattingh and van der Walt are in line with those of a study by Butler (2011) conducted at the University of Pretoria. It was confirmed by Butler that ESL students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels face serious challenges in writing academically acceptable papers. Butler (2011: 8) proposed ''a generative framework that may be used for the design of writing course materials in tertiary education" after careful investigation. The course materials can help lecturers to know what they are expected to teach their students. On the other hand, the materials can help students interact intellectually and creatively with the lecturers when they write different texts.

2.23 Interference of First Language into English as the LOLT

Studies conducted on the prospects and challenges of teaching academic writing at the tertiary level authenticate that there is first-language interference in the texts written in English by students. In some cases, students produce idiosyncratically written essays that have glaring traces of direct translation from their L1. Henning, et al. (2005), conducted a study and in that study, they stated that students are not able to produce convincing arguments in their assignments and in the end resort to plagiarism as a result of their inability to paraphrase information accessed from different sources. Although there is evidence that the majority of ESL students rely on

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their First Language when they write their essays in English, there is a difference in the levels of reliance (Sanmuganathan, 2017; Mirshekaran, Namaziandost & Nazari, 2018). For instance, Mirshekaran, Namaziandost and Nazari (2018) compared proficient L2 writers to lower proficient L2 writers and postulated that proficient L2 writers do not depend mainly on their L1 but lower proficient writers do. The study highlights the significant impact of L2 proficiency on writing skills, showing is associated with better writing performance and reduced first language (L1) for structuring and planning writing tasks. Similarly, Sanmuganathan's (2017) study explores the reliance of ESL students on their (L1) when writing in English. He observes that while many ESL learners depend on their L1, the extent of this reliance varies. Factors such as students' backgrounds, English proficiency levels, and the complexity of writing tasks influence this dependence. His research highlights that some students heavily rely on their native language for vocabulary and grammar, which can result in challenges with coherence and fluency in their English writing.

To form a concept of the challenges faced by students learning to write, three essential aspects of writing in a second language were the focus of Cumming's (1989) research. These dimensions were (a) the characteristics of the texts that individuals generate, (b) the composition process that people utilise while writing, and (c) the socio-cultural setting in which people write. He climaxed his study by highlighting that low proficient writers mainly depend on their L1 whereas expert writers mostly use their L1 when searching for words. Consistent with Sanmuganathan's position and Mirshekaran, Namaziandost and Nazari's position, Wolfersberger (2003) examined the composing strategies of ESL Japanese students studying in an English medium institution. The participants were students with low proficiency L2 writing skills who experienced difficulties in writing in English. The study revealed that students with low proficiency levels in English compose their texts in L1, more particularly during the prewriting stage, and then translate it to L2 which is the language of instruction. Contrarily, Wang and Wen's (2002) study established those high proficient writers switched more often between their L1 and their L2 when compared to low proficient writers. The study was conducted with sixteen adult Chinese–speaking ESL students with different writing

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proficiency levels. Wang and Wen (2002) concluded that, in contrast to other research, which tended to demonstrate that L1 use declined as writers' L2 skills increased, the current study demonstrated that bilingual writers' L1 does not diminish as their L2 proficiency increases. Wang and Wen argued that the quality of switching and strategies they use showed a developmental stage which shows that they are proficient in L2 use. So, diligent ESL researchers and academics must perpetually assess the writing proficiency levels of students in institutions of their own before making broad generalisations about the findings.

Although there are opposing results from different studies conducted, Yigzaw (2012) affirmed that all students, regardless of their proficiency levels, use their L1 for various writing activities. However, the extent of this dependency varies based on their proficiency levels. The findings indicate that lower proficiency writers tend to rely more heavily on their L1 during their writing process compared to higher proficiency writers. Beare and Bourdages (2007) agree with the assertion above that highly proficient L2 students hardly use their L1 when writing their text in English. Highly proficient bilingual writers can process information in English and they can easily switch from L1 to L2 and vice versa. Van Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam, and Sanders (2009) conducted an empirical investigation on the use of L1 during L2 writing. Twenty first-year university students who speak Dutch as their first language were the participants in the study. For the study, every student wrote four short argumentative essays in their first language (Dutch) and another four in their second language (English) under think-aloud conditions. Four conclusions were drawn after a thorough examination, to some extent, all writers who participated used L1 while writing in L2, they predicted that L1 use would be related between activities, L2 proficiency does not influence the writing process, and that general writing proficiency harms L1 use during L2 writing but has a positive influence on L2 use during L2 writing.

2.24 Academic writing as the main tool for summative evaluation

It is imperative to note that the higher education system nationally and internationally solely depends on academic writing as the main tool for summative evaluation. The students who are proficient in academic writing mainly acquire better scores or grades

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when compared to those who struggle to state their opinions. Cummins (1984) reports that “language proficiency pervades every area” as a means of showcasing the significance of acquiring academic writing proficiency. During Basic Education, students must be prepared to be linguistically competent before they enroll at higher institutions of learning. Sommers and Saltz (2004) opine that “writing teaches students to think”. It is for that reason that it is a common practice in all tertiary institutions that students must reproduce what they have learned in either a test or examination. This implies that students who are proficient in the language of instruction are normally able to produce well-written texts in different courses. On the other hand, students who lack proficiency or those who have limited proficiency are often penalised by their teachers based on weak rhetorical structure and language errors. However, due to limited or low proficiency in ESL, the majority of students in Ghanaian institutions of higher learning struggle to do well in examinations. Numerous factors contribute to this abnormal situation and within a short space of time, it is not easy for tertiary institutions to address them. These interrelated factors are different in all institutions but they include the following: insufficient bridging courses between high school and tertiary level, lack of adequate English proficiency levels by both students and lecturers, bunking classes by students, work overload among lecturers, overcrowding in lecture halls and disruption of lessons due to social activities on campus.

Duncan (2007) argues that tertiary students are more focused on the grades they receive in written assignments than on the feedback provided by tutors and lecturers. They are less enthusiastic about improving their writing proficiency as long as they can advance from one level to the next.

2.25 Components of academic writing

While error-free text is a desirable goal in academic writing, it is not the sole indicator of proficiency. In other words, a written text devoid of errors does not automatically equate to academic proficiency. Proficiency encompasses several broader dimensions beyond mere correctness. It is noteworthy that writing proficiency in a particular language involves obtaining the skills to communicate effectively through writing and this includes coherence and cohesion, phraseology and vocabulary,

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sentence structure and grammar, punctuation and spelling, style and tone (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Din et al., 2018). Morrison and Evans (2018) also state that writing proficiency comprises the capacity to appropriately combine and analyse information from multiple sources using apt language, organisation, and formatting. Apt language refers to the use of precise, formal and appropriate vocabulary that conveys ideas clearly and effectively. Also, in academic writing, there should be a logical structure and flow of ideas within the writing. Ideas should be presented coherently, often following a clear introduction, body and conclusion. Each paragraph should focus on a single idea or argument, beginning with a topic sentence followed by supporting details. Also involved in academic writing is formatting, that is the use of appropriate citation and referencing format and sticking to the norms and standards of academic discourse within a distinct field of study.

Reporting verbs are also essential in academic writing, playing a significant role in the citation process. Pecorari (2008:8) notes that citation is a rhetorical feature involving a reference ‘to something external to the citing text’. Citation involves explicitly mentioning another writer’s work within one’s text, making reference to and reporting cited sources (Buckingham & Nevile, 1997). By employing these verbs, authors can critically engage with the source material, demonstrating their understanding and analysis of the texts they incorporate (Kwon, Staples & Partridge, 2018 cited in Banini, 2021).

Excellent academic writing must consider the relationship between sentences within a paragraph and between paragraphs. A well-constructed paragraph, consisting of several sentences, requires both cohesion and coherence. Cohesion and coherence, as articulated by Halliday and Hasan in their seminal work “Cohesion in English” (1976), are fundamental concepts in understanding how texts function. Cohesion refers to the linguistic elements that connect sentences and ideas within a text, creating a sense of unity. On the part of Ampa and Basri (2019), cohesion refers to the interrelationship within a discourse that can exist either in a grammatical or lexical structure. They explain that cohesiveness arises from the harmony between elements in the discourse, creating a coherent understanding (Ampa & Basri, 2019:1339).

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They further explain that, from a syntactic perspective, cohesion refers to the smooth flow and connection of a text. Similar to the semantic system, cohesion is achieved through grammar and vocabulary.

Halliday and Hasan categorise cohesion into two main types: Grammatical and Lexical Cohesion. They indicate that Grammatical Cohesion includes: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. Reference is using pronouns or definite articles to refer back to previously mentioned entities. For example:

> My student came to the lecture hall. She looked at the projector on the table. 'She' refers to my student, in the statement above.

Bloor and Bloor (2013) aver that devices like pronouns, articles, demonstratives and comparatives are used to refer to items in linguistic or situational texts. Substitution is also replacing a word or phrase with another to avoid repetition (e.g., using "do" in place of a verb). For example: We need you to talk about the issue before we do. 'Do' in the example above has been used to substitute 'before we do'. Ellipsis occurs when you omit parts of a sentence that are understood from the context. Halliday and Hasan (1976) explain ellipsis as omitting an unimportant item that has been mentioned earlier in a text and replaced with nothing. It is similar to substitution because it is just 'substituting by zero'. For example:

a. Has he been studying?
b. No, he has not.

In the example above, 'been studying' has been omitted but nothing is used to substitute. However, we still understand the text.

Conjunctions are linking words (e.g., "and," "but," and "however") that connect clauses or sentences in a text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) state that conjunctions express 'logical semantic' relations that exist between sentences and not words and structures. For example:

a. The man was old.
b. He could lift the heavy metal.
c. The man was old but he could lift the heavy metal.

In sentence (c) 'but' connects the two sentences in (a and b).

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Another categorisation of Cohesion by Halliday and Hassan is Lexical Cohesion. This involves the connections made between words and phrases, which help to link ideas within a text. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), lexical cohesion can occur over long passages of text and is primarily categorised into two types: reiteration and collocation. Reiteration includes repetition, that is using the same word or variations of it throughout the text; synonymy that is, employing words that have similar meanings to maintain a connection; antonymy that is, using opposite terms to create contrast and Hyponymy, referring to specific instances of a more general term. On the other hand, Collocation involves the tendency of certain words to co-occur in specific contexts, creating a natural association (for example, “make a decision” or “strong coffee”). These cohesive devices play a crucial role in ensuring that texts are coherent and meaningful, facilitating the reader’s understanding of the relationships between different parts of the text in any academic writing.

Coherence refers to the overall semantic unity of a text. It is more about how well the ideas flow logically and how easily a reader can understand the relationships between them. Coherence is influenced by: The logical arrangement of ideas, the thematic development throughout the text and the reader's ability to infer connections based on context and prior knowledge. While cohesion can be seen as the surface-level connectivity achieved through linguistic devices, coherence represents deeper semantic relationships that contribute to the overall meaning of the text. In general, Halliday and Hasan's framework highlights that effective writing relies on both cohesion and coherence. Cohesion provides the structural ties that hold a text together, while coherence ensures that it makes sense as a whole. Understanding these concepts is crucial for evaluating and improving writing quality in academic contexts.

Also, observing the mechanics of writing in academic writing is essential for ensuring clarity, professionalism, readability, adherence to standards, and effective communication. The mechanics of writing refers to the set of conventions and rules

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that govern the technical aspects of writing. These mechanics include various components such as spelling, which involves arranging letters in the correct order to form words. It is vital to ensure that the intended meaning is conveyed accurately. Consistent and correct spelling enhances clarity and professionalism in writing. Punctuation marks also play a critical role in clarifying meaning and structure within sentences. They help separate ideas, indicate pauses, and convey emotions. Key punctuation marks include: Commas which are used to separate items in a list or clauses; Full stops which indicate the end of a statement; Question Marks which denote interrogative sentences; and Exclamation Marks which express strong emotions or commands. Capitalisation is another component of mechanics. Capitalisation rules dictate when to use uppercase letters. For example, capitalising the first word of a sentence, Proper nouns (names of people, places, etc.) and titles and headings. Understanding these elements is crucial for effective written communication. Again, understanding the eight parts of speech—nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and articles—is essential for constructing grammatically correct sentences. Each part serves a specific function in conveying meaning. Writing mechanics are not merely rules to memorise; they serve as guidelines that enhance the clarity and effectiveness of communication. Mastery of these mechanics allows writers to present their ideas coherently and persuasively, making their work more impactful. Academic writing ought to be written per the varied referencing styles and formatting that a specific university adopts for use. The following are several referencing styles that students could use at a particular university: Harvard, American Psychological Association (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago and Oxford. Once students find ideas in the sources, they should not fail to acknowledge them through citation and referencing.

There is a manifest dearth of documented research on university students' particular writing challenges both locally and internationally. Amuseghan and Tunde-Awe (2016) examined written English language examination papers of 50 final-year undergraduate students from the Department of Arts Education at the Adekunle Ajasin University, in Nigeria to identify the types of errors that still showed in the written work

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of graduating students studying English. It was generally found that the participants had challenges in learning and using correct grammatical rules in English. Amuseghan and Tunde-Awe made a recommendation that the common challenges in language learning could be solved by remedial teaching with the aim that the problems found would be the foundation on which effective teaching materials could be prepared. The study stresses the fact that if effective teaching materials are adopted in teaching the English language, the kinds of errors could be brought to the barest minimum. The writers believe that there may be an improvement in early intervention in English language learning if teaching materials are used.

Dewanti (2014) investigated errors in the writing of second-semester students in a Diploma programme at the English Department of Airlangga University, Indonesia. Twenty-six (26) narratives from 26 students were used by Dewanti (2014) to find out the types of grammatical errors and the most dominant errors committed by the target group. Dewanti (2014) concluded that students who learn English as a Foreign Language tend to make grammatical errors in their writing. Amuseghan and Tunde-Awe (2016) and Dewanti (2014) all investigated errors in students' writing, an aspect of academic writing and they all found grammatical challenges in students' writing.

Noori (2020) analysed the difficulties faced by undergraduate English major students in Academic Writing. This study provides insight into the challenges students encounter in academic writing in terms of content, structure, and language. Students struggle with formulating coherent ideas and maintaining focus on a single topic. They often find it difficult to differentiate between various genres of writing and to provide adequate supporting details in their work. This is similar to a study by Mwangi (2017) who noted that learners cannot often develop arguments and effectively engage with sources, which impedes their overall writing proficiency. In structure, many students are unable to provide clear introductions, conclusions, or logical sequencing of ideas and there is the challenge of proper citation and referencing. Students struggle with in-text citations and the overall structure of their papers. In terms of language, students frequently encounter three significant challenges: a lack of ability to use fitting discourse markers, difficulty in selecting appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas, and the tendency to repeat the same vocabulary throughout their writing. This aligns

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with Mwangi's (2017) findings, which revealed that learners struggle not only with appropriate terminology and spelling but also with the development of coherent arguments in their academic papers.

The research at Kabul University used a descriptive quantitative method, distributing a questionnaire to 121 undergraduate English major students. Data analysis was done using SPSS, providing a robust examination of the reported difficulties. This approach is consistent with similar studies that have effectively identified academic writing challenges through student surveys. The findings support existing literature on academic writing difficulties. Students reported significant challenges in content, structure, and language, with language issues being the most pronounced. The study's results align with previous research, highlighting linguistic deficiencies as a critical factor affecting students' writing abilities (Noori, 2020).

Also in South Africa, Mdodana-Zide and Mukuna (2023), examine the difficulties faced by first-year English Second Language (ESL) students in South Africa, the role of Academic Writing Centres, and the effectiveness of collaborative scaffolded approaches to improve writing proficiency. The study reveals that first-year students frequently face challenges with academic writing, particularly in creating high-quality content that showcases reasoning and captures the reader's attention—skills essential for success in higher education. Additionally, many students struggle with effectively structuring their essays, leading to issues with coherence and cohesion.

The study highlights the potential of Academic Writing Centres to provide a collaborative scaffolded model that supports ESL students in developing their writing skills. A descriptive research design was employed in the study, using questionnaires to assess the effectiveness of these centres. The results indicated that students found value in the support provided by Academic Writing Centres, suggesting that such initiatives can positively influence their writing proficiency.

The situation is not different in Ghana where English is the official language and all commercial signs and documents are printed in English even though there are 60 local languages. For example, Banini, Klu and Asafo-Adjei (2023) explore the occurrence, use, and function of reporting verbs in the literature review sections of doctoral theses,

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particularly focusing on those written by students in the Humanities at the University of Ghana. The study highlights the significance of reporting verbs as rhetorical tools in academic writing, emphasising their role in both presenting and critiquing scholarly work. Hyland's taxonomy categorizes reporting verbs into three distinct groups: Research Acts, Discourse Acts, and Cognition Acts. Each category plays a specific and vital role in academic writing. The analysis revealed significant patterns in how reporting verbs are used within doctoral theses. Antconc® software was used to analyse the occurrence of reporting verbs, revealing that while students employed a variety of verbs, there were notable discrepancies in their appropriateness within context. This is commensurate with the findings of Hyland (2008) which maintains that selecting the correct reporting verb is crucial for accurately reflecting the original author's intent and one's stance. Many students struggle with using reporting verbs effectively, often misusing them, which can lead to ambiguity in their writing. This issue is reflected in the literature that discusses the importance of understanding the crafty differences between reporting verbs to convey precise meaning (Bloch, 2010). The study is grounded in Social Constructionism and Systemic Functional Grammar, which suggest that language use is a social practice influenced by cultural contexts. This theoretical underpinning supports the notion that the use of reporting verbs is not merely a grammatical concern but also a reflection of broader social interactions within academic discourse.

In another study in Ghana, Mandor (2021), conducts a study on the analysis of the English language errors in the writing of second-year students in a Ghanaian university. The study used a mixed-method approach, collecting written compositions from second-year students at a Ghanaian university. The qualitative aspect focused on error taxonomies, while the quantitative aspect analysed error frequencies. A total of 16 error categories were identified, with 25% of errors related to expression, omission, spelling, and capitalisation being the most frequent. Other invaluable errors included plurality, addition, choice of words, and concord. The findings revealed that students exhibited weak writing skills, marked by grammatical errors and a lack of

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cohesion and coherence. Although issues such as tense misuse, punctuation errors, and incorrect prepositions were identified, these occurred less frequently.

Amoakohene (2017) posits repeatedly that the majority of students still experience challenges in writing error-free text despite being exposed to academic intervention by going through the Communication Skills Programme (CSP). In line with the recommendations of Amuseghan and Tunde-Awe (2016), Amoakohene (2017) gave insights to lecturers of CSP concerning the problem to help them make informed decisions concerning instruction materials and the teaching methods used.
The different aspects of errors and Error Analysis were explored by Amoakohene (2017) by extending the scope of procedural analysis of errors by Ellis (1994). Fascinatingly, the findings of Amoakohene (2017) disclosed that students of the University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS) could not effectively apply the rules of usage of the English language probably because prominence was not given to the Academic and communication Skill Progamme at UHAS thus affirming Mireku Gyimah's (2014) recommendations that Communicative Skill Programme should be extended beyond the first year to equip students with enough competence in English for their professional as well as their academic development.

Undoubtedly, all the research that has been conducted at the tertiary level in Ghana and beyond has exhibited that students have inadequate linguistic abilities to pursue university education, hence, the introduction of academic support in the form of language teaching to prepare students for academic discourse. All the researches that have been conducted are situated in the comprehensive and private universities with probably none conducted at the technical universities in Ghana. It is for this reason that this study seeks to assess the academic writing proficiency of final-year students in technical universities in Ghana to explore the academic writing proficiency of the students.

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2.26 Rubrics for assessing academic writing proficiency in technical universities in Ghana

There are many academic writing conventions, but for this study, the researcher provides a checklist that will be used to compare the written works of final-year university students in the technical universities selected.

1. Grammatical errors
    i. Linguistics Category taxonomy-Word formation (morphology), Syntax (sentence structure), lexis (vocabulary)
    Tense, prepositions, subject-verb agreement
    ii. Surface structure taxonomy- addition, omission, misformation and misordering
2. Mechanics-Spelling, Punctuations and Capitalisation
3. Content- Paragraph organisation
    i. Topic sentences, supporting sentences
    ii. Cohesion and coherence-contrastive devices
    iii. Writing creatively through logical argument
4. Structural errors-fragments(phrases), faulty parallelism, wrong word choice, run-on sentences (poor punctuation), dangling modifiers, misplaced modifiers

2.27 Chapter Summary

Literature on academic writing proficiency was reviewed. Particularly, the evolution and development of academic writing proficiency under contrastive rhetoric, writing as a process, error correction genre studies, prospects of teaching academic writing in higher education, main issues in teaching academic writing, interference of first language into English as the LOLT, academic writing as the main tool for summative evaluation and components of academic writing were presented here. The chapter ended with the rubrics for assessing academic writing proficiency in technical universities in Ghana.

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CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the literature review. This chapter reviews relevant literature related to two theories, a model, and a framework that guided the study. Fink (2019) defines a theoretical review as a review of the literature that focuses on the theoretical aspects of a topic and examines the concepts, theories, and models proposed to explain or describe the phenomenon of interest. Fink (2019) adds that this review delves into the foundational ideas and frameworks that have been developed over time, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and, it critically analyses the evolution of thought within the field, highlighting key contributions and debates. In line with the central objectives, the study adopted the theory of Error Analysis supported by the Cognitive Processes theory, Schleppegrell's (2004) model of academic written language, and Halliday and Hasan's framework on cohesion. These theories, the model, and the framework are briefly explained in terms of their relevance to the concerns of this study.

3.2 Error Analysis

This study primarily employed the Error Analysis (EA) approach to examine some errors found in the final year university students' academic writing in selected Technical Universities in Ghana. EA has multiple definitions. Maruti (2023) defines EA as a procedure that is based on an analysis of learners' errors. EA is a method used to account for the systematic errors that are associated with language learning (CARLA, 2014). According to Yang (2010), it is also the process of identifying the prevalence, kind, causes, and effects of ineffective language usage. Khalef-Al-Khresheh (2013) asserts that EA addresses how individuals acquire and employ a language. Li (2024) posits that learners make errors that can be observed, analysed, and classified. Li discusses the importance of Error Analysis in understanding learners' language systems. He states that identifying and classifying errors provides insights into the learners' internalised grammar and helps in developing effective

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teaching methodologies. This aligns with the idea that errors reveal significant information about the learner's language acquisition process and cognitive strategies. Again, Crystal (2003) postulates that EA is the process of using any linguistics-related concepts and procedures to identify, categorise, and methodically interpret the incorrect forms that speakers of foreign languages make.

3.3 Theoretical Foundation

The theory of EA was originally propounded by Stephen Pit Corder in the 1960s. His pioneering work laid the foundation for understanding how learners' errors can provide insights into the language acquisition process. By analysing these errors, researchers aimed to identify patterns and causes, which could then inform language teaching methods and enhance language instruction. The idea was developed to supplement the shortcomings of the contrastive analysis theory, a theory of second language acquisition that examines inconsistencies in a learner's output in the target language due to interference from the learner's native tongue (Karra, 2006). Before the adoption of EA, Contrastive Analysis (CA hereinafter) was the primary method used in language learning. Getting a deeper understanding of the theories and hypothesis of CA will give researchers apprehension into Error Analysis which is one of the theories underpinning this study. CA is an effective and famous theory that could do a comparison between two languages (L1 and TL) to recognise the aspect of similarities and differences between them (Sheen, 1996; Collins, 2007). Where there are similar structures, learners can master them. On the other hand, where there are different structures, learners might find it difficult to master, therefore leading to varied types of errors. CA has been very significant and has been the main theoretical explanation for the study of Foreign Language (FL hereinafter) and Second Language (hereinafter L2) (Khansir, 2012). However, CA was criticised as being inadequate for describing L2 errors by comparing structural differences between L1 and L2.

In the L2 learning theory, the CA hypothesis has been predominant. Based on the assumption that L2 learners will transfer the formal attributes of their NL to their L2 utterances, the CA hypothesis was implemented. In defining CA, Al-Khresheh (2016)

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avers that it is the influence of the learner's L1 on the acquisition of L2. Many researchers identified this as an invaluable aspect of language learning, and learners can enhance their language learning, transfer semantics (some sounds and meanings), and transfer rules and structures which are made up of pragmatics and word order. Critics of CA argued that it could only predict the problems L2 learners faced but could not provide strategies to overcome them. Abbas (1995) also pointed out that CA could over-predict errors that did not appear in L2 learners' language. Despite CA's effectiveness in enhancing Foreign Language (FL) teaching and highlighting differences, these criticisms lacked empirical support. In learners' errors, CA was not observed and also some errors made by learners were the same irrespective of their first language, hence, CA became only a relevant theory in the retrospective explanation of errors. These criticisms and many more rendered CA as being insufficient in analysing errors and this led to the emergence of EA.

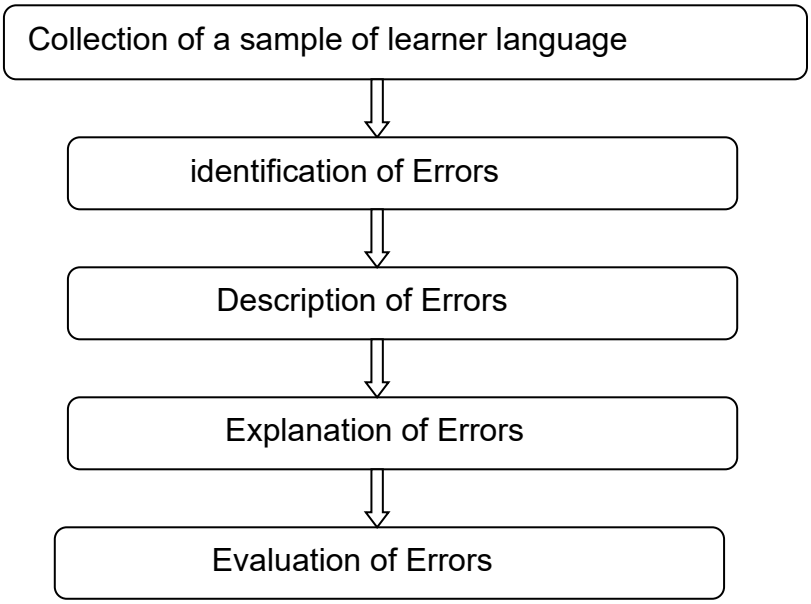
Error Analysis showed that, despite contrastive analysis's useful features being incorporated into the research of language transfer, a significant percentage of errors could not be anticipated by this method because a significant number of learner errors stem from learners drawing the wrong conclusions about the rules of the target language (Maruti, 2023). EA, as put forward by Corder in the late 1970s due to the behaviouristic nature of L2 learning, reported that learning was a result of acquiring a set of new language patterns (Al-Khresheh, 2016). So, L2 errors were seen as only the outcome of learner's NL habits in the target language which underprivileged them of being explained and underestimated. The coming to light of EA facilitated errors to be viewed as learners' performance in terms of cognitive processes in recognising or coding inputs gotten from the target language (Erdogan, 2005). EA played an initial role in L2 error investigation, categorisation, and Error Analysis. Corder (1981), avers that L2 errors reflect some underlying linguistics rules and focus on actual committed errors by FL/L2 learners rather than potential errors. Error Analysis provided scientific orientation and generally focused on linguistic and cognitive processes instead of the input, practice, or inductive learning posed by CA. EA advanced a step-by-step way of analysing FL/L2 learner errors. According to James (1988), EA is the process of

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determining the incidence, nature, causes, and consequences of unsuccessful language. On the part of Mahmoodzadeh (2012), EA is a procedure used to identify, categorise and explain errors made by L2 learners. EA sought to clarify the study's essential components and attempted to classify errors that were found in the samples of the academic writings of undergraduate English students in technical universities. EA is one of the three usefulness of errors that Corder (1967) highlighted. Errors, in his opinion, are beneficial for several reasons. To the teacher, they demonstrate a student's development; to the researcher, they reveal how a language is learned and the learner's learning strategies and to the learner, he or she can learn from these errors. Many academics have used the EA theory to explain various errors made by foreign language learners. Prominent among these scholars are (Lennon, 1991; Selinker, 1992; Teh, 1993; Kellerman, 1995; Brown, 2000; Jiang, 2009; Al-Khresheh, 2015, 2016). These researchers have employed EA to clarify various Foreign Language (FL) learners' errors, including phonological, syntactic, and grammatical ones. For instance, Abisamra (2003) used the EA technique to analyse several forms of grammatical, syntactical, semantic, and lexical problems.

3.4 Procedures of Error Analysis

Corder (1974) provides a comprehensive framework for investigating Error Analysis and proposes that EA research should follow the diagramme below:



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Figure 3.1: Steps in Error Analysis Corder (1974)

Below is the explanation of the main steps of Error Analysis:

3.4.1 Collection of a sample of learner language

This initial step involves gathering a representative sample of language produced by learners. Samples can include written texts, spoken interactions, or any other form of communication produced by learners. This data serves as the foundation for subsequent analysis and it is the most critical phase because it involves deciding which type of language samples to collect and how to gather them. Second language researchers can collect learner language samples using three methods: naturalistic (spontaneous), elicited, and experimental (Chaudron, 2003 as cited in Nisreen, 2017, and Demana, 2023). Corder (1974) calls experimental and elicited methods 'experimental elicitation' and clinical elicitation,' respectively. Chaudron (2003) postulates that the naturalistic method collects learner language in real-life settings while experimental and elicited methods use different techniques to gather samples, focusing on meaning rather than form. Clinical elicitation requires learners to produce written or oral data, such as in interviews or free essays, focusing on communication and message delivery. Ellis (1994) avers that there are three categories of language specimens and they are: massive, specific and incidental samples. For massive samples, language samples are collected from many learners to get a broad list of incorrect utterances that represent the whole study population. In specific samples, one sample is gathered from a few learners. In incidental samples, only a single sample is taken from one participant. Nisreen (2017) asserts that the specific sample type is usually used in Error Analysis. Another key factor in gathering language samples is deciding whether to collect them at a single point in time (cross-sectionally) or over a period (longitudinally). This study is cross-sectional because it collects data from participants in technical universities at a single point in time confirming Ellis's (1994) claim that cross-sectional Error Analysis studies are more prevalent than longitudinal ones.

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3.4.2 Identification of errors

This is the stage where the analyst identifies specific errors within the collected data. The identification of errors in language learning involves comparing a learner's language production with the target language. For analysts to effectively pinpoint errors, it is crucial to establish a clear definition of what constitutes an error, as various researchers have proposed different interpretations. Catalán (1997) cited in Demana, (2023) suggests that this diversity in definitions can benefit analysts, allowing them to select the definition that best aligns with the specific objectives of their analysis. This flexibility enables a more tailored approach to understanding and addressing errors in language acquisition. Errors can be grouped into different types, such as syntactic, lexical, or mechanical errors. This identification helps in understanding common patterns of errors made by learners.

3.4.3 Description of Errors

After identifying errors, the next step is to describe and classify them in detail. This stage involves comparing the learner's errors with the correct forms in the target language. James (1988) avows that the main goal of classifying errors is to identify differences and similarities, allowing researchers to count the type of errors. Commonly used taxonomies include the surface strategy taxonomy and the linguistics category taxonomy. The surface strategy taxonomy focuses on changes to surface structures: addition, omission, misordering and misformations (Dulay et al., 1982)

3.4.4 Explanation of Errors

This step involves analysing why certain errors occur. Understanding the underlying causes provides insights into the learning process. For theoretical and teaching purposes, the most important phase of Error Analysis is explaining the errors (Corder, 1975; Taylor, 1986; Ellis, 1994). Analysts consider factors such as interference from the learner's first language, overgeneralisation of rules, or lack of exposure to certain language structures.

3.4.5 Evaluation of Errors

The final step is to evaluate the significance of the identified errors with language learning objectives. The evaluation of errors examines how errors affect the recipient's

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understanding or reaction (Ellis, 1994). Different analyst may evaluate language errors differently based on their background or error setting. The same error might be assessed differently depending on the context and the evaluator. Native and non-native speakers are likely to use different criteria in their evaluations. Evaluation can inform teaching practices and materials, highlighting areas where learners may need additional support or instruction.

3.5 The Role of Error Analysis

The coming of Corder's (1974) EA unveiled that many learner errors are committed by learners making faulty interferences about the rule of the target language. As a procedure, EA is employed to identify, categorise and explain the errors that Foreign and Second Language learners commit. As it has been mentioned earlier, there are different definitions of EA attributed by different scholars. For example, James (1988 p.1) defines EA as 'the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language'. On the part of Khalef-Al-Khresheh (2013), EA deals with the way people learn and use language. That is EA examines not only how learners acquire a language but also how they use it in different contexts, emphasising the connection between learning and practical application. These definitions are in support of Corder's (1981) EA model of collection, identification, description, and explanation. As predicted by CA, EA is a shift from potential errors to actual errors committed by FL and L2 learners. The implication is that, unlike, CA, EA provides both pedagogical and scientific orientation in dealing with L2 errors. EA emphasises linguistics and cognitive processes but it does not focus on input, practice, or deducted learning. The systematic analysis of errors committed by FL and L2 learners makes it possible to determine areas that require reinforcement in the teaching and learning process (Corder, 1974). Again, EA further proposes that a considerable number of errors are made by FL/L2 learners alike regardless of their L1 and that such errors come about as a result of intralingual interference or transfer. According to James (1988), such interference from the structure of the TL itself is the main cause of intralingual errors. Without referring to L1 features, such errors can be created. Depending on this assumption, EA serves two main purposes and these are:

1. To identify the types and patterns of errors

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2. To establish error taxonomies.

When it was found that the theory wrongly diagnosed students' learning challenges because of their 'avoidance' of some difficult structures of the TL, criticisms of the EA cropped up. It is noteworthy that, despite some of the criticisms against EA, it has still become a significant tool for analysing learners' errors. Scholars who criticised EA are also of the view that much attention is given to learners and they argue that if teachers are preoccupied with noticing errors of learners, there are lots of correct utterances that they may not even notice, hence researchers' studies will only be based on what learners are not doing right as opposed to what makes learners successful. Another criticism against EA is the overstressing of production data although production errors are only a portion of the entire performance of the learner. For instance, Ney (1986) highlighted that both the number of sentences in a language and the types of errors a learner might make are endless. As a result, Ney advances that EA should be abolished. Error Analysis has to do with the compiling, studying, and analysing of L2 learner errors, focusing on investigation aspects of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). James (1988) postulates that Error Analysis is seen to be the concept of interlanguage, which compares the learner's data with the target norm and identifies and explains errors. In the early 1960s, EA was a way of studying SLA. Three language systems seem to influence learner errors in EA and these are learners' L1 influence, their interlanguage, and the target language. One area that is of interest to researchers and considered the most significant of the three is the lacuna between the interlanguage and the target language. According to Corder (1967), the reason for learners committing errors is because of the learning strategies they adopt to discover the target language. The opposition asserted that in the late 1970s, Error Analysis became insufficient as a research tool. The reason is that inductive error analyses were adopted to get a generalisation of errors. EA was only applied by researchers in the late 1970s as a trivial supporter of SLA theory and research. Even though Error Analysis transformed behaviourists' perspective on the acquisition of language, learner errors were no longer seen as 'signs of inhibition' on the part of Corder (1967) but were viewed as important evidence of language acquisition. Researchers received

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an insight into strategies for learning a TL and natural aspects of SLA through learner errors. Error Analysis made a huge contribution to comprehensive knowledge about the processes of SLA and the outcomes of EA were meant to be applied to revising theories of language learning as well as improving language teaching.

Again, Error Analysis gave more insights into possible causes of errors since researchers realised that L1 was not the sole (and not the most vital) factor that contributed to errors. Researchers were implored to probe into finding that errors were not rare and typical of varied target languages and researchers were keenly searching for reasons for making those errors. These errors grouped under performance errors emanated from mistakes and are determined by a learner's situational factors like tiredness and not by a learner's interlanguage. True errors were linked to the state of interlanguage or the competence of the learner. Interlingual errors came from the MT or NL interference and there was a difference between that and intralingual errors which took place when the target language rule was applied to unapplicable areas. In detailed research by Corder (1967), he revealed that covert errors were errors that came from the utterance which was seemingly correct yet does not mean what the writer or speaker intended it to mean. Error Analysis contributed greatly to the interlanguage hypothesis in the mid to late 1970s yet it was criticised for some practical challenges. The first enigma was that EA was viewed to put together language learning processes knowledge by scrutinising the learner's output but proved to be difficult to identify whether there was an error at all and what brought about that error. It was difficult for EA to distinguish between errors and mistakes. Again, for the classification of error, there was more than one way and also it was not easy to identify error causes. So many causes of errors exist, for example, communication strategies, external factors, personal factors, etc. Because EA concentrated on the learner's output as the sole source of evidence used, the found or proposed causes of errors were undependable. Furthermore, error taxonomies confuse description with explanation and that mini support to the learner (Johnson & Johnson, 1998).

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3.6 Errors and Mistakes

The ability of a college or university student to convey ideas and information accurately and efficiently, in an academic setting is termed as academic writing proficiency. An error-free text is a highly desirable goal in academic writing, as it significantly enhances clarity and comprehension. When a piece of writing is free from errors, it allows readers to fully grasp the intended message without distractions.

Errors are forms of deviations and so are mistakes. A deviation is defined as something that does not conform to the standard. So, using or expressing a language system that is not consistent with the language learned is known as deviation (Mandor, 2021). Brown (1987) posited that it is vital to distinguish between errors and mistakes to arrive at a proper analysis of L2 learners' errors.

In his 1981 work, Corder distinguishes between errors and mistakes. He espouses that errors are systematic and indicate a lack of knowledge or competence regarding language rules. He further explains that errors reflect the learner's interlanguage and represent persistent issues that require teacher intervention for correction. On the other hand, mistakes are non-systematic and occur due to performance issues such as fatigue, carelessness, or momentary lapses in attention. Learners can typically self-correct these mistakes if they recognise them.

Corder (1971) and James (1988) initiated a criterion that can aid in distinguishing between errors and mistakes. On their part, a mistake can be corrected by the one who is making the mistake. On the contrary, errors cannot be self-corrected. The reason is that errors are 'systematic' and most of the time not recognised by the learner. Norrish (1983) advances that errors are systematic deviations when the one learning the language has virtually no knowledge about a particular thing and repeatedly gets it wrong. In Norrish's perspective, a mistake is an inconsistent deviation when the one learning has knowledge about something and sometimes s/he uses it consistently and other times does not use it correctly. Additionally, Brown (1994) stated that in learning a language, an error is what learners make in their L2 writing because they do not know the syntactic and lexical structure while a mistake is viewed as learners' low competence in using a foreign language. Also, Ellis (1999) in his explanation of errors states that errors reflect the lacuna in learner's knowledge.

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Moreover, in the perspective of Brown (2000), a deviation is a mistake if it refers to a performance error, that is, either a random guess or a slip which is seen as a failure to use a system that is known correctly. On the parts of Richards and Schmidt (2013), an error is using language in a way that a fluent or native speaker of the language sees as faulty or incomplete learning. According to Brown (1987) language learning, just like any other human learning, is a process that involves the making of mistakes. In language learning, errors are a normal phenomenon. It is important to note that even native speakers make mistakes in their language. Language learners learn through errors and mistakes. Finally, Norrish (1983) states that mistake-making can, indeed, be viewed as an important part of learning.

3.7 Errors made when learning a second Language

There are varied forms in which errors in the English language may occur. They are performance errors, competence errors, global errors, and local errors.

3.7.1 Performance Errors and Competence Errors

Performance errors were first mentioned by Noam Chomsky in 1965. In his perspective, performance errors are errors that learners make due to tiredness, laziness, or hurriedness (Touchie, 1986). Such errors can easily be dealt with if the learner makes an effort and, therefore, such errors are perceived as not serious. On the other hand, competence errors tend to be serious because those errors show a lack of learning. Such errors are described by Suryani and Hidayatullah (2017) as the outcome of the application of rules by the first language learner which do not correspond with the second language norms, and errors of performance due to a mistake in language use. Concerning the errors of competence, the authors postulate that the learner knows what is grammatically correct. Moreover, they state that “repeats, false starts, corrections, or slips of the tongue” are examples of performance errors (Suryani & Hidayatullah, 2017: 69).

3.7.2 Global Errors and Local Errors

Global errors are defined by Burt (1975) as errors that have the potential to significantly alter the speaker's purposeful meaning. Misordering of words when using

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connectors and under/over generalisation of syntactic rules are some examples of Global errors. These errors make a text difficult to understand. Another example of Global errors is wrong word order in a sentence. However, local errors are primarily connected to little errors like grammar, spelling, or punctuation and do not substantially impair communication or comprehension of a document. Examples include mistakes in the use of nouns, articles, auxiliaries, and inflections. However, in a study on Approaches to Treating Errors, Tran (2013) observes that it is difficult to strike the difference between global and local errors because one type of error may be a global error in one text but may also be a local error in another text.

From Corder's perspective, errors of competence are the application of rules which did not correspond to L2 norms while mistakes or errors of performance are slips of tongue. It is worth noting that Ellis (1999: 68) saw the 'practical difficulties' regarding the distinction Corder made between 'errors and 'mistakes' and he asserted that in practice the distinction is not workable and Corder himself acknowledged that. Corder (1981:10) acknowledged that 'determining what is a learner's mistake and what is a learner's error is one of some difficulty and involves a much more sophisticated study and analysis of errors than is usually accorded them'. This made it explicit that the distinction between errors of competence and performance faced serious practical limitations. Due to the practical limitations of Corder's definition of 'competence' and 'performance' prompted some linguists like Chomsky to popularly distinguish 'competence' and 'performance'.In Chomsky's perspective, 'competence' is an idealised capacity that is located as a psychological or mental property or function, and 'Performance' is the production of actual utterances. Thus, competence involves 'knowing' the language and Performance involves 'doing' something with the language. The difference, however, was too abstract to embrace the real problems of second language learning because it was not easy to assess competence without assessing performance.

Concerning the distinction between errors and mistakes, there are a lot of theoretical issues that are still not resolved, therefore prompting the views of linguists like Chomsky (1965), Ellis (1994), and Lengo (1995) to be captured.

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3.8 Taxonomies of Error Analysis

This section delves into error taxonomies within the framework of Error Analysis. According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982:150), the most commonly utilised taxonomies in Error Analysis are categorised as follows:

Linguistic Category Taxonomy, Surface Strategy Taxonomy, Comparative Analysis Taxonomy, and Communicative Effect Taxonomy. The four taxonomies are explained first of all to portray error taxonomies that rely solely on noticeable characteristics for their definition and secondly, to relate the findings of research conducted thus far regarding the observed types of error (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982:146).

3.8.1 Linguistic Category Taxonomy

This taxonomy classifies errors based on the affected language components or linguistics constituents, such as phonology (sound), morphology (word formation), syntax (sentence structure), lexis (vocabulary), and discourse (flow of text) (Dulay et al., 1982). Researchers may use this taxonomy alone or in combination with others. It is also convenient for organising collected data. For example: If a student writes ‘She coming to the institution’, the error is in syntax (missing verb ‘is’)

3.8.2 Surface Strategy Taxonomy

This taxonomy focuses on how surface structures are altered. Analysing errors from a Surface Structure perspective allows researchers to recognise that students’ errors are based on logic, rather than laziness or sloppy thinking. Instead, these errors result from learners’ use of interim principles to produce a new language (Dulay et al., 1982, as cited in Demana 2023). Dulay et al. (1982) state that errors can be divided into the following categories: omission, additions, misformation, and misordering. Omission typically occurs in the early stages of second language acquisition, while misformation, misordering, and overuse are more common during the intermediate stages. Omission errors occur when essential elements are missing from sentences, leading to grammatical inaccuracies. The researchers assert that grammatical morphemes, such as noun and verb inflections, articles, and prepositions, are more

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frequently omitted than content morphemes, which carry meaning. For example, in the sentence, ‘There was bicycle near bush’, the grammatical morpheme ‘a’ and ‘the’ are omitted.

Additions are the second category in Surface Structure Taxonomy. These are the direct opposites of omissions. They occur when an additional grammatical item appears in a sentence where it does not belong in a well-constructed utterance.
Misformation is the third category within Surface Structure Taxonomy. It is defined as the “use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure” (Dulay et al., 1982: 158). This category encompasses three distinct types: Regularisations, Archi-forms, and Alternating Forms. Regularisations occur when irregular forms are mistakenly replaced with regular ones, leading to errors in grammatical structure. Archi-forms involve the use of a single form to represent multiple grammatical categories, often resulting in oversimplification. Alternating forms refer to the inconsistent use of different grammatical structures or morphemes, which can create confusion in communication. Misordering is the final category of error identified within Surface Structure Taxonomy. This type of error occurs when a morpheme or a group of morphemes is incorrectly positioned within an utterance, leading to confusion or miscommunication. Proper placement of morphemes is essential for conveying the intended meaning clearly and accurately as in *“He runs quickly every morning*." Here, *every morning* is misordered. The correct version should be “Every morning, he runs quickly.”

3.8.3 Comparative Analysis Taxonomy

The Comparative Analysis Taxonomy focuses on examining the similarities and differences between the structures of L2 errors and other types of constructions, such as errors made by children acquiring their L1. This taxonomy encompasses four primary categories of errors: developmental errors, interlingual errors, ambiguous errors, and other errors (Kafipour & Khojasteh, 2012). Developmental Errors are errors that mirror the natural progression seen in first language acquisition, highlighting the similarities in learning processes across different languages. Interlingual Errors are

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also errors that stem from interference caused by a learner's native language, where structures or rules from the L1 negatively impact the acquisition of the L2. Ambiguous Errors include errors that can be interpreted in multiple ways, often leading to confusion regarding the intended meaning. Finally, Other Errors encompasses various miscellaneous errors that do not fit neatly into the previous classifications but are nonetheless significant in understanding language learning challenges.

3.8.4 Communicative Effect Taxonomy

This taxonomy emphasises the effects that errors have on the listener or reader. Dulay et al. (1982: 189) postulate that 'errors that affect the overall organisation of the sentence hinder communication, while errors that affect a single element of the sentence usually do not hinder communication.' They categorise these errors into two types: global errors and local errors. Global Errors disrupt the overall structure of a sentence and significantly impede communication. Examples include incorrect order of major constituents, missing, incorrect, or misplaced sentence connectors, neglecting to signal exceptions to commonly applied syntactic rules, applying regular grammatical rules to irregular forms, using predicates that inaccurately describe a person's feelings, and misusing subordinate clauses. Local Errors, while still important, typically involve mistakes in specific elements of a sentence without significantly obstructing communication. These errors include incorrect noun and verb inflections, errors in articles and axillaries, and mistakes in quantifier formation.

For this study, the researcher seeks to integrate the Surface Structure Taxonomy with linguistic taxonomies. This combination offers the advantage of helping researchers understand that the errors made by students are grounded in a certain logic. Rather than being merely the result of laziness or careless thinking, these errors reflect learners' application of interim principles as they strive to produce a new language (Dulay et al., 1982, as cited in Kafipour & Khojasteh, 2012). Using the Surface Structure Taxonomy is beneficial in this study because it helps to identify specific structural errors in the academic writings of final-year university students. Recognising these errors can provide insights into where students struggle with the mechanics of

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writing. The Linguistic Category Taxonomy is also used in this study because, by grouping errors based on linguistics components, this taxonomy helps assess different aspects of language, allowing a more comprehensive evaluation of a student's writing proficiency. Due to the multifaceted nature of academic writing, the theory of Error Analysis alone cannot fully explain the full paradigm of academic writing proficiency. Another theory, model, and framework used to support the theory of Error Analysis in this study is the Cognitive Processes Theory, Schleppegrell's (2004) model of academic written language, and Halliday and Hasan's framework on cohesion.

3.9 Relationship of Error Analysis to the current study

In this study, Error Analysis allowed the researcher to systematically identify and categorise common errors made by students in their writing. By examining the examination scripts of final-year students in technical universities in Ghana, the researcher could pinpoint recurring issues such as grammatical errors. Also, analysing errors can offer insights into students' language proficiency levels. For example, frequent grammatical errors might indicate a lack of understanding of specific language rules. Findings from Error Analysis in this study can help provide targeted feedback to students. By identifying common errors, educators can tailor their feedback to address specific issues.

Finally, Error Analysis was one of the valuable tools for assessing academic writing proficiency of final-year Technical University students in Ghana. It provided a framework for evaluating the students' writing based on their ability to produce error-free texts. Classifying errors provided a deeper understanding of students' writing abilities, extending beyond simple correctness to include overall coherence and organisation.

3.10 Cognitive Processes Theory

The first person credited with the foundational ideas that led to the development of Cognitive Processes Theory is Ulric Neisser. He is often referred to as the 'father of cognitive psychology' for his significant contributions to the field, particularly through his book Cognitive Psychology, published in 1967. Cognitive Processes Theory is a

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framework in psychology that seeks to explain how individuals process information, make decisions, and solve problems. In other words, it examines how our brains work. This theory focuses on the mental activities writers use while composing, which helps in evaluating their writing skills. Cognitive Processes Theory by Flower and Hayes (1981) breaks writing into three main steps: planning, translating and revising. These steps are key to how students handle academic writing. The Cognitive Processes Theory of Writing by Linda Flower and John R. Hayes explains the mental activities involved in writing. It shows that writing is a complex task where planning, writing, and revising all work together, influenced by the writer's goals and the audience. Key tenets of Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Processes Theory include:

Writing as a Recursive Process

Flower and Hayes argue that writing is not a linear activity but a recursive one. Writers often cycle through different stages—planning, translating, and reviewing—rather than following a strict sequence. This flexibility allows continuous refinement of ideas and improvement of drafts. The theory identifies three primary components:

1. **Planning**: It encapsulates generating ideas, setting goals, and organising thoughts before writing. It sets a clear direction for the task.
2. **Translating**: The actual act of writing, transforming ideas into text with attention to language, style, and coherence.
3. **Reviewing**: Evaluating and revising the work to enhance clarity and effectiveness. This is crucial for refining arguments and improving overall quality.

The theory includes external factors like the audience, purpose, and context of the writing task. Understanding these helps tailor the work to meet specific needs and expectations. The theory also emphasises the roles of long-term memory (where knowledge and experiences are stored) and working memory (which holds information temporarily during writing). Effective writing requires retrieving relevant information from long-term memory while managing cognitive load in working memory.Goal

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setting is critical in the writing process. Writers establish both content goals (what they want to say) and process goals (how they will achieve it). This self-directed approach enhances motivation and focus. Again, writing is viewed as a problem-solving activity where writers navigate challenges related to content, structure, and expression. Addressing these challenges is central to effective writing. The model acknowledges that individual differences—such as prior knowledge, experience, and cognitive abilities—affect how writers engage with the writing process. Understanding these differences helps educators tailor instruction to diverse student needs. Scholars who have used the Cognitive Processes Theory in assessing students' writing include (Emig, 1971; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Deane et al., 2008).

3.11 Relationship of Cognitive Processes Theory to the current study

This theory can significantly enhance the assessment of academic writing proficiency by providing a framework for understanding how students think and process information while writing. By analysing how students approach writing tasks from the examination scripts of students, the researcher can identify where students struggle in planning, drafting, revising, and editing their work. Insights into cognitive processes also helped to identify common writing challenges, allowing for personalised support. By evaluating how well students perform these cognitive tasks, researchers can measure their overall writing skills. Also, understanding these processes improves teaching strategies and creates a better learning environment.

3.12 Schleppegrell's (2004) model of academic written language

Schleppegrell's (2004) model of academic written language which falls under Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was also adopted to support the study. SFL examines how language functions in different contexts, focusing on the grammar and structure of academic writing. Mary J. Schleppegrell propounded the model of academic written language in 2004 to address the challenges students face in mastering academic writing, particularly in understanding the linguistic features that characterise academic discourse. The following are the key components of the model:

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Content

This refers to what the writing is about. It includes the main ideas and information presented by the writer. The model encourages students to focus on clear and relevant topics. The writer should understand how different grammatical structures convey various meanings. For example, using passive versus active voice can shift the sentence's focus.

Text Structures

This focuses on how the text is organised. Are students able to create coherent and cohesive paragraphs? A well-structured piece of writing has a logical flow, making it easier for readers to follow the argument or narrative. Using this framework helped the researcher to identify specific challenges faced by the students. Applying this model, educators can assess students' writing through the lenses of content, voice, and structure to identify strengths and areas for improvement. For teachers, it helps them to teach language features that help students understand specific language features that enhance their writing, such as using appropriate vocabulary, varied sentence structures, and cohesive devices like linking words. Scholars who have used this model include (Gibbons, 2002; Schleppegrell, 2004; Schulze, 2009).

Functional Language:

Schleppegrell's model advances that in writing there should be a focus on language functions such as comparing, contrasting, classifying, and evaluating, which are essential for academic writing. Students should examine how language achieves specific purposes in academic contexts, like arguing a point in an essay or explaining a concept in a report.

Academic Vocabulary:

Identifying and accurately using subject-specific terminology.

Schleppegrell's 2004 model of academic written language plays a significant role in assessing students' academic writing proficiency by providing a structured framework that focuses on the linguistic features and functions essential for effective academic communication. It also serves as a valuable tool for identifying and addressing the challenges faced by students in academic writing. By focusing on linguistic features,

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genre conventions, and cohesion, educators can provide targeted support that enhances students' writing proficiency and confidence. Schleppegrell's (2004) model of academic written language provides a framework for understanding how students can improve their writing skills in academic contexts. The model focuses on how students need to use language differently in school compared to everyday conversation. It also stresses the importance of grammatical choice and text structures that help convey complex ideas clearly and effectively in academic settings. For instance, in universities, students need to learn how to write essays, research papers, and reports, which require a more formal and organised use of language than casual chatting with friends.

3.13 Relationship of Schleppegrell's (2004) model of academic written language to the current study

Grounded in systemic functional linguistics (SFL), this model links meaning and structure in writing. This approach enables the researcher to analyse how students use specific grammatical features to convey meaning effectively. When assessing examination scripts, the researcher can evaluate students' text organisation, expression of judgments, and development of coherent arguments. This approach provides a more detailed understanding of students' writing proficiency. Moreover, Schleppegrell's framework links language use with disciplinary knowledge, indicating that effective academic writing requires understanding both content and the related linguistic conventions. This connection is key for assessment, aiding lecturers to appraise how well students integrate their subject knowledge with proper academic language, thereby providing a wide-ranging measure of writing proficiency. By detecting common challenges students face with academic language, lecturers can create targeted interventions and assessments to directly address these issues.

3.14 Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework on cohesion

Finally, Halliday and Hasan's framework on cohesion was adopted in this study to support the assessment of academic writing of final-year university students in the technical universities in Ghana. This framework was propounded by Halliday and

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Hasan in 1976 to reshape our understanding of how texts are constructed and understood. The framework highlights the semantic relationships within texts, highlighting how various elements interact to create meaning. Grammatical cohesion has four major tenets according to Halliday and Hasan's (1976). These are reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. Anytime one element in a text cannot be explained meaningfully unless it is referred to another element in the text, that situation is termed as Reference. Pronouns, articles or other referring expressions according to Bloor and Bloor (2013) are used to refer to items in situational texts or linguistic texts. Substitution is the replacement of a word or phrase with another to avoid repetition. Ellipsis on the on the other hand is omitting parts of a sentence when they are understood from the context. Finally, Conjunctions are using connectives to link sentences and show relationships between them. Scholars who have used this framework include (Saud, 2015; Bahaziq, 2016; He, 2020).

3.15 Relationship of Haliday and Hasan's cohesion framework to the current study

Halliday and Hasan's cohesion framework can be instrumental in assessing the academic writing of final-year university students by providing a structured approach to examine how effectively students create coherence and evaluating how well students use pronouns and demonstratives to maintain clarity and avoid redundancy. It can also help to scrutinise how students employ lexical cohesion through synonyms, antonyms, or related terms to create semantic links within their writing. While cohesion focuses on the surface-level connections between sentences, coherence pertains to the overall logical flow and clarity of ideas in a text. Halliday and Hasan's 1976 framework encouraged the researcher to consider both aspects in assessing the writing proficiency of final-year Technical University students. For instance, in the examination scripts, a text may be cohesive but lack coherence if the ideas do not logically progress or relate to one another. Evaluating coherence alongside cohesion provided a more comprehensive assessment of the students' writing ability.

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3.16 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the review of literature related to the theories and frameworks that underpinned the study. The chapter looked at the following main areas: the Theoretical Foundation of errors, the model and role of Error Analysis, errors and mistakes, and the taxonomies of Error Analysis. The chapter concludes with a brief review of the literature on Cognitive Processes Theory, Schleppegrell's 2004 model of academic written language, and Halliday and Hasan's 1976 framework on cohesion. The next chapter discusses the design of the research and the enquiry process.

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CHAPTER FOUR

DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH AND THE ENQUIRY PROCESS

4.1 Introduction

The research philosophy and design, as well as the steps that the researcher used to attain the research objectives, are provided in this chapter, under the study's primary objective to evaluate the final year academic writing proficiency of chosen technical universities. This chapter covers the research paradigm, study design, research methodology, study area, data and sources, target population, sampling procedures, research tools, data collection process, and study reliability. Additionally, this chapter presents the ethical principles that guided the conduct of this study.

4.2 Research Paradigm

The qualitative paradigm served as the study's compass. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the word paradigm comes from the Greek word meaning pattern and has been widely defined by scholars. For instance, a paradigm serves as the theoretical or philosophical foundation for research, often regarded as the guiding research philosophy (Khatri, 2020). Creswell (2014) explains that qualitative paradigm entails investigating and comprehending the meaning that individuals or groups give to a social or human situation. The qualitative paradigm has been described by Schurink (1998), as an anti-positivistic, interpretative approach; it is idiographic and holistic, aiming to understand social life and the meanings individuals attach to it. Therefore, inductive reasoning is used to support this paradigm.

Pretorius (2024) describes a research paradigm as a unified framework of beliefs and practices that shapes how researchers perceive reality (ontology), acquire and validate knowledge (epistemology), and uphold values and ethics (axiology). More than a methodological preference, a paradigm serves as a guiding worldview—offering a lens through which researchers interpret phenomena, formulate inquiries, and justify their chosen approaches.

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On their part, Cohen and Manion (1994) aver that a paradigm is the philosophical foundation upon which research is done. This concept encompasses a shared set of beliefs, values, and techniques among a community of researchers, guiding their understanding and investigation of various phenomena.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998: 22), a research paradigm is a loosely connected set of logically related assumptions, concepts, and propositions that guide thinking and research. Willis (2007) avows that a paradigm is also an all-encompassing belief system, a worldview, or a framework that underpins study and application in a particular discipline. Maxwell (2008) describes a paradigm as a set of broad philosophical assumptions about the nature of the research world and how it can be understood. These assumptions are typically shared by researchers within a specific field or tradition. In structuring the conduct of research, Creswell (2014) reports that the research paradigm is of great importance. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) postulate that single or multiple paradigms may be used by researchers relying on the prisms through which they view their research. Understanding research paradigms are vital as they guide scientific discoveries through their assumptions and principles (Park, Konge, and Artino, 2020). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), four paradigms guide and inform the conduct of a study. These paradigms include positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and interpretivism.

The positivism paradigm is often described as naturalistic and objective, as it examines, accepts, and predicts rule-governed patterns of behavior (Taylor & Medina, 2013). This paradigm posits that there exists a single, objective reality that can be known and accurately described and explained. Positivists rely on sensory observations to acquire knowledge about their environment. Within this framework, researchers can compare claims and determine truth by adhering to an objective perspective, which confines them to collecting and interpreting data from this viewpoint. Consequently, positivists typically employ quantitative methods, such as statistics, social surveys, and structured questionnaires. This paradigm is predominantly applied in the natural and physical sciences, as well as in studies

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involving large sample sizes (Ali, 2024). Alharahahah and Pius (2020) define positivism as ‘the philosophical stance of a natural scientist that is working with observable reality within society leading to production of generalisation’. The positivist paradigm asserts that real events can be observed empirically and explained with logical analysis (Kaboub, 2008). Positivism is unsuitable for this study due to its focus on objective, measurable data, which limits exploration of students’ subjective experiences and contextual factors affecting writing proficiency. Its reliance on predefined hypotheses and rigid methods also restricts flexibility in uncovering emerging themes or adapting interventions to diverse student needs.

According to Pretorius (2024), post-positivism accepts that an objective reality exists but our understanding of it is always limited and influenced by human bias. Post - positivism take a scientific stance when conducting their studies. It focuses on cause-and-effect relationships, uses quantitative methods, and often relies on statistical analysis to validate hypotheses. To promote the development of theories, this research paradigm affirms deductive logic or warrants. Post-positivism researchers believe in varied perspectives of participants and do not believe in a single perspective. The belief in varied perspectives enhances this study by allowing the researcher to incorporate students' unique viewpoints on their writing struggles and needs. This approach moves beyond a single, objective truth, enabling a richer understanding of the multifaceted nature of academic writing proficiency. Additionally, post-positivism encourages reflexivity and critical analysis, ensuring that interventions for the final-year technical university students are not only evidence-based but also tailored to the specific contexts and lived experiences of the participants. Thus, post-positivism provides a strong framework for addressing the study's objectives holistically.

The critical theory paradigm focuses on addressing societal biases and inequalities. It uses qualitative approaches to promote significant social, economic, political, and educational change. This paradigm encourages participants to engage in advocacy to bring about positive transformations in their lives. Critical research views knowledge as a reflection of power, privilege, and oppression. This paradigm does not align with

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the current study because carefully examining issues of power, privilege and inequality within the context of academic writing is not part of the objectives of this study.

The interpretive paradigm is a research approach centered on understanding the subjective meanings and experiences that individuals assign to their social realities. It emphasises that reality is socially constructed and shaped by interactions, culture, and context. Researchers working within this paradigm seek to uncover the depth and complexity of human experiences through qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and focus groups. Unlike positivism, which aims to discover universal truths, interpretivism values the richness of individual perspectives and actively co-constructs knowledge with participants to explore complex social phenomena (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). In this study, it allowed the researcher to explore how students perceive their writing proficiency, focusing on their personal experiences and social contexts. This paradigm values the lived realities of students, helping uncover the factors influencing their writing skills. Interpretivism promotes co-construction of knowledge between researchers and participants. By engaging students directly, researchers can design interventions that reflect students' needs and lived experiences, ensuring solutions are meaningful and contextually relevant. Three main assumptions underpin every research paradigm and they are: ontology, epistemology and methodology. These assumptions shape how researchers perceive the world, define knowledge, and approach the investigation of their research questions.

4.2.1 Ontology

This concerns the nature of reality. It asks, "What exists?" or "What is the nature of the reality we are exploring?" For example, some paradigms, like positivism, assume there is a single, objective reality. The positivist paradigm sees reality as "objectively given and measurable" (Antwi & Hamza 2015:218). In contrast, others, such as constructivism or interpretivism, hold that multiple realities exist, shaped by individual perspectives (Pretorius, 2024).

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The positivist paradigm is often linked to quantitative research, aiming to predict, control, and generalise findings.

4.2.2 Epistemology

This addresses the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the researcher and what can be known. It explores questions like, “How can we understand reality?” and “What counts as valid knowledge?” In positivism, knowledge is viewed as something measurable and objective. Meanwhile, interpretivism sees knowledge as constructed through interpretation and interaction between the researcher and participants. Crotty (1998) asserts that the meaning individuals ascribe to the world is generated through social interaction, shaped by various factors such as prior experiences and knowledge, political and social status, gender, nationality, and personal and cultural values (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

4.2.3 Methodology

This refers to the overall approach or strategy used to discover knowledge. It answers the question, “How do we uncover reality?” The methodology chosen aligns with the paradigm’s ontological and epistemological assumptions. For instance, a positivist paradigm typically employs experiments and surveys to collect measurable data, whereas an interpretivist paradigm favours interviews and observations to gain insight into participants’ experiences and meanings (Ugwu, Ekere, & Onoh, 2021). The interpretivist paradigm holds that research methodology should focus on exploring “the minds and meaning-making, sense-making activities” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013: 40). This approach is commonly employed in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). In contrast, positivism asserts that reality must be examined through the “rigorous process of scientific inquiry” (Guba, 2013: 20), often utilising quantitative methods to generalize data (Mukherji & Albon, 2015).

Postpositivist and interpretivist perspectives served as the foundation for the current investigation. The study is based on the postpositivist paradigm since it incorporates many viewpoints through various interviews conducted in various contexts and follows extremely thorough approaches to qualitative data collection and analysis. Interpretivism prioritises understanding individuals’ lived experiences over relying

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solely on quantitative measures. For instance, employing qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups enables the researcher to delve into how students perceive their writing skills, including the challenges they face with clarity, coherence, and formality. To position the inquirer to better understand the phenomena, the inquiry once more concentrated on the specific contexts or settings (four Technical Universities in Ghana) in which individuals function. In the context of this research, Postpositivism provided a structured, rigorous framework for inquiry, aiming for well-supported but provisional knowledge. Interpretivism enriched this framework by focusing on meaning and lived experiences which qualitative methods are best suited to uncover. This integration allowed a balanced research design that neither rejects the possibility of some objective understanding nor ignores the complexities of subjective meaning.

4.3 Study design

According to Cresswell and Creswell (2017), research design refers to the overall strategy chosen to integrate the different components of a study in a coherent and logical way. It acts as a blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data, ensuring that the research problem is thoroughly investigated. Creswell and Creswell's framework stresses the worth of philosophical assumptions and specific methods in shaping the research approach, suggesting that the choice of design is fundamentally driven by the nature of the research problem being addressed. Similarly, Van Wyk (2012) avers that a research design is the overall plan for linking conceptual research problems to relevant and achievable empirical research.

For the purpose of this study, research design incorporates the types of basic designs. Common types include experimental, correlational, descriptive and exploratory.

4.3.1 Experimental Research Design

This research design is a structured framework used to test cause-and-effect relationships by manipulating one or more independent variables and observing their effects on dependent variables. This method is widely regarded as the most demanding approach for establishing causality in scientific research (Knight, 2010).

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4.3.2 Correlational Research Design

Correlational research design examines the relationships between two or more variables to determine if they are associated. Unlike experimental research, it does not involve manipulating variables but instead focuses on observing naturally occurring patterns and associations (Selviana, Afgani & Siroj, 2024).

4.3.3 Descriptive Research Design

Descriptive research design focuses on systematically describing the characteristics, behaviours or phenomena of a specific population or subject without manipulating variables. It aims to answer the “what,” “where,” "when," and “how” questions rather than exploring causation or underlying mechanisms. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of a topic (Siedlecki, 2020).

4.3.4 Exploratory Research Design

Exploratory research design focuses on identifying and analysing the root causes or factors contributing to a specific issue or condition. It seeks to answer the “why” behind a problem, enabling researchers to develop effective solutions (Olawale, Chinagozi, & Joe, 2023).

This study adopted descriptive and exploratory research designs. Adopting a descriptive research design for the current study enabled the researcher to focus on answering “what” questions, such as identifying the current state of final-year students' academic writing skills. This approach provided a detailed account of their proficiency levels without manipulating variables. Furthermore, by observing and cataloging the difficulties students faced, this design captured the “what” and “how” of their struggles within their natural academic environment. Descriptive research also served as a foundation for identifying patterns or trends that informed practical solutions, making it particularly suitable for exploring potential interventions.

On the other hand, an exploratory research design proved invaluable for gaining deeper insights into the challenges technical university students encounter in academic writing. Since exploratory research seeks to uncover underlying problems

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and generate new ideas, it was well-suited for understanding the nuanced difficulties students face in their writing. This design allowed the researcher to employ flexible methods such as interviews, focus groups, and document analysis to delve into students' experiences and perceptions. Finally, by identifying patterns and generating hypotheses, exploratory research laid a vigorous groundwork for designing effective interventions tailored to address students' needs comprehensively.

On his part, Creswell (2014), opines that the study design entails various investigations that may employ qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods procedures to provide specific directions for the conduct of a study by outlining and controlling the type of data to collect, the data collection steps, and the data analysis procedure. Additionally, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006) demonstrates that the primary goal of research design is to enable the provision of relevant responses to the study questions through evidence. The study employed a qualitative research methodology that analyses the academic essays that students have authored. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the goal of qualitative research is to comprehend the context in which behaviour takes place. Numerical data is often not used in qualitative research designs; instead, detailed verbal descriptions are used. Afful and Tekpetey (2011) state that a qualitative study design prioritises a thorough examination, description, and interpretation of verbal behaviour over the predominance of using numerical data. Creswell (2005: 39), defines qualitative research as:

> ‘A type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants, describes and analyses these words for themes, and conducts an inquiry in a subjective, biased manner’.

Various procedural guidelines specify and regulate the type of data to collect, the method of data collection, and the technique of data analysis within the qualitative paradigm. Ethnography, content analysis, case study, phenomenology and ethnomethodology, the historical method, applied and action research, clinical methods, symbolic interaction, and grounded theory are only a few of them (Schurink, 1998; Creswell, 2007). Designing a case study will be the main methodology used in

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this study. According to Creswell (2007), case study research is a qualitative method where the researcher conducts an in-depth investigation of one or more cases over a period of time. This approach involves extensive data collection from a variety of sources, such as interviews, observations, documents, and reports. The goal is to gain a deep understanding of the case or cases in their real-life context, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the complexities and nuances involved. This method is particularly useful when the researcher seeks to explore and explain phenomena within their natural settings, providing rich, detailed insights that might not be attainable through other research methods.

This study specifically adopted the collective or multiple case study design because it seeks to assess the final-year university students' academic writing proficiency in selected technical universities in Ghana. According to Creswell (2007), while using the multiple case study approach, one subject is chosen (for this study, it is an assessment of the academic writing proficiency of chosen Technical University students in Ghana; however, the researcher chooses numerous cases to describe the issue). The goal of the research—to explore and examine students' writing competency levels and challenges—can be realised with the use of this research approach.

To answer the research questions, it is necessary to state clearly the kind of evidence, that is, whether it is a test theory, an evaluation of a phenomenon, or a description of an occurrence. The aim of the study is one vital aspect of a research design. The aim can be a single or combined approach of exploratory, predictive, evaluative, and descriptive.

This study's primary objective was to assess final-year university students' academic writing proficiency. Therefore, a combination of explanatory and descriptive approaches was adopted. Subsequently in this chapter, each of these strategies will be covered in detail. In contrast to research methods, which are concerned with the ways by which the data for the study are going to be acquired, research designs provide the framework for identifying the kind of evidence needed to properly answer the research questions. The suitability and sufficiency of the evidence to be gathered to obtain answers to the research questions are dealt with in the study designs, but

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the research methods, including the use of observation, questionnaires, and interviews, are also taken into consideration.

This implies that the enquirer's choice of research methods is dependent on the scope of the study design. This fundamental difference guided the present study.

4.4 Research Methodology

In research, the terms methodology and method are commonly used synonymously, however, some people think there should be a distinction made between the two (McGregor & Murnane 2010). McGregor and Murnane (2010) have shown that the majority of research projects use the term "methodology" as the heading; unfortunately, under the heading, it is a description of the methodology but a description of the methods used in the research design, demonstrating that methodology and method are sometimes used synonymously. This shows that the terms "methodology" and "method" are used synonymously by the majority of scholars. However, in this study, methods and methodology are viewed as distinct ideas because the methodology is the broader framework while the method is a specific approach within the framework. For instance, while methodology incorporates the theoretical analysis of the methods and principles associated with a particular field of study, methods refer to a procedure used to gather data in a research study. Hence, there is a difference between methodology and method.

Numerous studies in the literature also fall short of defining "research methodology" and "research method" (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2008). Some scholars have made an effort to define these two concepts as well as to highlight the contrasts between them. According to Creswell (2007), methodology is the process through which a researcher performs a study to learn more about the outside world.

Again, Brewer (2000) posits that Methodology is the broad theoretical and philosophical framework within which procedural rules, or methods, fit. Methods are the technical rules that outline the procedures for obtaining reliable and objective knowledge. That is, a study can be faulty as being unreliable and unobjective if the procedural, or step-by-step, rules of arriving at the conclusions, cannot be trusted.

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Similarly, Somekh and Lewin (2005) state that methodology involves the collection of methods or rules by which research is conducted, as well as the principles, theories, and values that underpin a particular research approach. In other words, methodology not only includes the specific techniques and procedures used to gather and analyze data but also the broader philosophical and theoretical foundations that guide the research process. These underlying principles and values help shape the research design, determine the selection of methods, and influence the interpretation of results. By providing a coherent framework, methodology ensures that the research is systematic, rigorous, and aligned with the overarching goals and objectives of the study. On the other hand, methods are the steps or processes that will allow the methodology to be put into practice; they serve as a way to concretise or frame the abstract concept.

Pole and Morrisson (2003) aver that methods can be viewed as a toolkit from which researchers select the most suitable instruments to gather and analyse data. This toolkit approach draws attention to the flexibility and adaptability of research methods, allowing researchers to choose the best tools for addressing specific research questions and challenges. By selecting appropriate methods, researchers can ensure that the data collected is relevant, accurate and reliable (Moreover, these methods provide a systematic approach to data analysis, enabling researchers to draw meaningful conclusions and insights from their findings. This careful selection and application of methods is crucial for achieving valid and robust results in any research study.

Also, Kothari (2004) posits that research methods refer to the specific techniques and procedures that researchers use to carry out their research operations. These methods encompass a wide range of activities, including data collection, data analysis, and the overall approach to investigating research questions. By employing appropriate research methods, researchers can systematically explore their hypotheses, gather relevant information, and draw meaningful conclusions. The choice of methods is influenced by the nature of the research problem, the objectives of the study, and the theoretical framework guiding the research.

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To distinguish between methodology and method, Mackenzie and Knipe (2008) describe that research techniques deal with the methods/processes/tools used for data gathering and analysis, whereas research methodology covers the overall approach to a study, including important components like the theoretical framework and paradigm.

Simply said, research methods carry out the principles established by research methodology when conducting research. By defining methodology as “a style of thinking about and understanding social reality” whereas method is “a collection of procedures and methods for acquiring and analysing data,” Strauss and Corbin (1998: .3) further highlight the distinction between the two.

Kothari (2004: 8) summarises the distinction between research methodologies and research methodology as follows:

> The scope of the research methodology is wider than that of the research methods. Thus, when we talk of research methodology, we not only talk of the research methods but also consider the logic behind the methods we use in the context of our research study and explain why we are using a particular method or technique and why we are not using others so that research results are capable of being evaluated either by the researcher himself or by others.

Methodology and methods are seen as separate concepts in this study. That is, the methodology is understood to be the theoretical and philosophical framework that guided how the entire study was conducted, whereas the term “method” is understood to refer to the procedures, like data collection and analysis, that helped the researcher achieve the objectives of the research. Methodologies can be mixed, qualitative, or quantitative (Krathwohl, 1993; Creswell, 2003; Thomas, 2003; Gorard, 2004). The purpose of the inquiry that led to this study's adoption of the qualitative technique was to assess the academic writing proficiency of final-year students in technical universities.

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4.5 Qualitative Research

The goal of this study was to comprehensively assess the academic writing proficiency of final-year students at technical universities in Ghana, hence the researcher used a qualitative research approach. In qualitative research, the researcher collects data from participants in their natural setting so that a meaningful hypothesis can be formulated.

Hennink et al. (2020) explain qualitative research as an approach that enables you to thoroughly analyse people's experiences using a particular set of research techniques, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, observation, content analysis, visual approaches, life histories, or biographies. On their part, Vanderstoep and Johnson (2009: 168) postulate that in qualitative research, empirical methods are used by researchers to collect data from multiple sources as they “avoid going into the study with preconceived ideas of what they are going to find in the study”. To make sound conclusions, qualitative researchers, therefore, collect large amounts of data which they interpret with no mathematical or scientific quantifications. Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined a qualitative research design as any sort of investigation whose conclusions are not reached using statistical or mathematical techniques. Since qualitative research is descriptive, it allows the researcher to fully comprehend the attitudes and actions of research participants. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research enhances data by examining a phenomenon to discover the significance that individuals or groups attach to it. In a study like this, several steps must be taken, including developing research questions and procedures, collecting data from participants in their environments, conducting an inductive analysis of the data by moving from specifics to broad themes and interpreting the data to determine its appropriate meanings. He continues by saying that the report's presentation is ultimately adaptable concerning its structure. Regarding the collection of qualitative data, Patton (2002), referenced in Ary et al. (2006: 247) outlines that qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents. The data from interviews consists of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. The data from observations consist of detailed descriptions of people’s

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activities, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organisational processes that are part of observable human experience. Document analysis in qualitative inquiry yields excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organisational clinical and programme records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal journals, as well as unstructured written responses to surveys and questionnaires.

:

Some important qualitative research methodologies include phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, narrative research, and case study research (Creswell, 2007). The case study method, notably the multiple/collective case study, was used in this study to completely assess the academic writing proficiency of final-year students at technical universities.

With case study research, the researcher chooses a phenomenon or problem and the location or context to explore that particular phenomenon or problem for a better understanding.

Case studies “involve the study of a subject investigated through one or more cases inside a constrained system (i.e. a setting, a context),” according to Creswell (2007: 73).

A case might potentially refer to a time frame rather than a collection of individuals. Case studies, according to Zainal (2007), explore and investigate current real-life situations through in-depth contextual examination of a small number of circumstances or occurrences and their connections. In other words, a case study allows the researcher the chance to carefully examine data for a specific environment. This method has the advantage of giving detailed information about the behaviour of research subjects as well as helpful data for real-life problems.

Many academics view this qualitative research methodology as a methodology or as an all-encompassing research approach (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Creswell, 2007). Case studies are equally taken into account as the underlying technique or all-encompassing research approach used in the current investigation to fully understand the academic writing proficiency of final-year students in technical universities in Ghana.

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Depending on the type of phenomenon they are studying, researchers making use of case studies might select either qualitative or quantitative case studies (Hosenfeld, 1984; Block, 1986; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) goes on to say that there are other types of case studies, including exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive case studies, that fall under both qualitative and quantitative research. Creswell (2007), assigns case studies into three categories based on their intended use: simple/instrumental, many, and intrinsic. In a straightforward case study, the investigator chooses one case to explore thoroughly based on the case's topic. In a collective or multiple case study, the researcher selects several examples or venues to explore the phenomenon in question. The researcher analyses the phenomena in its course by applying the same techniques to all of the chosen examples (Yin, 2003). Regarding the intrinsic case study, the investigator concentrates on the issue due to its unfamiliarity and investigates to better comprehend it.

This investigation used a collective/multiple case study as its methodology. The country was divided into Northen Zone and Southern Zone. Four technical universities in Ghana (Two technical universities from the southern zone and two from the northern zone) were purposely selected from the ten technical universities for this study to better understand the academic writing skills of final-year students at those institutions.

The investigation was carried out at all four universities using the same methods.

Researchers have developed a variety of methods for conducting case study investigations (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). This study followed the five phases proposed by Stake (1995).

1) The case study approach was chosen for this investigation to fully understand the academic writing abilities of final-year students.
2) The investigation was based on four cases that were found. Four technical universities in total.
3) Diverse approaches were employed to gather data for this inquiry. These included: (a) examination scripts that were used to assess the academic writing

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proficiency of the students and (b) an interviewing guide that was used to gather information from the lecturers and students.

4) The study used holistic analysis. This means that the full case was examined.
5) The case's significance was eventually reported. A phase referred to as the "lessons learned" phase by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

This methodology was chosen purposely to help the researcher make a self-reflection on the way knowledge is imparted to students by lecturers and also to make a systematic reflection to improve lecturers' performance. This reflective investigation has fortified the researchers' standard of imparting knowledge and simultaneously brought new momentum which helped to improve the writing proficiency of final-year students in the selected technical universities.

4.6 The Study Area

The Republic of Ghana is located on the coast of the Gulf of Guinea (West Africa). The country places a high value on education, and its '... educational system is regarded as one of the best in West Africa' (https://www.justlanded.com/english/Ghana/Ghana-Guide/Educational/Introduction-to-education). As a result, university education - among the best in the country - receives equal attention. According to the National Accreditation Board (NAB), Ghana currently has [10] technical universities that offer degree-granting programmes. (www.nab.gov.gh).

Ghana's constitution provides for education, particularly higher education. According to the 1992 constitution, higher education should be made available to all through any appropriate means, including the gradual implementation of free education. And everyone has the right, at his or her own expense, to establish and maintain a private school or schools at any level, in any category, and under any conditions prescribed by law.

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4.7 Technical Universities in Ghana

Ghana's technical universities began as government technical institutes under the Ghana Education Service. Following the government's educational reforms in the early 1990s, the government decided to establish a polytechnic in each region. As a result, each of Ghana's ten regions had at least one polytechnic (http://tertiaryeducationghana.blogspot.com/2015/03/polytechnics-in-ghana.html; Nsiah-Gyabaah (2009)

The Polytechnic Act 321 (PNDC Law 1993) established these polytechnics as part of the Ghana Tertiary Education System. In the 1993/1994 academic year, the polytechnics began offering Higher National Diploma programmes (Polytechnic Education in Ghana: Management and Challenges).

The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) was the polytechnics' top advisory and constitutional agency. However, by law, the polytechnics' direct governance and administration were vested in their respective Councils and Academic Boards. The former was the highest-ranking policymaker. The latter, the Academic Board, was in charge of establishing academic policies, establishing operational rules and regulations, and advising the Polytechnic Council on policy formulation. The Polytechnic Law (1992) and their respective statutes governed and administered the Polytechnics (Takoradi Polytechnic 2005).

The law required polytechnics to assist universities in improving access to higher education by training middle and upper-level workers (Amedorme, Agbezudor & Sakyiama, 2014; Takoradi Technical University, 2018). The importance of polytechnic education to Ghana's development cannot be overstated (Nsiah-Gyabaah, 2009; Amedorme et al., 2014), and the government's White Paper on Tertiary Education System Reforms (2004), as cited in Nsiah-Gyabaah (2009: 96), stated that

Polytechnics have a distinctive and important role to play in middle-level manpower development which is particularly critical for the effective implementation of decentralisation policies and planning reforms. Particular attention will be given to the areas of applied science and technology, arts, industrial commerce, secretarial and accounting practice, fine arts, social services, and communications practice…The

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provision of such programmes will complete the cycle of technical education and provide a capacity for higher-level technician training and practical research.

The Technical University Act 2016 (Act 922) was enacted by Parliament and converted eight of the ten existing polytechnics into technical universities (Report of the Committee on Education on the Technical Universities Amendment Bill, 2020.). The Technical Universities Amendment Act 2020 also converted the final two polytechnics into technical universities in April 2020. (Act 1016). These technical universities now primarily provide degrees and master's programmes in the field of Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET).

4.7.1 Technical university 1

This public Technical University is located in the capital city of Ghana's Western Region, set within a vibrant coastal urban area that offers convenient access to city amenities and services. It trains students for jobs in Technology, Engineering, Business, and more. The Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies, part of the Business Faculty, is the only one that offers English courses. The staff is almost evenly split between men and women. More students are enrolling, partly because of the Free SHS policy, which helps more students from different backgrounds attend university. The school has many students per teacher, which can make teaching harder. It welcomes students of all genders from across Ghana and needs better facilities, like more classrooms.

4.7.2 Technical University 2

This public Technical University situated in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, at the heart of the region's largest city, has a large and diverse student population across faculties such as Applied Sciences & Technology, Built & Natural Environment, Business & Management Studies, Creative Arts & Technology, Engineering & Technology, Entrepreneurship & Enterprise Development, and Health Sciences. The Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies, within the Business & Management Studies faculty, offers English courses to its students. The university welcomes both

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Ghanaian and international students, creating a culturally rich learning environment. It plays a vital role in training skilled professionals for Ghana and other African countries, especially in technical and vocational fields. Situated in an urban center, the university provides easy access to city amenities.

4.7.3 Technical University 3

Technical University 3 is located in the Bono Region of Ghana, northeast of Asufufu, in an urban area with easy access to city amenities and services. About 67% of new students are male and 33% are female, reflecting broader trends in technical and vocational education. Over 84% of students are enrolled in science, technology, engineering, and TVET programs, while the rest study business and administration. The university offers a wide range of programs, including nine Master of Technology degrees, 26 Bachelor's degrees, 23 Higher National Diplomas, five Diplomas, and eight non-tertiary courses, all designed to equip graduates with skills that match job market needs and promote entrepreneurship. The Secretaryship and Management Studies program, under the Business Faculty, includes English language courses. To support its growing student population, the university is expanding its infrastructure with new academic buildings and facilities.

4.7.4Technical University 4

This public Technical University is located in the southern part of Ghana, within the country's largest coastal metropolis along the Gulf of Guinea. Situated in a vibrant urban center that serves as the nation's main economic and administrative hub, the university benefits from close access to government offices, major markets, and key transportation networks. In a recent intake, there were 5,437 male and 3,240 female students, showing a gender gap common in technical education. The university offers a wide range of programmes, including Masters of Technology, Bachelor of Technology, Higher National Diplomas, Diplomas, and non-tertiary courses. There are four faculties: Built Environment, Applied Sciences, Applied Arts, and Business, with Secretaryship and Management Studies under the Faculty of Business. The

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curriculum is designed to give students practical skills for the job market, supporting both employability and entrepreneurship.

4.8 Data Collection method

Data collection is the structured process of gathering, measuring, and analysing information to address research questions, assess outcomes, or predict trends. As a fundamental step in research and decision-making across diverse fields, it plays an essential role in generating valuable insights. Data collection methods refer to the techniques employed to acquire information for research or analysis, encompassing a wide range of approaches such as surveys, interviews, observations, and experiments. Data collection methods include surveys, interviews, observations, focus groups, document reviews, and transactional tracking. These methods can be categorised into:

Primary Data Collection: Involves collecting original data directly from sources (Examples of primary data are surveys, interviews, focus group discussions and. experiments).

Secondary Data Collection**:** Involves using existing data from sources like books, reports, literature review, online databases and historical analysis (Driscoll & Brizee, 2017).

Data Collection Tools or Instruments are systematic approaches and software programmes specifically designed to gather and analyse information from diverse sources (Dhlakama & Murairwa 2024). These tools facilitate the collection of primary data through methods like interviews, surveys, observations, and focus groups, while also processing secondary data. In this study, both primary and secondary data were employed. For primary data, interviews and Focus Group Discussions were used to ascertain information from the lecturers and students of the technical universities selected.

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The lecturers who taught and marked the scripts were evaluated in this study, as well as the students who wrote the exams. Both lecturers and students provided the primary data. Through the use of an interview guide, the primary data was collected. The secondary data, on the other hand, was the examination scripts of final-year students of the Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies in the selected Technical Universities. These examination scripts were obtained from the Secretaryship and Management Departments of the universities selected.

Presently, Ghana has a total of ten (10) technical universities according to the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) (www.gtec.edu.gh).

The population for the study was four technical universities out of the ten technical universities in Ghana. All students of the four technical universities, all lecturers of the four technical universities, and all examination scripts of the selected technical universities. The target population comprised the four technical universities offering Secretaryship and Management Studies as a programme and English language as a course. All final-year students of the Secretaryship and Management Studies Department offering English language as a course. All lecturers teaching English in the Secretaryship and Management Studies Department and all examination scripts of the final-year students who wrote the examination in the 2023/2024 academic year from the Secretaryship and Management Studies Department in the technical universities. The examination scripts were used because they contained the text elements that were examined. In addition, the students were also needed because they could tell the challenges they encountered in their academic writing. Finally, English lecturers took part in the study because they were responsible for marking the examination scripts of the students so they could provide the necessary data (challenges students faced) for the study.

A total of sixty (60) examination scripts were used for the study. The total number was made up of fifteen (15) scripts per university for the four (4) selected technical universities. The qualitative nature of the study made it necessary to choose a small sample size to represent Technical University students since a smaller sample size is required to conduct a detailed, in-depth analysis. (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

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According to Dornyei (2007), a qualitative inquiry focuses on finding people who have deep and varied perspectives on the subject being studied to maximise what can be learned and is less concerned with representativeness. Thus, it might be challenging to handle a bigger sample size for this investigation and the needed focus and attention may not be achieved. Again, this number is considered adequate based on the fact that the study aims to examine each examination script in more detail to know the academic writing proficiency of the students' academic writing. There was a focus group discussion which was made up of ten (10) participants (students) who wrote the examination. Because these students wrote the examination, they were able to bring out the challenges they encountered when they were writing the examination. Four (4) lecturers who were involved in teaching and marking the examination scripts also participated in the study to expose the challenges students face in their academic writing and to suggest some possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year technical university students.

4.9 Sampling Techniques

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset (sample) from a larger population to represent the whole, enabling researchers to draw generalisations or make inferences about the entire population based on the analysis of that sample (Berndt, 2020). Common types of sampling are the probability and non-probability sampling each characterised by inherent strength and limitations (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). Non-probability sampling techniques are better suited to qualitative studies than probability sampling techniques. Quantitative sampling techniques include random sampling with and without replacement, stratified sampling, cluster sampling, and systematic sampling (Barreiro & Albandoz, 2001). Non-probability sampling techniques include convenience, purposeful, quota, and snowball sampling (Showkat & Parveen 2017). This study is qualitative so, the purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the participants. According to Showkat and Parveen (2017), non-probability methods allow researchers to study specific phenomena to gain valuable insights. The same applied to this study as it assessed the final-year university students' academic writing proficiency. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to

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intentionally select participants who possess specific characteristics or experiences critical to the research question, ensuring the sample is information-rich and relevant. This enhanced the depth and quality of the collected data by focusing on cases best suited to provide meaningful insights. Convenience sampling also helped the researcher to select participants who were readily available and willing to participate, making it a practical way to recruit participants. Since the study aimed for a deep understanding of students' writing challenges across four Technical Universities in Ghana, purposive sampling guided the selection of students who meet criteria relevant for exploring these challenges (final year Secretaryship and Management Studies students). Convenience sampling was then used within these purposively identified groups to recruit participants who were accessible and willing to participate, facilitating efficient data collection without compromising relevance. The synergy between these methods strengthened the study's ability to gather meaningful data efficiently.

A multiple-sampling technique was used in this study. The first stage of the process involved partitioning the country into the southern zone and northern zone. Purposively, two technical universities from the southern zone and another two from the northern zone were selected respectively from the technical universities that offer Bachelor of Technology in Secretaryship and Management Studies. The country (Ghana) was divided into southern and northern zones for university selection to ensure geographic diversity and representativeness in the study. By purposively selecting two technical universities from the southern zone and two from the northern zone, the study captured perspectives from different regions with potentially distinct socio-cultural and educational contexts. Selecting universities from both zones helped the study better understand and compare students' experiences with writing skills across these diverse settings, thereby increasing the relevance and generalizability of the findings within the country's geographic and institutional landscape.

Secondly, the Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies was purposively selected for the study. Purposive sampling helps to pick the specific department for the study. The Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies

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was purposively selected because it is the only department in the technical universities that offer English as a course. Furthermore, purposive sampling was adopted to select the final-year English students from the Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies. Again, purposive sampling was adopted to select the examination scripts. Final-year lecturers of the English students were also purposively selected.

When a researcher discovers that certain data can only be collected from specific participants because they are experts on the phenomenon being studied—purposive sampling is employed. These individuals are positioned to offer valuable information for the investigation since they may have gained that expertise via a specific role or position, they hold. “The enquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon in the study,” (Creswell, 2007: 125).

In like manner, Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016: 126) propose that purposive sampling entails the intentional selection of participants based on specific characteristics. Consistent with Creswell's (2007) contention that this type of sampling is applicable “at the site level, at the event or process level, and at the participant level”. In line with Creswell's (2007: 126) assertion that this kind of sampling can be applied at the site, event, or process level, the four technical universities in Ghana were chosen for the study (site level) because they were thought to be able to supply sufficient data to address the research questions.

Besides, the four English lecturers (one from each of the selected universities) were purposively selected (participant level) since they are responsible for marking the examination scripts- An obligation that was anticipated would put them in a position to supply adequate data for the research.

For the third stage, there was a convenient selection of the scripts that were available at the time of the study. Fifteen (15) scripts from the four (4) universities making a total of sixty (60) scripts were conveniently selected and Ten (10) students were also conveniently selected for the Focus Group Discussion. The selection was based on the availability of the students and their willingness to share their experiences.

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Convenience sampling, according to Etikan et al. (2016: 2), is employed when "members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time or the willingness to participate are included for the study". Likewise, for this study, convenience sampling was employed to choose sixty (60) examination scripts by selecting fifteen scripts from each of the four selected technical universities. The examination scripts were readily available to the researcher so these selections were done. This sampling method was also chosen because it is quick, easy to use, and economical.

Table 1: Provided information about the study's population, sample size, and breakdown of Sample size of research participants

Type of university	Division of the country into zones	Number of technical universities selected from each zone	Name of technical universities (TUs) Selected	No. of scripts selected	No. of lecturers selected	No. of students selected for Focus Group Discussion	Academic Year/semester
Technical University	Southern zone	2	TU 1	15	1	10	2023/2024
			TU 2	15	1	10	
	Northern zone	2	TU 3	15	1	10	First Semester
			TU 4	15	1	10	
TOTAL				60	4	40	

Source: Field survey, 2024

Pseudonyms are given to the selected universities in observance of their right to anonymity.

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The study adopted multiple sampling techniques. In the first instance, the country was divided into a southern zone and a northern zone. Four (4) technical universities, two from the southern zone and two from the northern zone were purposively sampled out of the ten (10) technical universities that offer Bachelor of Technology in Secretaryship and Management Studies, with students offering English language as a course. Secondly, the Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies was purposively selected for the study. Also, purposive sampling was adopted to select the final-year students reading Secretaryship and Management Studies as a programme and English language as a course. There was also purposive sampling for the examination scripts and a convenient selection of the scripts that were available at the time of the study. There was also a convenient selection of fifteen (15) scripts from the four (4) technical universities making a total of sixty (60) scripts. Lecturers who taught Secretarial English were also purposively selected and finally, a convenient sampling of ten (10) students were selected for the Focus Group Discussions making a total of forty (40) students from the four technical universities.

The Secretaryship and Management Studies Department was selected because apart from the Communication Skills that every first-year student does, the Secretaryship and Management Studies Department is the only class within the TUs that offers English language as a course, so, they are the highest level as far as language is concerned. The expectation is that whatever they write or say is the best that the university can offer concerning language. Therefore, if they have academic writing challenges, it has far-reaching implications for the rest of the students.

The final years were selected because they were taught Communication Skills which sought to provide them with writing, reading, and note-taking abilities and to correct their English in the first year. These final-year students, apart from studying Communication Skills in the first year, have also received tuition in the English Language, they have been writing all their examinations and assignments in the English language and they are consequently expected to have high proficiency in academic writing than the average Technical University student.

These final-year students are at their ‘departure’ level, that is, they are about to leave the university for the work environment where they will continue to engage themselves

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in technical writing (communication written for and about business and industry) such as memos, e-mails, and letters. Particularly, the study used examination scripts for the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. Apart from the examination scripts, four English lecturers were purposively selected to take part in the study because they were involved in marking the examination scripts and it was assumed that they could provide information needed for the study.

4.10 Investigative tools

This study adopted two main research instruments, namely documents and interviews.

4.10.1 Document Review

A document can be broadly defined as any written, graphical, or pictorial material that conveys information or meaning and it includes letters, policy manuals, public records (Morgan, 2022). The practicality of using existing data for research is becoming increasingly rife as considerable volumes of data are being gathered and archived by researchers all over the world (Bowen, 2009; Johnston, 2014; Borgman, 2017). For instance, Borgman (2017) highlights the transformative potential of open research data, emphasising the critical role of reusing existing data to accelerate knowledge development across various disciplines. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), documents are a valuable source of data for case studies. These documents can include a wide range of materials such as letters, emails, reports, meeting minutes, and official records. By analysing these documents, researchers can gain insights into the context and background of the case, uncover patterns, and corroborate findings from other data sources. This method allows for a comprehensive understanding of the case being studied, as documents often provide detailed and nuanced information that might not be captured through interviews or observations alone.

Document in the form of examination scripts was used for this study. These examination scripts covered the final year, the second semester of the Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies in the selected Technical universities. A

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document according to Creswell (2007) is one source from which data for a case study can be acquired.

4.10.2 Interviews

Interviews are a fundamental qualitative research method used to gather in-depth information from participants. The researcher poses questions to participants to explore their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and perspectives on a specific topic (Cardno, 2018).Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013) postulate that interviews are required when the enquirer wishes to obtain detailed information about a participant's thoughts and attitudes or wishes to thoroughly investigate new issues. Similarly, DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) argue that interviews allow respondents to express important issues about their environments; interviews are also important tools for understanding a subject matter or phenomenon. In their study, DeJonckheere and Vaughn emphasise that this method allows researchers to explore participants' thoughts, feelings and beliefs deeply, providing valuable insights into their environments and experiences. Kvale (2006) defines in-depth interviews as approaches to understanding the world from the interviewee's point of view and uncovering people's interpretations of their experiences. Interviews are helpful, according to Boyce and Neale (2006) when a researcher seeks "specific information about a person's ideas and behaviours or wishes to examine new concerns in depth." Finn and Jacobson (2008) claim that interviews enable respondents to express what is significant to them and help them learn more about a context or a topic in a similar vein. Again, in addition to creating a comprehensive portrait of the informant, analysing their words, and providing thorough opinions, interviews also provide interviewees with the opportunity to articulate their thoughts and feelings in their voice (Lune & Berg, 2017).

To gather data from the lecturers who were involved in marking the examination scripts of final-year students in the Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies, and from the students who addressed the challenges they faced in their academic writing, the interview guide was used. According to Creswell (2007), interview guides allow the interviewer to ask pre-planned questions, but not all of the

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pre-planned probes, transitions, and follow-ups are used during the interview. As a result, the interviewer has the discretion to deviate from the interview questions as needed to pursue unexpected findings and fruitful directions. Interview guides, according to Morse and Field (2013), are used to collect data on a specific subject. They add that while the subject is known, the responses cannot be predicted. The interview guide was chosen over informal and structured interviews for this study because it allowed for the use of pre-set questions and the flexibility to follow up on serendipitous prompts. The researcher benefited from the in-depth interview method and its associated interview guide to know the challenges that final-year Technical University students face in their academic writing and also the possible interventions that can be adopted to improve academic writing proficiency. In-depth interviews were conducted in the four technical universities with the English lecturers, each from the four technical universities, and 10 participants (students) in a Focus Group Discussion.

4.10.3 Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method where a small group of people, usually 6–12 participant, engage in a guided conversation about a specific topic. This method is used to gain insight into participants' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences related to the subject at hand. The group is usually selected because they share relevant characteristics, interests, or experiences (Krueger, 2014). Ten (students) from the four technical universities were selected based on their availability and willingness to share experiences. Participants were arranged to sit around a table to enable them to see and hear one another. I was the moderator responsible not only for guiding the participants through the discussion, but also for looking after the group dynamics to ensure all participants join in the discussion. All the sessions were recorded using a tape recorder.

4.11 Data Collection Process

Ethical clearance was received from the University of Venda Research Ethics Committee before the commencement of this study. This paved the way for the data-

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gathering process to begin. Letters were immediately dispatched to the four technical universities in a bid to seek approval to conduct the study there. The data gathering process started on 30th of July, 2024 and ended on 16th January, 2025.

For the examination scripts of the 2023/2024 the researcher, through personal visitations to the selected technical universities, was able to collect the expected fifteen examination scripts questions from three technical universities. One technical university failed to release the examination scripts of the students. For the interview with the lecturers, one lecturer from each of the technical universities was selected, making a total of four (4) lecturers. Also, a Focus Group Discussion made up of 10 students, making a total of 40 students from the four technical universities was gathered for analysis.

For the in-depth interviews, the interview guide that was used to gather data from the students had two sections (See Appendix D). The first section contained questions that explored the academic writing proficiency of the students. The second section explored whether there was any support system in place to help students overcome their writing challenges. These questions were designed in a bid to find answers to questions about the challenges students face in their academic writing. Research Question 2 (See 1.5). Also, concerning the in-depth interview with the lecturers, the interview guide that was used had two sections. The first section explored the challenges students face in their writing and the second section explored the effect of the challenges on their academic performances and the need for any support if any. All these questions were designed to answer research questions 2 and 3.

Apart from the composed questions which constituted the interview guide, further probing and clarifications were made on serendipitous areas. Where the interviewees brought in issues unrelated to the core purpose for conducting the interviews, the researcher found ways of redirecting the line of questioning to fit the purpose for the conduct of the interviews. These were done in consonance with the posits of Creswell (2007). Creswell espouses that interview guides allow the interviewer to follow pre-set questions, but not all of the prearranged probes, transitions and follow-ups are used during the interview. The interviewer, therefore, has the freewill to deviate from the

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interview questions as and when necessary to pursue unexpected findings and fruitful directions.

During the conduct of the interviews, visitations were made to the selected universities. Rapport was created between the researcher and the individual interviewees to ensure that the atmosphere was relaxed to allow for a free flow of ideas since all the interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis. Prior to the commencement of each interview, the informed consent form and the participant information sheet (See Appendices B and C) were given to the interviewees to offer explanations to them as regards the nature and scope of the study. The interviewees were required to sign the informed consent form as evidence of their assent to partake in the study. Each interview lasted about thirty-five (35) minutes. In each of the university the ten (10) students conveniently selected were assembled around a table, As the moderator, I guided the group discussion with open-ended questions designed to explore participants' perceptions, attitudes and experiences about the topic. The discussions were recorded with a tape recorder and notes were taken to capture both verbal responses and non-verbal cues. After the session, recordings were transcribed and analysed qualitatively to identify themes, patterns and insights relevant to the research objectives.

4.12 Analysis of data

The study was analysed using two different approaches: document analysis and thematic content analysis.

4.12.1 Document analysis

Document analysis is a type of qualitative research in which the researcher interprets materials to give context and meaning to a topic under review (Bowen, 2009). Morgan (2022) posits that Document analysis is a valuable research method that has been used for many years. This approach involves analysing various types of documents, such as books, newspaper articles, academic journal articles, and institutional reports. By systematically analysing these materials, researchers can extract meaningful

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insights and data that contribute to their understanding of specific topics or issues (Morgan, 2022).

To extract meaning and comprehension from the data, document analysis necessitates data analysis and interpretation. (Rapley, 2007; Corbin & Strauss 2008; Bowen, 2009). Egger and Carpi (2008) cited in (Demana, 2023) avow that the techniques researchers use to analyse and interpret data allow other scholars to review and use it for future research. In this study Error Analysis served both as a method for analysing data and as the theoretical framework. Richard and Schmidt (2002) assert that Error Analysis is a method for identifying, classifying, and systematically interpreting unacceptable forms of oral or written language. Fifteen (15) examination scripts purposively selected from each of the four technical universities totaling Sixty (60) examination scripts were used for the study.

The researcher used a mix of the Linguistic Category Taxonomy and the Surface Structure Taxonomy by Dulay et al. (1982). The Linguistic Category Taxonomy classifies errors based on where they fit in the target language system. For instance, grammatical errors can be divided into categories like tense, prepositions, and articles (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). The Surface Taxonomy also describes errors by how surface structures are changed (Dulay et al., 1982:150). It includes addition (adding something unnecessary), omission (leaving out something important), misordering (putting things in the wrong order) and misformation (using the wrong form).

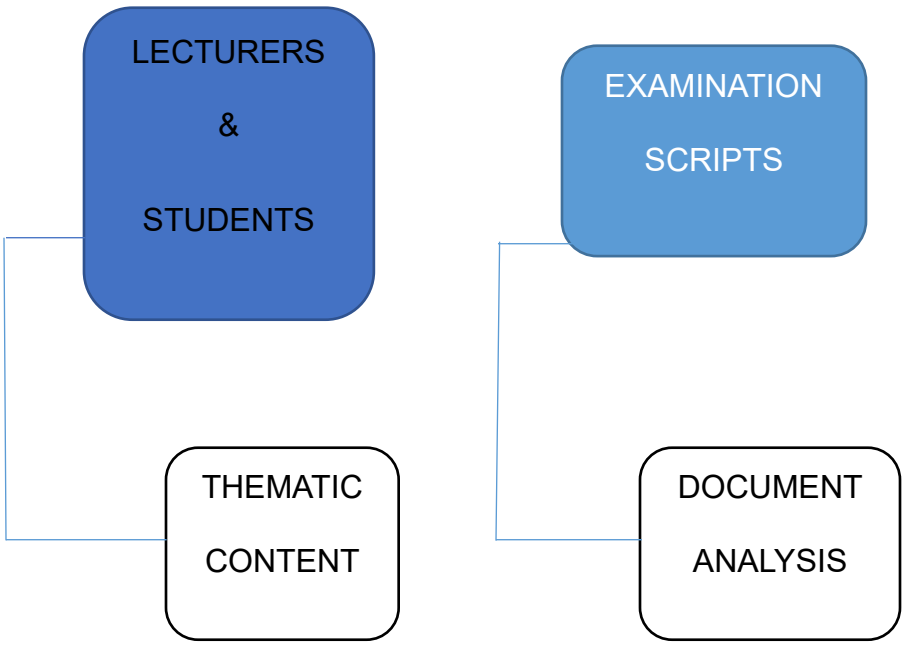
In this study, these two taxonomies were used to describe grammatical errors for several reasons. First, combining them suits the nature of grammatical errors and complements each other. Second, using both provides a more detailed description of errors and allows analysis from different angles (Chuang & Nesi, 2006 cited in Demana, 2023).These two taxonomies are widely used in Error Analysis studies for dealing with grammatical errors (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; James, 1998).

As has been established earlier in this study, academic writing is not assessed only on grammar. Other components make academic writing proficient or non-proficient. For this reason, the researcher adopted Isaacson's (1996) five aspects of student writing that a balanced assessment should consider to support Error Analysis so that other aspects of academic writing in the final year university students' examination

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scripts could be assessed. According to Isaacson (1996), the first aspect is fluency, which is the ability to turn thoughts into written expressions using various sentence structures and appropriate vocabulary. The second aspect is content, which involves organising ideas and writing coherently, including creative writing through logical arguments. The third aspect is using the standard conventions of written English, like correct spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, and readable handwriting. The fourth aspect, as identified by Isaacson, is vocabulary use, meaning the ability to express precise meanings in different writing contexts. The fifth aspect is syntax, which is the ability to use different sentence patterns and constructions. Isaacson further notes that for assessment to be effective, teachers must consider the purpose, process, and product of the writing assignment (Isaacson, 1996 cited in Mwangi, 2017). These five aspects of student writing identified by Isaacson (1996), that a balanced assessment should consider have been used in a study by Mwangi (2017), to assess the challenges that Kenyan students face in their academic writing.

Figure 4.1 presents a visual representation of the sources of data for this study and their corresponding approaches used to analyse them:



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Figure 4.1: Sources of data and approaches to data analyses

The examination scripts of the Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies of the four technical universities (which are documents) were used for this enquiry. These examination scripts were from the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year.

4.12.2 Thematic content analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) explain thematic content analysis as a qualitative research method used to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within qualitative data. This approach is particularly useful for interpreting complex data sets, such as those from interviews. Data obtained from students from the Focus Group Discussions guided the second research question- What are the challenges encountered by Technical University students in their academic writings? The data again guided the third research question- What are the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year technical university students? Thematic content analysis was also employed to analyse the data obtained from the in-depth interviews with the lecturers. I read the interview transcripts multiple times to immerse myself in the content. I assigned codes to meaningful chunks of interview text that reflect discrete ideas and opinions related to interventions. After the initial coding, to enhance the reliability and validity of the analysis, a peer independently coded a representative sample. Both codes were compared side by side to ensure consistencies. After coding, I looked for patterns and connections among the codes-grouping similar or related codes together to form tentative themes that represent broader concepts. An inductive method was employed to allow themes to emerge organically from the data, without imposing pre-existing frameworks. The themes were then reviewed against the coded data and entire data set to ensure they accurately reflect the lecturers' perspective. The analysis was still guided by the second research question and the third research question. Glaser and Strauss (1967); Babbie (1979); Fox (1982) and Berg (1989) are some researchers who have used thematic content analysis in various studies.

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The study analysed the data according to the guidelines provided by Creswell and Poth (2018) in a Spiral form as indicated in Figure 4.1 below.

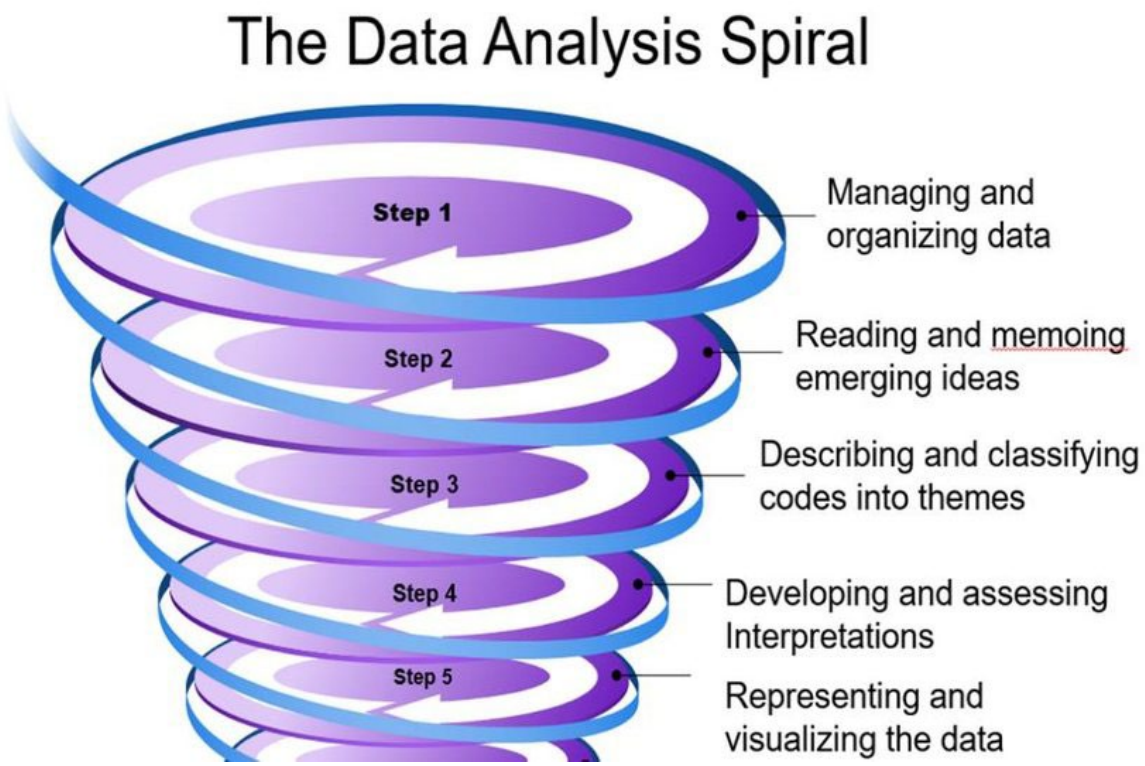


Figure 4.2: The Data Analysis Spiral (Creswell & Poth 2018: 186)

1. The researcher created files and a filing system based on the recommendations made by Creswell and Poth (2018).
2. The researcher carefully and frequently read the data to interpret it and record any ideas that came to mind.
3. The description and grouping of codes into themes took place in the third step. The researcher described, categorised and analysed the data in this step. The information was organised into categories, themes and sub-themes based on insights gained from the codes.
4. The researcher developed and interpreted the data
5. Finally, the data was represented and visualised.

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4.13 Field notes

To gather primary data in this study, Field notes were also used. For the sake of future reference, the researcher noted important issues related to the challenges encountered by final-year university students in their academic writing, from students' and lecturers' points of view. Additionally, the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year university students were also noted by the researcher.

Field notes provide comprehensive descriptions of subjects' activities and their setting. They are a critical component of qualitative research, serving as the researcher's written record of observations, experiences and insights gathered during fieldwork (Schurink, 1998; Schwandt, 2014). Field notes were crucial to this study, preserving valuable data that might have otherwise been lost. These notes were meticulously handwritten in a specially prepared book, enabling the researcher to reflect, interpret, and analyse the issues (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

4.14 Field challenges

The researcher visited the selected universities to conduct FGDs with students, interview the English lecturers and assess the examination scripts. One Technical University, after the researcher was done with FGDs with students and an interview with a lecturer, failed to release the examination scripts to be assessed. A few months after, the researcher realised that not having the examination scripts for that university would affect the quantity of data needed for the study. So, the researcher went back to the institution. On the first visit, one of the lecturers in the institution took the researcher around the campus because that was my first visit to that institution. He went alone to request the scripts but he was denied. When I visited the second time, I went to see the Head of Department and discussed with him, the need for the examination scripts. He revealed to me that if I am not taking the scripts away, running photocopies or scanning them on my phone, then the scripts could be released to me. I agreed and arrangement was made for me to get the scripts

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4.15 Triangulation

Triangulation is the process of gathering information on a particular occurrence using multiple methods. Denzin (1978) defined triangulation as combining different methodologies to study the same phenomenon. The primary rationale behind the majority of researchers' use of triangulation is its ability to prevent or manage biases, which enhances the validity and reliability of investigations (Jonsen & Jehn 2009). To improve the study's validity and reliability, triangulation is employed in this investigation to collect data from a variety of sources and enhance our comprehension of final-year university students' academic writing proficiency. Greene and Caracelli (1997) purport that a variety of approaches are necessary to fully comprehend the complexities of social phenomena due to their complex character.

4.15.1 Types of Triangulations

There are various types of triangulation, and they are typically used to improve the dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability of studies in qualitative research. Patton (2002) and Brown (2005) make the following recommendations:

- Investigator triangulation: This involves using several researchers to analyse the data to minimise and comprehend any discrepancies or biases that the individual researchers may have.
- Methods triangulation: This involves comparing data obtained using various methods (e.g. qualitative and quantitative).
- Theory triangulation: This method entails employing many theories to interpret the issue under consideration.
- Source triangulation: This type compares data derived from various qualitative approaches (e.g. documented accounts, interviews)
- Time triangulation: This entails collecting data at various times.
- Location triangulation: This method refers to gathering data at various sites/locations (e.g. four different universities).
- Multiple analysis triangulation: This method compares data collection and interpretation by using different interviewers, observers, and analysts.

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This study used three different triangulations: source triangulation, theory triangulation and location triangulation. Source triangulation involves comparing data obtained from different qualitative sources. For this study, data were gathered from examination scripts of final-year Secretaryship and Management Studies students, interview responses from lecturers involved in marking the examinations in the four selected technical universities, and students responses from Focus Group Discussions in the technical universities selected. This comprehensive approach was designed to enhance the validity and reliability of the enquiry (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009).

Location triangulation, which involves gathering data from different sites to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue, was also utilised in this enquiry. In that regard, this study assessed final-year students' academic writing proficiency at four different technical universities in Ghana.

Finally, this study used the theory of triangulation which involves using multiple theories to interpret the issue under investigation. This study used the Error Analysis theory, cognitive processes theory, Schleppregrell's model of academic written language and Halliday and Hasan's (1974) framework on cohesion. By cross-verifying findings using multiple theories, the research can demonstrate greater validity. If different theories lead to consistent conclusions, the findings are more likely to be credible and reliable. Again, using various theories helps mitigate the researcher's biases. It ensures that the interpretation is not overly influenced by a single theoretical viewpoint.

4.16 Ethical Considerations

In the context of academic research, a diversity of ethical issues, conditioned by the different roles of members within institutions arise (Drolet et al., 2023). Ethical considerations are crucial in conducting research, especially when it involves the privacy and reputation of participants. Reiter (2017), Creswell (2018), and Reading (2018) describe ethics as the norms and standards that guide a researcher's conduct throughout their research activities. Ethical conduct in research encompasses

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addressing morally ambiguous situations that may arise during the research process. These situations include but are not limited to, exposing research participants to potential harm, failing to maintain confidentiality, misusing information, or exhibiting bias. Ensuring ethical conduct is crucial to uphold the integrity of the research and protect the rights and well-being of participants. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research and Innovation Directorate of the University of Venda, South Africa, before starting the study. Additionally, permissions were sought from the selected universities to ensure free consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent. The research participants were fully informed about the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, ensuring that participants' names would not be disclosed. To protect their reputations, all personal information was handled with the utmost care and kept strictly confidential. Moreover, all lecturers and students interviewed at the four technical universities were provided with a Participant Information Sheet. This sheet contained essential information about the study, enabling them to make informed decisions regarding their participation. Moreover, the lecturers and students were invited to voluntarily participate in the study by signing a detailed Informed Consent Form. The lecturers and students faced no risk, as their identities and responses were kept confidential and used exclusively for academic purposes (Kumar, 2018). Participants were provided the option to withdraw at any time without penalty. Final ethical considerations adhered to include the correct data-gathering methods, analyses, and reporting.

4.16.1 Trustworthiness of the study

Guba (1981) proposed four parameters that are required in the conduct of a study to ensure the trustworthiness of investigations. Researchers generally agree on his four parameters (Shenton, 2004). These are the four criteria: dependability (for reliability), credibility (for internal validity), transferability (for external validity/generalisability) and confirmability (for objectivity). How these four parameters were implemented or used in this qualitative investigation is covered in the next sub-sections.

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4.16.1.1 Dependability(reliability)

In research, reliability (dependability) refers to the consistency of a measurement ensuring that repeated assessments produce similar results. In other words, if you conduct the same study or use the same tool multiple times, you should get comparable outcomes each time. On the part of McBurney and White (2013:156), reliability is “the degree of accuracy in the measurements made by a research instrument.” Shenton (2004) expouses that procedures utilised to conduct the study should be properly given or published to ensure dependability and enable researchers to perform all the intricacies involved in the original investigation. This study passes the dependability test since all pertinent information about the research procedures used has been provided, enabling researchers to fully understand the methods used and their efficacy.

4.16.1.2 Transferability (external validity)

Transferability is the degree to which a specific study's conclusions or findings can be applied to different contexts and demographics (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013). It highlights the relevance of research findings to other situations, ensuring that the insights gained are not confined to the original study but can also provide value to a broader audience. This study provides readers with enough information about the study sites to enable them to apply the findings, in line with Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Firestone (1993). Moreover, the methodology, the methods, and the data analysis have been described thoroughly to allow this study’s findings or conclusions to be generalised within other situations and populations.

4.16.1.3 Confirmability (objectivity)

Confirmability specifically refers to actions done to make sure that, to the greatest extent feasible, the ideas, opinions, and attitudes recorded are those of the research participants, not the researcher. Taylor and Medina (2011) state that confirmability is about making sure the research data can be traced back to its original source. This means that the data and findings should be linked to their sources, ensuring transparency and reliability in the research process. This is done by keeping detailed

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records and saving data for future review (Bowen, 2005). Following confirmability norms, the study has carefully recorded every step using field notes. Also, samples of interview transcripts and examination scripts were safely stored for easy retrieval if needed. Confirmability helps verify that the results are based on actual evidence rather than the researcher's bias or assumptions. Shenton (2004) argues that providing a detailed description of the methodology is essential to allow for the scrutiny of research integrity. To meet the confirmability test, a comprehensive methodological description is provided in this enquiry. Additionally, the researcher skillfully used triangulation to corroborate the evidence from the participants.

4.16.1.4 Credibility (internal validity)

Credibility in research is about how well a study measures what it aims to and the legitimacy of the conclusions drawn from the data. It ensures that findings are meaningful and relevant to real-world contexts, making it a crucial aspect of research integrity. Credibility answers questions like whether the researcher spent a significant amount of time in the field, verified interpretations with participants, and demonstrated a learning process (Taylor & Medina, 2011). Guba (1981) identifies constructs such as triangulation and a 'thick' description of the issue under investigation as key components of credibility in qualitative studies. For this study, three types of triangulation were utilised: source triangulation, location triangulation, and time triangulation. Furthermore, all interpretations are grounded in detailed descriptions of the data collected from various sites and participants.

4.17 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the methodological beliefs that underpinned this enquiry, including the research paradigm, study design, research methodology, study area, data sources, target population, sampling techniques, investigative tools, and data collection processes. Additionally, it addresses the trustworthiness of the study, triangulation, and ethical considerations.

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CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this section of the thesis, the findings of the research conducted are presented. The sources of the data and the steps involved in the attainment of these data were presented in Chapter Four. The study objectives and research paradigms that guided the process of gathering these data (see Chapter Four). The study's main objective was to assess the final-year university students' academic writing proficiency.

This study employed a qualitative research approach, specifically a multiple/collective case study design. The multiple/collective case study design was used for this study to help the researcher gain a better understanding of final-year students' academic writing proficiency.

According to Yin (2003), this type of case study focuses on the phenomenon (in this case, academic writing proficiency of final-year students in selected technical universities in Ghana) and selects multiple cases/sites (in this study, they are the four selected technical universities) to study the issue by duplicating the process across all the selected cases.

Three data collection tools were used in the study: documents analysis and in-depth methods including semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The data from the documents (past examination scripts) gave information on the writing proficiency of final-year students in technical universities in Ghana. On the other hand, the Focus Group Discussions with the students and semi-structured interviews with the lecturers who marked the scripts provided information on the challenges encountered by Technical University students in their academic writing. Also, data from the FGD with students and semi-structured interviews with lecturers provided information for the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year Technical University students.

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It is critical to draw readers' attention to the research questions or problems that underpinned the purpose of this study to present the results academically and concisely. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How is the writing proficiency of final-year students' academic writing in technical universities in Ghana?
2. What are the challenges encountered by Ghanaian Technical University final-year students in their academic writing?
3. What are the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year students in the technical universities in Ghana?

This chapter is divided into three sections. An analysis of data from documents (examination scripts) as related to research question 1 (How is the writing proficiency of final-year students' academic writing in technical universities in Ghana?) is discussed in Section 1.

The analysis of the Focus Group discussion from the students on the challenges they face in their academic writing and a thematic analysis from semi-structured interviews with the lecturers on the challenges students face in their academic writing as related to the research question 2: (What are the challenges encountered by Technical University final-year students in their academic writing?) are covered in Section two. Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral was used to analyse the data from the interview.

Finally, to answer the third research question, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the lecturers who marked the scripts and with the students who wrote the examination. Data from the semi-structured interviews are presented, analysed and discussed as related to research question three (What are the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year Technical University students?). Again, Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral was used to analyse the data for the third research question.

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Section 1: Research Question 1

5.2 How is the writing proficiency of final-year students' academic writing proficiency in Technical Universities in Ghana?

To answer the first question which is "How is the writing proficiency of final-year students' academic writing in Technical Universities in Ghana?" It is important to present the results of the academic writing proficiency based on the examination scripts of the students of each selected Technical University. As indicated already, the data collected were examination scripts from final-year university students from the Secretaryship and Management Studies Department of the selected technical universities. Noted previously in Chapter 2 (2.24) on components of academic writing in technical universities, the grammatical errors were assessed by using a combination of Linguistics category taxonomy and Surface structure taxonomy developed by Dulay et al. (1982).

The Linguistic category taxonomy classifies learners' errors within the overall system of the target language. For example, grammatical errors can be categorised by tense, prepositions, articles, and so on (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). The Surface Structure Taxonomy, also known as 'Target Modification Taxonomy' by James (1998), describes errors based on how the surface structures are altered (Dulay et al., 1982: 150). This taxonomy includes error types such as 'addition' which involves the presence of an item that must not be used, 'omission' when an essential part is omitted, and 'misformation' when the wrong form of a morpheme or structure is used. These two taxonomies were used in this study to describe grammatical errors for several reasons. First, combining them is suitable for the nature of grammatical errors and they complement each other. Second, using both taxonomies provides a more comprehensive description of errors and allows for examination from different analytical perspectives. (Chuang & Nesi, 2006 cited in Demana 2023). Chuang and Nesi (2006) state that combining the linguistic category taxonomy with the surface structure taxonomy can create a multi-dimensional error profile, leading to a better understanding of learner errors.

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Grammatical errors alone were not sufficient to answer the first research question because other factors add up to make academic writing proficient or not proficient. For that reason, mechanics, which include spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation; content, which include paragraphing, cohesion and cohesion and structural errors made up of fragments, faulty parallelism, wrong word choice, run-on sentences, dangling modifiers, misplaced modifiers, etc. were all adopted to answer research question one successfully.

First of all, the academic writing proficiency was coded under the following categories: Grammatical errors with a focus on Linguistics Category taxonomy and Surface Structure taxonomy. Mechanics, content errors and structural errors.
Secondly, a coding scheme was created to include specific codes for each proficiency type. This is represented by the table below:

Table 2: Coding scheme

PROFICIENCY TYPE	CODE	DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFICIENCY TYPE
Grammatical Errors	GE 1	Tense
	GE 2	Preposition
	GE 3	Subject-verb agreement
	GE 4	Word formation
	GE 5	Syntax
	GE 6	Addition
	GE 7	Omission
	GE 8.	Misformation
	GE 9	Misordering
Mechanics Errors	ME 1	Spelling
	ME 2	Punctuation
	ME 3	Capitalisation
Contents Errors	CE 1	Topic sentence
	CE 2	Supporting sentence
	CE 3	Cohesion and coherence

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Structural Errors	SE 1	Fragment
	SE 2	Faulty parallelism
	SE 3	Wrong choice of words
	SE 4	Run on sentences
	SE 5	Dangling modifiers
	SE 6	Misplaced modifiers

To explore the writing proficiency of final-year students' academic writing in the selected technical universities in Ghana, the researcher conveniently selected samples from the examination scripts that were available at the time of the study. Fifteen (15) scripts from the four (4) universities making a total of sixty (60) scripts were conveniently selected.

Each examination script was read thoroughly and matched against the coding scheme created to assess academic writing proficiency in the selected examination scripts.

To enhance the researcher's manual assessment of academic writing proficiency in student examination scripts, online resources, such as grammar and spelling checkers, were used to verify detected errors. Rubrics for assessing academic writing proficiency at technical universities were carefully examined to improve the reliability and validity of the data. The tables below present typical errors (academic writing challenges) observed in students' examination scripts, along with their descriptions, explanations, and evaluations, all based on Corder's principle of error analysis. It is worth noting that, given the possibility of reconstructing the erroneous clauses in multiple ways, only one version was provided.

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Table 3: TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY 1

ERROR TYPE	CODE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES	CORRECT FORM
Grammatical Errors	GE 1	Tense Error	*i. The programme was organise to equip the young girls in the town.*	i. The programme was organised to equip the young girls in the town.
			ii. The team focus on the introduction of the programme for the day.	ii. The team focused on the introduction of the programme for the day.
			iii. Yesterday, we talk about leadership skills and talents.	iii. Yesterday, we talked about leadership skills and talents.
	GE 2	Preposition Error	*i. The report is written to give details in the three-day outreach programme.* `	i. The report is written to give details of the three-day outreach programme.
			ii. In the third day, the girls were taken	ii. On the third day, the girls were taken through a leadership seminar.

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			through a leadership seminar.	
	GE 3	Subject-Verb Agreement Error	*i. The month of March were challenging.* *ii. There was various skills that was displayed on that day.* *iii. Most of you will be an entrepreneur.*	i. The month of March was challenging. ii. There were various skills that were displayed on that day. iii. Most of you will be entrepreneurs.
Grammatical Errors cont.	GE 4	Word Formation	*i. The topic discuss on the second day include the following:* *ii. The programme was organise for the young girls to received information on various health issue.*	i. The topics discussed on the second day include the following: ii. The programme was organised for the young girls to receive information on various health issues.

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			iii. The girls actively participant in all session and showed keen <u>intrest</u> in learning.	iii. The girls actively participated in all sessions and showed keen interest in learning.
	GE 5	Syntax	*i. The participants gratitude expressed for opportunity learning and grow stating programme had equiped them valuable skills.* *ii. On these day talks were giving and awards was giving to them for successful programme and gratitude was giving to the community.*	i. The participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to learn and grow, explaining that the programme had equipped them with valuable skills. ii. On these days, talks were given and awards were presented to them for the successful programme, and gratitude was expressed to the community.

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			iii. The programme was success and also thanked the Shama District for given us opportunity.	iii. The programme was successful and we thanked the Shama District for giving us the opportunity.

Grammatical Errors cont.	GE 6	Error Of Addition	*i. Secondly, is the interaction with people concerning our customer service was good.* *ii. Several of our staffs have attended professional workshops and conferences* *iii. The programme organised for young girls in the district was successful despite some few challenges*	i . Secondly, the interaction with people concerning our customer service was good. ii. Several of our staff have attended professional workshops and conferences. iii. The programme organised for young girls in the district was successful despite some/a few challenges.

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	GE 7	Error of Omission	*i. The team gave them guidelines on how they have choose their courses.*	i. The team gave them guidelines on how they have to choose their courses.
			ii. We invited resource person to come and teach the girls how to personal skills. *iii. He also taught them how to open account.*	ii. We invited a resource person to come and teach the girls how to develop personal skills. iii. He also taught them how to open an account.
	GE 8	Misformation	*i. They used theirself as an examples.* *iii. The workers are hardworking, and there attendance is very impressive.*	i. They used themselves as examples. ii. The main objective of the programmme was to educate the young girls. iii. The workers are hardworking, and their attendance is very impressive.
	GE 9	Misordering	None	

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Mechanics Errors	ME 1	Spelling	*i. The health screening exercies helped the young boys in the area.* *ii. Puntuality has become our number one priority.* *iii. We were previledged to tour the city.*	i. The health screening exercise helped the young boys in the area. ii. Punctuality has become our number one priority. iii. We were privileged to tour the city.
	ME 2	Punctuation	*i. Firstly the girls were taught how to make beads.* *ii. On the third day the girl's were taken through a leadership seminar.*	i. Firstly, the girls were taught how to make beads. ii. On the third day, the girls were taken through a leadership seminar.
			iii. The first session focused on education and awareness covering topics like personal hygiene health safety and education.	iii. The first session focused on education and awareness, covering topics like personal hygiene, health, safety and education.

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	ME 3	Capitalisation	*i. The programme was held from march 15th to march 17th, 2024.* *ii. The outreach and empowerment programme for girls in the district.* *iii. volunteers conducted interactive workshops and discussions for the girls.*	i. The programme was held from March 15th to March 17th, 2024. ii. The Outreach and Empowerment Programme for Girls in the District. Volunteers conducted interactive workshops and discussions for the girls.

Content Errors	CE 1	Topic Sentence	*Paragraph- On the second day, the programme shifted its focus to career exploration and mentorship. Specifically, the girls had the opportunity to interact with successful women from various professions, who shared their experiences and provided guidance on*	**Topic sentence-**On the second day, the programme shifted its focus to career exploration and mentorship.

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			career planning and decison-making. Furthermore, the participants also engaged in hands-on workshops and simulations to explore different career paths.	
	CE 2	Supporting Sentences	*Paragraph- On the second day, the programme shifted its focus to career exploration and mentorship. Specifically, the girls had the opportunity* to *interact with successful women from various professions, who shared their experiences and provided guidance on career planning and decison-making. Furthermore,the participants also engaged in hands-on workshops and simulations to explore different career paths.*	**Major supporting sentence-** Specifically, the girls had the opportunity to interact with successful women from various professions, who shared their experiences and provided guidance on career planning and decison-making.
				Minor supporting sentence - Furthermore, the participants also engaged in hands-on workshops and simulations to explore different career paths.

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	CE 3	Cohesion and Coherence	*On the second day, the programme shifted its focus to career exploration and mentorship. Specifically, the girls had the opportunity to interact with successful women from various professions, who shared their experiences and provided guidance on career planning and decision-making. Furthermore, the participants also engaged in hands-on*	i. clear transitions and related ideas are used in the paragraph. The use of phrases like "the girls had the opportunity" and "the participants also engaged" maintains a logical flow. All sentences relate back to the main idea introduced in the topic sentence.

Structural Errors	SE 1	Fragment	*i. Provide educational and vocational training opportunities for young girls in the district* *ii. Empowering through community engagement*	i. The objective of the Girls' Foundation is to provide educational and vocational training opportunities for young girls in the district. ii. The final day was dedicated to empowering the girls through community engagement

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	SE 2	Faulty Parallelism	*i. The programme focused on impacting essential life skills, fostering leadership and promote community engagement.* *ii. The second day focused on skills development, including understanding of financial literacy, communication is key, and resolving conflicts effectively.*	i. The programme focused on impacting essential life skills, fostering leadership and promoting community engagement. ii. The second day focused on skills development, including understanding financial literacy, emphasising effective communication, and resolving conflicts.
	SE 3	Wrong Word Order/wrong choice of a word	*i. Day two, we had two **sections** of the meeting.* *ii. On **those** day, talks were giving by the resource person.* *iii. Taken were the young ladies through the previous lessons.*	i. Day two, we had two sessions of the meeting. ii. On **those** days, talks were given by the resource person. iii. The young ladies were taken through the previous lessons.

Structural Errors cont.	SE 4	Run-on Sentences	*i. We invited a resource person from Anita's Bakery Services, she taught the girls how to*	i. We invited a resource person from Anita's Bakery Services, **and** she taught the girls how to acquire personal skills in baking.

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			acquire personal skills in baking. *ii. The programme was a success, it empowered the young girls in the district.* *iii. Last days are always fun as they say we were privileged to tour the Shama Fort had sport activities and entertainment.*	ii. The programme was a success; it empowered the young girls in the district. iii. Last days are always fun; they say we were privileged to tour the Shama Fort, which had sport activities and entertainment.
	SE 5	Dangling Modifiers	*i. Conducting workshops on career guidance, they assisted individuals of all ages in making informed decisions*	i. When the N.G.O officials were conducting workshops on career guidance, they assisted individuals of all ages in making informed decisions about their educational and occupational paths.

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			about their educational and occupational paths. *ii Introducing career options, the presentation was well-received.*	ii .Introducing career options, the speaker found that the presentation was well-received.
	SE 6	Misplaced Modifiers	*i. Despite some challenges, the outreach and empowerment programme organised for young girls in the Shama district was successful for the community.* *ii. The day one brought all the girls in all the townships in the district*	i. Despite some challenges, the outreach and empowerment programme for the community, organised for young girls in the Shama district, was successful. ii. On day one, all the girls from the townships in the district arrived with much excitement.

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			with much excitement.	

5.2.1 Grammatical Errors

Grammatical errors involve mistakes in sentence structure or form that can weaken clarity, distort meaning, and undermine the overall effectiveness of communication. From the table in Technical University 1, the first grammatical error (GE 1) presented is the use of wrong tenses as indicated in the students' examination scripts. In example (i), the sentence "The programme was organise to equip the young girls in the town" uses a mix of correct and incorrect tense forms.

The auxiliary verb "was" indicates the past tense and, in conjunction with a past participle, sets up a passive construction. However, after "was" in a passive construction, you need the past participle of the verb. Therefore, the correct sentence should be "The programme was organised to equip the young girls in the town." In GE 1 sentence (ii) "The team focus on the introduction of the programme for the day" also has an issue with verb tense. The verb "focus" is in the present simple form, which does not agree with the context implied by "for the day," suggesting a specific, completed action. The most probable intended meaning is that the team's focus was on the introduction at some point in the past. Therefore, the past simple is suitable. The reconstructed sentence should be "The team focused on the introduction of the programme for the day." Similarly, in GE 1 sentence (iii) "Yesterday, we talk about leadership skills and talents" has a tense error. The verb "talk" is in the present simple tense, but the adverb "Yesterday" clearly indicates that the action happened in the past. The sentence should use the past simple tense. Therefore, the correct verb form is "talked." as in the corrected sentence "Yesterday, we talked about leadership skills and talents."

The second grammatical error GE 2 presented in Technical University 1 is a preposition error. Prepositions act like bridges, connecting elements and providing significant context about location, direction, time, or association. They are words that tell you where, when, or how something is related to something else. In example (i),

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the sentence “The report is written to give details in the three-day outreach programme” is not grammatically incorrect, because using “in” suggests the details are contained within the outreach programme itself. This is possible, but often not the most natural way to express the relationship. It implies the details are surrounded or enclosed by the programme, hence a better alternative is “The report is written to give details of the three-day outreach programme.” This suggests the report provides information about the programme and is often the most appropriate choice. Considering sentence (ii), “In the third day, the girls were taken through a leadership seminar.” The preposition “in” is not the most normal choice. While “in” is not strictly wrong, other prepositions would express the intended meaning more clearly and effectively.

The most common and natural preposition to use with specific days is “on.” The corrected sentence would be “On the third day, the girls were taken through a leadership seminar.”

The third grammatical error GE 3 presented in Technical University 1 is subject-verb agreement errors. Subject-verb agreement is a fundamental rule of English grammar. It requires that the verb in a sentence must match the number of its subject. Simply put, a singular subject takes a singular verb, while a plural subject takes a plural verb. Adhering to this rule ensures that your sentences are both clear and grammatically correct. For example, in (i) “The month of March” is a singular noun phrase. It refers to a single unit of time: one specific month. The verb is “were,” which is the plural form of the past tense of the verb “to be.” The singular subject “The month of March” does not agree with the plural verb “were.” The corrected sentence should be “The month of March was challenging.” Also, in (ii) the corrected sentence should be “There were various skills that were displayed on that day.” This is because in sentences starting with “There is/are “or “There was/were,” the subject comes after the verb. In this case, the subject is “various skills.” “Various” indicates that “skills” is plural. Therefore, “was” (singular) is incorrect. It should be “were” (plural).

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Moreover, the relative pronoun “that” refers back to “various skills,” which, as we established, is plural. Therefore, “was” (singular) is again incorrect and should be “were” (plural).

The fourth grammatical error in GE 4 is word formation. In sentence (i) the error lies in the use of “discuss.” In this context, we need a past participle to function as an adjective describing “topic.” The corrected sentence should read: ‘’The topics discussed on the second day include the following’’. “Discuss” is the base form of the verb while “Discussed” is the past participle, which can be used to form a passive construction or act as an adjective. In this case, “discussed” acts as an adjective modifying “topics,” indicating which topics are being referred to (the ones that were talked about). “Organise” should be “organised”: The verb “was” in the sentence requires a past participle to form the passive voice. “Organise” is the base form of the verb, while “organised” is the past participle. Also, in (ii) “received” in the sentence should be changed to “receive”: After the word “to”, the base form of the verb should be used. Finally, in the same sentence the word “issue" should be “issues”. That is “issue” should be plural to agree with “various”. The corrected sentence should be: The programme was organised for the young girls to receive information on various health issues. In (iii) the sentence needs a verb in the past tense to describe the girls' actions. “Participant” is a noun or the base form of a verb. The past tense form, “participated,” is needed here. “Session” should be “sessions.” The word “all” indicates that there was more than one session, so the plural form “sessions” is needed. The corrected sentence should be “The girls actively participated in all sessions and showed keen interest in learning.”

Syntax is the next grammatical error (GE 5) discussed. Syntax is about how we arrange words to make sentences meaningful. It looks at things like word order, how words work together, and the rules for creating clear and meaningful sentences. It is a significant part of grammar that helps us understand how to form sentences correctly. Sentence (i) under syntax is a run-on sentence with missing connecting words and verbs. It lacks a clear main verb to tie the different phrases together. “Participants gratitude expressed” is an awkward way to start the sentence. It is not

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clear who is expressing gratitude and how. There is also an incorrect verb forms which are “learning and grow”. These verbs should be “learning and growing” or “to learn and grow” to be grammatically correct and parallel. The sentence is also missing articles (a, an, the) which are necessary for clarity and grammatical correctness. There is also an incorrect tense and word choice. “Equiped” should be “equipped”. The word “stating” also does not quite fit the context; a word like “explaining” would be more appropriate. In sentence (ii) “On these day” should be “On these days”. “Day” needs to be plural to agree with “these”. In the sentence, “Giving” is the present participle, but here we need the past participle “given” to form the passive voice correctly. The same issue occurs with “awards was giving” and “gratitude was giving”. “Awards was giving “should be "awards were given. There are two issues here. First, “awards” is plural, so it needs the plural form of the verb “to be,” which is “were," not “was.” Second, “giving” should be “given”, as explained above. In summary, the original sentence suffers from incorrect verb forms, number agreement errors, and cumbersome phrasing and these hinder the sentence’s clarity and flow. Looking at sentence (iii), the word “Success” is a noun, and it comes after “was,”. Typically, we need an adjective or a noun phrase with an article to make the sentence grammatical. We can either have ‘’The programme was a success ‘’ or ‘’The programme was successful’’. Again, ‘’thanked the Shama District for given us opportunity’’ is not well structured. The word ‘’given’’ is the past participle form of the verb ‘’give’’, but here we need the gerund (the -ing form) because it functions as a noun after the preposition ‘’for’’. Also, ‘’opportunity’’ needs an article (“an’’ or ‘’the’’) since it is a singular countable noun. The sentence can be reconstructed as: ‘’The programme was successful and we thanked the Shama District for giving us the opportunity’’.

Error of addition is the next grammatical error (GE 6) to be discussed. “An error of addition occurs when a learner includes an unnecessary element in a sentence. This could be a superfluous word, phrase, or morpheme that does not belong in a well-formed utterance.” Addition errors are often contrasted with omission errors, where elements are missing from a sentence. These errors can indicate that a learner has acquired some basic rules but has not yet refined them. The primary error of addition in (i) is the presence of both “is” and “was” acting as main verbs in the same clause.

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This creates a redundancy, as the sentence is trying to use two forms of the verb “to be” to describe the same thing. Having both “is” and “was” makes the sentence grammatically incorrect. One option is to remove the “s”. Then, we have “Secondly, the interaction with people concerning our customer service was good. In example (ii) the error in the sentence “Several of our staffs have attended professional workshops and conferences” is the use of the plural noun “staffs” instead of the collective noun “staff”.” The word “staff” is a collective noun, which means it refers to a group of people but is treated as a singular unit. Just like “team, “group, or “committee.” When you are referring to the staff as a whole, you use the singular form. The “s” added to staff is redundant and should be removed. In (iii), the sentence “The programme organised for young girls in the district was successful despite some few challenges” has the unnecessary inclusion of both “some” and “few. “The word “few” already implies “some,” but with a limited quantity. Using some few together is redundant because they essentially convey the same meaning. To correct the sentence, you can either drop “few” and use only “some” or drop “some” and maintain “few”. The reconstructed sentences can be “The programme organised for young girls in the district was successful despite a few challenges or The programme organised for young girls in the district was successful despite some challenges.”

Error of omission is the seventh grammatical error (GE 7) captured in the table. An error of omission occurs when a necessary word or structure is missing, rendering the sentence incorrect. This can include the absence of elements such as articles, auxiliary verbs, apostrophes, prepositions, and the distinction between countable and uncountable nouns. In sentence (i), The main error of omission involves the auxiliary verb and the main verb within the phrase “how they have choose” There is an omission of “to” after “how they have”. We need “to” before the verb in its base form to express a sense of obligation, advice, or instruction. “Choose” should be in the infinitive form (the base form) when used with “to”. So, the corrected phrase should be: “how they have to choose their courses”. Similarly, there is an omission in sentence (ii). The primary error of omission lies in the lack of a verb that connects “how to” and “personal skills”. “Personal skills” is a noun phrase, and “how to” usually precedes a verb that describes the action or ability being taught or learned. The sentence lacks a verb to

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clarify what the girls should do with those personal skills. The sentence also lacks an article that should have come before “resource person (“a” or “the”), depending on whether it is a specific person or just any resource person. Sentence (iii) is not an exception. The primary error is the missing article before the word “account”. “Account” is a singular, countable noun, and in this context, it requires either the definite article “the” or the indefinite article “an”. Since we are likely referring to a general instance of opening an account (rather than a specific, already-mentioned account), the indefinite article “an” is the more appropriate choice."

The next error under grammatical is the error of misformation (GE 8). Misinformation occurs when language learners use the incorrect forms of morphemes or words (Dulay et al., 1982). The error of misformation in the sentence “They used theirself as an example” lies in the incorrect use of the reflexive pronoun. Specifically, “theirself” is a misformation of the correct reflexive pronoun, which should be “themselves.” Reflexive pronouns (myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves) refer back to the subject of the clause or sentence. They indicate that the subject is both performing the action and receiving the action.”Theirself” is non-standard. The word “theirself” is sometimes used colloquially, but it is not grammatically correct in standard English. The correct reflexive pronoun for the third-person plural (“they”) is “themselves.” “Theirself” is a misformation because it is an attempt to create a reflexive pronoun using the possessive pronoun “their” + “self.” However, English grammar rules dictate that the plural reflexive pronoun must be “themselves.”The error in sentence (ii), “The main whole of the programme was to educate the young girls” is the incorrect use of the phrase “main whole. “Whole” refers to the entirety or complete unit of something. “Main” refers to the most important part of something. Using them together in this context creates an absurd and grammatically incorrect phrase. The programme does not have a “main whole”; it has a main objective, purpose, or goal. The reconstructed sentence using “main objective” should be “The main objective of the programme was to educate the young girls”. Finally, in the sentence (iii) “The workers are hardworking, and there attendance is very impressive” contains misformation error. There is the incorrect use of “there” instead of “their.” This is a common type of misformation involving homophones (words that sound alike but

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have different meanings and spellings). The student has confused “there,” an adverb, or, with “their”, a possessive pronoun. “Their” (possessive pronoun) indicates ownership or belonging. It shows that something belongs to “they” (the workers in this case). Example: “Their car is new”. “There” (adverb), indicates a place or is used to introduce a sentence. Example: “The book is over there.” “There is a problem.” The student is not omitting a word but rather using the wrong form of a word. This demonstrates an attempt to apply the correct grammatical structure (possessive pronoun) but using the wrong word from a set of similar-sounding options. The reconstructed sentence should be “The workers are hardworking, and their attendance is very impressive.”

The last grammatical error captured in Table 3 is the error of misordering (GE 9). Misordering errors are grammatical errors that occur when a morpheme or group of morphemes are placed incorrectly within an utterance. In other words, this type of error happens when items or words are misplaced in a sentence. Such errors often arise from differences between one's first language (L1) and second language (L2). In the scripts assessed in Technical University 1, no misordering errors were found.

5.2.2 Mechanics Errors

In writing, mechanics errors are technical mistakes involving spelling, capitalisation, and punctuation. Essentially, these errors compromise the clarity and professionalism of your writing by violating the established conventions of written language. The first mechanic error (ME1) in the table for Technical University 1 is a spelling error. Spelling errors occur when words are written incorrectly according to the established spelling rules and conventions of a particular language. Essentially, it means that the letters in a word, or their arrangement, deviate from the accepted standard. In example (i) “The health screening exercies helped the young boys in the area.” The word “exercises” is misspelled. This is the most obvious error. “Exercise” can be a noun (meaning a physical activity or activity to practice or train) or a verb (meaning to perform physical activity). In this sentence, it is used as a noun, and since it is plural, it should be “exercises”. In (ii), the spelling error in the sentence “Puntuality has become our number one priority” is “Puntuality”. The correct spelling should be “Punctuality” – the

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letter “c” is missing from the correct spelling. In (iii), the spelling error in the sentence "we were previledged to tour the city" is that the “i” and “e” are in the wrong order.“Previledged” should be “privileged”.

Punctuation error (ME 2) is the next mechanics error. The sentence “Firstly the girls were taught how to make beads” is not well punctuated. A comma is often recommended after an introductory word or phrase like “Firstly”. It signals a slight pause and improves readability, especially if the word is longer or the following phrase needs clearer separation. The reconstructed sentence should be “Firstly, the girls were taught how to make beads”. In example (ii), depending on the writer’s preference and the flow of the surrounding text, adding a comma after the introductory phrase “On the third day” would be acceptable and could improve readability: “On the third day, the girl’s were taken through a leadership seminar**.**”

Just like the previous example in (i), a comma signals a brief pause and separates the introductory phrase from the main clause of the sentence. Although it is not a strict requirement , it is a style that many writers would choose in this case. Therefore, the original sentence is technically *not* incorrect, but the addition of a comma would be a common and valid stylistic choice**.** On the other hand, the apostrophe is incorrectly used to try to pluralise “girl.” The sentence should be “On the third day, the girls were taken through a leadership seminar.” It is simply the plural form of the noun. The apostrophe is only needed if showing possession. Finally, in sentence (iii) “The first session focused on education and awareness covering topics like personal hygiene health safety and education.” The biggest issue is the lack of commas to separate the items in the list of topics. This makes the sentence difficult to read and understand. The corrected version should be “The first session focused on education and awareness, covering topics like personal hygiene, health, safety and education.”

The last of mechanics error is capitalisation (ME 3). Capitalisation involves writing a word with its first letter in uppercase and the remaining letters in lowercase. The first word of a sentence is always capitalised. Capitalise proper nouns, which are specific names for people, places, organisations, or things, names of months, holidays, and days of the week. Trademark and brand names are also capitalised. For example (i) “The programme was held from march 15th to march 17th, 2024”. Months of the year

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are proper nouns and must always be capitalised. In example (ii) whether “Outreach” and “Empowerment" should be capitalised depends on the context. In this context, “Outreach and Empowerment Programme” is the official title of the programme so both words should be capitalised. This is because titles generally capitalise the first word, nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Also, “district” refers to a specific, named district, so it should be capitalised.

“Girls” is likely the intended focus of the programme. In this context, “Girls” should be capitalised because it is part of the programmme's title and refers to a specific group. The corrected version should be “The Outreach and Empowerment Programme for Girls in the District”. The first word of a sentence should always be capitalised. This is a fundamental rule of English capitalisation so, in example (iii) “volunteers” should be Volunteers”.

5.2.3 Content Errors

The third major proficiency assessed is content errors. Specifically, the researcher looked at how students wrote their paragraphs. Emphasis was placed on the topic sentences, supporting sentences, cohesion and coherence.

Content error (CE 1) was the topic sentences, (CE 2) was supporting sentences and (CE 3) was cohesion and coherence. In this paragraph “The second day, the programme shifted its focus to career exploration and mentorship. The girls had the opportunity to interact with successful women from various professions, who shared their experiences and provided guidance on career planning and decision-making. The participants also engaged in hands-on workshops and simulations to explore different career paths”, there was a clear topic sentence which was “On the second day, the programme shifted its focus to career exploration and mentorship”. The paragraph provides a specific and limited subject, allowing for focused development in the supporting sentences. The supporting sentences provide specific details and examples that elaborate on the topic sentence. The second sentence explains how the girls explored career options by interacting with successful women and receiving guidance. The third sentence continued to provide another example of career exploration through hands-on workshops and simulations. Generally, the paragraph

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has a clear and logical structure. It starts with a general statement (the topic sentence) and then moves to specific examples. The sentences flow smoothly and logically connect. The “they” in the last sentence is a clear reference to the “girls” in the previous sentence, creating cohesion. The paragraph has a unified focus; all sentences contribute to the central idea of career exploration and mentorship. The use of “also” in the final sentence signals that another example of career exploration is coming, creating a smooth transition. There are transitional words and phrases in the paragraph. For example, the use of “Specifically and “Furthermore” effectively connects the sentences and shows the relationship between the ideas. “Specifically,” introduces a more detailed description of the interaction with professional women, and “Furthermore” adds another activity related to career exploration. All in all, the paragraph is well-organised and effectively structured. The topic sentence is clear and focused, and the supporting sentences provide relevant and specific details. The paragraph demonstrates good unity and coherence. The organisation is logical and supports the main idea effectively.

5.2.4 Structural Errors

Structural errors were the last academic writing proficiency assessed in the final year Secretary ship and Management Studies examination scripts of Technical University 1. The first structural error (SE 1) was a fragment. A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence that lacks the essential components necessary to form a complete thought. Precisely, it may be missing a subject, a verb, or both, rendering it unable to stand alone as a grammatically correct sentence. The phrase “Provide educational and vocational training opportunities for young girls in the district” in (i) is a sentence fragment because it lacks a Subject. The fragment does not specify who is responsible for providing these opportunities. Without a subject, the sentence cannot stand alone. Again, the fragment does not have a verb form. While “provide” is an action verb, the fragment does not form a complete thought because it lacks context about what happens after the provision of these opportunities. This fragment can be converted into a complete sentence that communicates its intended message. Adding a subject will enhance clarity and ensure that the writing is grammatically

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correct. In (i), after introducing a subject we have, “The objective of the Girls’ Foundation is to provide educational and vocational training opportunities for young girls in the district. Also, in (ii) the phrase “Empowering through community engagement” is a fragment because it lacks a clear subject (who or what is doing the empowering) and a main verb that completes the thought. “Empowering” is acting as a gerund (a verb form functioning as a noun), but it does not form a complete sentence. Although it suggests a relationship between empowerment and community engagement, it does not convey a full idea or statement. Correcting it involves adding the missing elements or integrating the phrase into a larger sentence to convey a complete idea. The best approach depends on the specific context and the message you want to communicate.

The next structural error assessed in the examination scripts is faulty parallelism (SE 2). Faulty parallelism happens when parts of a sentence that should be the same are not similar in structure. This often occurs in lists or series when verb tenses or other parts do not match. The sentence “The programme focused on impacting essential life skills, fostering leadership and promote community engagement” displays faulty parallelism. This is because the sentence is trying to list three areas of focus for the programme. However, the grammatical structure of each item in the list is inconsistent:

a. “impacting essential life skills” (using a gerund “impacting”)
b. “fostering leadership” (using a gerund “fostering”)
c. “promote community engagement” (using a base form verb “promote”)

The first two items use gerunds (verbs acting as nouns), while the third item uses a base form verb. This inconsistency disrupts the parallel structure, making the sentence awkward and less clear. The corrected version using gerunds consistently will be “The programme focused on impacting essential life skills, fostering leadership and promoting community engagement. In the same manner, sentence (ii) of (SE 2) “The second day focused on skills development, including understanding of financial literacy, communication is key, and resolving conflicts effectively” displays faulty parallelism. Just as we observed in (i) the list contains three elements:

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“understanding of financial literacy”: This is a gerund phrase (verb + noun).
“communication is key”: This is a complete clause (subject + verb).
“resolving conflicts effectively”: This is another gerund phrase.
The inconsistency in structure disrupts the parallelism because the first and third items are gerund phrases, while the second item is a complete clause. This lack of uniformity makes the sentence unpleasant to read.

The examination scripts were also assessed on wrong word order or wrong word choice (SE 3) under structural errors. Wrong word order refers to the incorrect arrangement of words within a sentence while wrong word choice means using a word that is inappropriate for the context of the sentence. The first example from the script was on wrong word choice. “Day two, we had two sections of the meeting”. Although “sections of the meeting” is not grammatically incorrect, it is a tricky and rather inaccurate way to describe how the meeting was structured. It sounds a bit unusual. Using “sessions” is a more common way to divide up the different parts of a meeting. Correcting the example with an improved word choice, we have “Day two, we had two sessions of the meeting.” (implies structured blocks of time). Opting for “sessions”, makes the sentence sound more natural and conveys the intended meaning more clearly.

In sentence (ii) there was another wrong choice of words. The sentence is “On those day, talks were giving by the resource person”. This sentence refers to multiple talks (“talks were giving”). This implies that the event happened over multiple days. Therefore, “day” should be pluralised to “days”. Technically speaking this is a grammatical error related to singular/plural agreement. Also, the verb form “giving” is incorrect because it does not make sense that the talks were actively “giving” something. The correct past participle form “given” is desirable to indicate that the talks were presented or delivered by the resource person. The last example under structural error (SE 3) has an error of wrong word order. The excerpt from the exam scripts is “Taken were the young ladies through the previous lessons."

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The sentence reverses the standard Subject-Verb-Object order. Instead of “Subject (The young ladies) + Verb (were taken), we have “Verb (Taken) + Auxiliary Verb (were) + Subject (the young ladies).”

This non-standard word order makes the sentence sound odd, dated, and grammatically incorrect in modern English. Some languages may allow for more flexible word order, but English generally relies on a more fixed structure.

Another structural error identified from the examination script is the run-on sentence which is coded SE 4. A run-on sentence is a grammatical mistake that happens when two or more independent clauses (complete thoughts) are joined together incorrectly, without proper punctuation or conjunctions.

Sentence (i), which is “We invited a resource person from Anita’s Bakery Services, she taught the girls how to acquire personal skills in baking” contains a run-on error known as a comma splice. The sentence consists of two independent clauses:

a. We invited a resource person from Anita’s Bakery Services.

b. She taught the girls how to acquire personal skills in baking.

Each clause can stand alone as a complete sentence, but they are improperly connected by just a comma. A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are joined by only a comma without a coordinating conjunction (like “and,” “but,” or “so”) or appropriate punctuation (like a semicolon). In this case, the comma before “she” is insufficient to connect the two clauses correctly. To fix the run-on error, a coordinating conjunction “and” was introduced to join the two independent clauses. The reconstructed sentence should be “We invited a resource person from Anita’s Bakery Services, and she taught the girls how to acquire personal skills in baking.”

Similarly, in example (ii) The sentence “The programme was a success, it empowered the young girls in the district” is also a run-on sentence, specifically a comma splice.

“The programme was a success” - This is a complete thought that can stand alone as a sentence.

“It empowered the young girls in the district” - This is also a complete thought that can stand alone as a sentence.

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The two independent clauses are joined only by a comma, which is insufficient to connect them grammatically. This is also a classic example of a comma splice. To correct the error, a semi-colon can be used to join the two independent clauses. The corrected version should be “The programme was a success; it empowered the young girls in the district.”

In example (iii), the sentence “Last days are always fun as they say we were privileged to tour the Shama Fort had sports activities and entertainment” also contains a run-on sentence error. The sentence has multiple independent clauses that are improperly connected:

“Last days are always fun.”

“They say we were privileged to tour the Shama Fort.”

“Had sports activities and entertainment.”

“The last clause is particularly problematic because it lacks a subject and verb, making it incomplete”.

The clauses are not properly punctuated or connected. The lack of punctuation (like a period or semicolon) or conjunctions leads to confusion about where one thought ends and another begins. While there is not a comma present in this specific sentence, it resembles a comma splice because it attempts to connect independent thoughts without proper punctuation. The sentence can also be considered a fused sentence because it combines multiple independent clauses without any punctuation.To fix the run-on error, the sentence can be broken into clearer, separate sentences or use appropriate punctuation and conjunctions. Using a semicolon, the reconstructed sentence should be “Last days are always fun; they say we were privileged to tour the Shama Fort, which had sports activities and entertainment.

The next structural error (SE 5) is dangling modifiers. A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that does not clearly describe anything in the sentence. It “dangles” because the word it should describe is missing or unclear. Often, it is an introductory phrase that is connected to the wrong thing. Dangling modifiers can make a sentence confusing. The introductory phrase of the sentence (i) “Conducting workshops on career guidance” is intended to describe who is conducting the workshops. However,

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the subject “they” does not indicate who is conducting the workshops. As it stands, the sentence can be misleading because it suggests that “they” (the individuals being assisted) are the ones conducting the workshops, rather than the intended subject (likely a different group or organisation). The ambiguity created by the dangling modifier can confuse readers about who is conducting the workshops. This can lead to misinterpretation of the sentence's meaning. To clarify the sentence and eliminate the dangling modifier, you can specify who is conducting the workshops by specifying the subject. Thus, we have “When the N.G.O officials were conducting workshops on career guidance, they assisted individuals of all ages in making informed decisions about their educational and occupational paths.”

The sentence “Introducing career options, the presentation was well-received” in (ii) also contains a dangling modifier. The introductory phrase “Introducing career options” is intended to describe who is doing the introduction.

The main clause states that “the presentation was well-received.” This implies that “the presentation” is the subject of the action. However, “the presentation” cannot logically be the one “Introducing career options”. Presentations do not introduce; people do.

The modifier “Introducing career options” is left “dangling” because there is no logical subject within the main clause for it to modify. It irrationally suggests that the presentation itself is performing the act of introducing career options. It sounds like the presentation was doing the introduction.

For the dangling modifier to be fixed, there is the need to make it clear “who” was introducing the career options: “Introducing career options, the speaker found that the presentation was well-received.” (The “speaker” is now doing the introduction).

The final structural error assessed in the examination scripts of final year Secretaryship and Management students from Technical University 1 is misplaced modifiers (SE 6). A misplaced modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that is separated from the word it describes, causing confusion or unintended meaning. Modifiers should be placed close to the words they describe. If they are too far away, sentences

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can become unclear or preposterous. Misplaced modifiers differ from dangling modifiers. A misplaced modifier describes a word or phrase that is in the sentence but in the wrong place. A dangling modifier describes a word or phrase that is not included in the sentence.

The sentence, “Despite some challenges, the outreach and empowerment programme organised for young girls in the Shama district was successful for the community” in (i) has a misplaced modifier that affects the clarity of the sentence. The phrase “for the community” is misplaced. As it stands, it sounds like the “success” was specifically “for the community,” but the intended meaning likely is that the entire “programme” was for the community. The phrase is too far away from “programme,” causing ambiguity. To improve clarity, “for the community” should be moved closer to “programme”. The revised version should be: “Despite some challenges, the outreach and empowerment programme for the community, organised for young girls in the Shama district, was successful.” (The phrase is now clearly linked to the programme).

In like manner, in (ii) the sentence “The day one brought all the girls in all the townships in the district with much excitement” also has a misplaced modifier. The current position of “with much excitement” sounds like the “district” has the excitement or even the “girls” themselves are the excitement, rather than describing how the “action” (bringing the girls together) was undertaken. The misplacement of “with much excitement” creates a sense of confusion. It is not clear what or who is experiencing the excitement. This declines the overall clarity of the sentence. The sentence can be reframed as: “On day one, all the girls from the townships in the district arrived with much excitement.” (Focuses on the girls' feelings).

After reading through each script and identifying errors based on the coding scheme, the researcher counted the number of occurrences for each script. To avoid counting bias, the selected scripts were given to two lecturers who teach the English language to also read, count and confirm the number of occurrences identified by the researcher. Below is the filled coding matrix for the number of error occurrences for Technical University 1.

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Table 4: Number of error occurrences for Technical University 1

SCRIPT ID	GRAMMATICAL ERRORS	MECHANICS ERRORS	CONTENT ERRORS	STRUCTURAL ERRORS
	COUNT	COUNT	COUNT	COUNT
1	5	4	0	3
2	7	3	0	2
3	5	3	1	2
4	7	4	1	3
5	6	3	1	2
6	8	5	2	4
7	4	3	0	2
8	3	2	0	1
9	5	4	1	2
10	7	5	1	3
11	4	3	1	2
12	6	4	2	3
13	5	4	1	2
14	3	2	0	1
15	6	5	2	4
Total Errors	**81**	**54**	**13**	**36**

5.2.5 Percentage of each type of error per script for Technical University 1

To get the percentage of each type of error for University 1, the total number of each type of error per script is divided by the total number of that type of error for all the scripts and multiplied by 100.

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Script 1

- Grammatical errors
  5/81x100=6.17%
- Mechanics errors 4/54x100=7.4%
- Content errors
  0/13x100=0%
- Structural errors
  3/36x100=8.33

Script 2

- Grammatical errors 7/81x100=8.64
- Mechanics errors 3/54x100=5.56
- Content errors 0/13x100=0
- Structural errors 2/36x100=5.56

Script 3

- Grammatical errors 5/81x100=6.17
- Mechanics errors 3/54x100=5.56
- Content errors 1/13x100=7.69
- Structural errors 2/36x100=5.56

Script 4

- Grammatical errors 7/81x100=8.64
- Mechanics errors 4/54x100=7.4
- Content errors 1/13x100=7.69
- structural errors 3/36x100=8.33

Script 5

- Grammatical errors 6/81x100=7.41
- Mechanics errors : 3/54x100=5.56
- Content errors : 1/13x100=7.69
- Structural errors : 2/36x100=5.56

Script 6

- Grammatical errors 8/81x100=9.88

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- Mechanics errors 5/54x100=9.26
- Content errors 2/13x100=15.38
- Structural errors 4/36x100=11.11

Script 7

- Grammatical errors 4/81x100=4.98
- Mechanics errors 3/54x100=5.56
- Content errors 0/13x100=0
- Structural errors 2/36x100=5.56

Script 8

- Grammatical errors 3/81x100=3.70
- Mechanics errors 2/54x100=3.7
- Content errors 0/13x100=0
- Structural errors 1/36x100=2.78

Script 9

- Grammatical errors 5/81x100=6.17
- Mechanics errors 4/54x100=7.4
- Content errors 1/13x100=7.69
- Structural error2/36x100=5.56

Script 10

- Grammatical errors 7/81x100=8.64
- Mechanics errors 5/54x100=9.26
- Content errors 1/13x100=7.69
- Structural errors 3/36x100=8.33

Script 11

- Grammatical errors 4/81x100=4.98
- Mechanics errors 3/54x100=5.56
- Content errors 1/13x100=7.69
- Structural errors 2/36x100=5.56

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Script 12

- Grammatical errors
  6/81x100=7.41
- Mechanics errors4/54x100=7.4
- Content errors 2/13x100=15.38
- Structural errors 3/36x100=8.33

script 13

- Grammatical errors 5/81x100=6.17
- Mechanics errors 4/54x100=7.4
- Content errors 1/13x100=7.69
- Structural 2/36x100=5.56

Script 14

- Grammatical errors
  3/81x100=3.70
- Mechanics errors
  2/54x100=3.7
- Content errors
  0/13x100=0
- Structural errors
  1/36x100=2.78

Script 15

- Grammatical errors
  6/81x100=7.41
- Mechanics errors
  5/54x100=9.26
- Content errors
  2/13x100=15.38
- Structural errors
  4/36x100=11.11

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Table 5: Summary of Error Percentages of Technical University 1

Script ID	Grammatical Errors (%)	Mechanics Errors (%)	Content Errors (%)	Structural Errors (%)
1	6.17	7.4	0	8.33
2	8.64	5.56	0	5.56
3	6.17	5.56	7.69	5.56
4	8.64	7.4	7.69	8.33
5	7.4	5.56	7.69	5.56
6	9.87	9.26	15.39	11.11
7	4.97	5.56	0	5.56
8	3.7	3.71	0	2.77
9	6.17	7.4	7.69	5.56
10	8.64	9.26	7.69	8.33
11	4.96	5.56	7.69	5.56
12	7.4	7.4	15.39	8.33
13	6.17	7.4	7.69	5.56
14	3.7	3.71	0	2.77
15	7.4	9.26	15.39	11.11

The results summarised in Table 4 reveal that students at Technical University 1 face academic writing challenges across all four key areas assessed: grammatical errors, mechanical errors, content issues, and structural weaknesses. The high frequency of grammatical errors is 44.02% (Total of all grammatical errors in the fifteen scripts divided by total of all the four types of errors multiplied by 100, that is, 81/184x100) in Table 4, and represented on the graph below, indicates significant struggles with sentence construction and syntax, including issues such as subject-verb agreement,

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misused prepositions, and incorrect verb tenses. The presence of mechanics errors 29.34% (54/184x100) aligns with research that indicates the occurrence of mechanical inaccuracies, such as spelling mistakes, misused punctuation. Content errors 7.06% (13/184x100) imply that students generally understand the material but struggle with presenting it effectually. Structural errors 19.56% (36/184x100) highlight difficulties in logically organising ideas, a challenge also noted in studies on structural errors in academic writing.

Script 6 in Table 5 exhibits the highest rate of grammatical errors (9.87%), highlighting considerable challenges in sentence structure and language use. Script 6 and 10 in Table 5 demonstrate the highest rate of mechanical errors (9.26%), script 1,4,10 and 12 depict structural error (8.33%) and script 6,12, and 15 exhibit the highest content errors of (15.39) all in Table 5.

Improving grammatical accuracy is key, as it forms the basis for effective communication in academic writing. Overall, the findings from Technical University 1 align with wider research on academic writing errors. For example, the findings corroborate the posits of Farooq and Farid (2023) that grammar poses significant challenges for ESL students, often making it the most complex aspect of writing. Even when learners successfully construct sentences, structures, and paragraphs, they frequently face numerous difficulties along the way. This consistency highlights the importance of addressing grammatical, mechanical, and structural challenges to enhance writing proficiency. When these errors are overlooked, then students will continually communicate poorly and their academic performance will always be affected negatively. This is in line with Afeadie and Kpeglo (2022) who observed that many errors committed by students in their writings have very great impact on their communication.

Graphical representation of all the errors committed by students in Technical University 1

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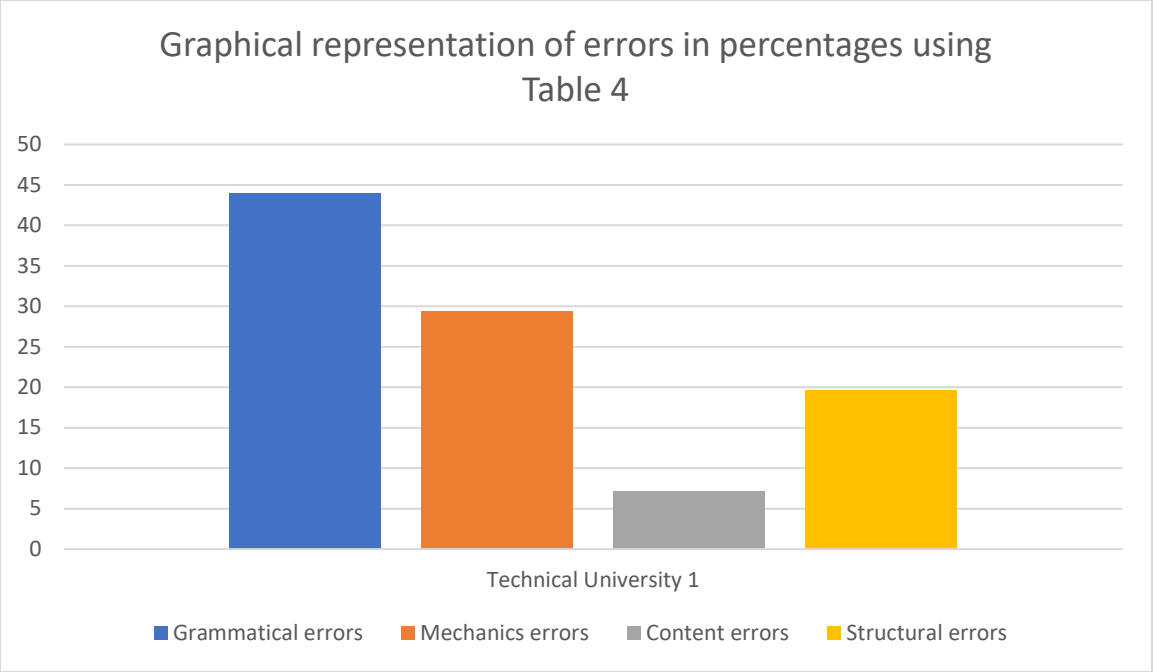


Figure: 5.1 Error percentages in Technical University 1

Table 6: Technical University 2

ERROR TYPE	CODE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES	CORRECTION
Grammatical Errors	GE 1	Tense Error	i. *To begin with, the employer must attract and retain the number of people require with the appropriate skills, expertise and competencies.*	i. To begin with, the employer must attract and retain the number of people **required** with the appropriate skills, expertise and competencies.

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			ii. Before the employer can retain the human resource, they must be equip of the necessary skills, knowledge and ability.	ii. Before the employer can retain the human resources, they must be **equipped** with the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities.
	GE 2	Prepositional Error	*i. When we say the nature of the organisation, we are referring **about** the overall structure and purpose of the organisation.*	i. When we say the nature of the organisation, we are referring **to** the overall structure and purpose of the organization.
			ii. Before the employer can retain the human resources, they must be equiped of the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities.	ii. Before the employer can retain the human resource, they must be equipped **with** the necessary

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				skills, knowledge and abilities.
Grammatical Errors cont.	GE 3	Subject-Verb agreement Error	*i. A number of factors that can influences the size of an organisation.* *ii. We can relate it to the vision, mission, goals and values that guides its activities.* *iii. The first factor that influence the size of an organisation's span of control is the nature of organization.*	i. A number of factors that can **influence** the size of an organization. ii. We can relate it to the vision, mission, goals and values that **guide** its activities iii. The first factor that **influences** the size of an organization's span of control is the nature of the organization
	GE4	Word Formation	i. *If the employees are working in different locations, it will be very difficult for the subordinates to process it's employee base and tasks.*	If the employees are working in different locations ,it

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			ii. *The managers' level in the organisation, the size of the team the managers oversee, and the nature of their works.*	will be very difficult for the subordinates to process its employee base and tasks. The managers' level in the organisation, the size of the team the managers oversee, and the nature of their work.

Grammatical Errors cont.	GE 5	Syntax	i. *When we refer outside the organization, we can talk about the size, Is it big or small? The nature, Is it private or public sector?*	i. When we refer to organisations outside our own, we can discuss their size (whether it is big or small) and their nature (whether it is in the private

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				or public sector).
			ii. As an HR expect for an organization to reach its competitive level the following are the advantages.	ii. As an HR expert, I believe that for an organization to reach its competitive level, the following advantages are important
			iii. These employees must be trained and giving out orientation such as seminars in other for them to have an effective workforce as well as achieve their targeted goal.	iii These employees must be trained and given orientation through seminars in order for them to have an effective workforce and achieve their targeted goals

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	GE 6	Error of Addition	*i. Again, another factor that can influence the size of an organisation's span of control is the physical location.* *ii. Flexible managements can attract many staffs with skills to the organisation.*	i. Another factor that influence the size of an organisation's span of control is the physical location. ii. Flexible **management** can attract many **staff** with skills to the organisation.

Grammatical Errors cont.	GE 7	Error of Omission	*i. Span of control refers to the number of subordinate or employee within an organization that a manager or supervisor can effectively oversee and manage.* *ii. There are several factor that influence the size of span of control and I would like to highlight four of them.*	i. Span of control refers to the number of subordinates or employees within an organization that a manager or supervisor can effectively oversee and manage. ii. There are several factors that influence the size of the span of control and I would

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				like to highlight four of them.
			iii. *The first factor influencing the size of an organization's span of control is the nature of organisation*.	iii. The first factor influencing the size of an organization's span of control is the nature of **the** organisation.
	GE 8	Misformation	*i. The managers exceptionally leadership skills and ability to communicate effective directly influence the organization's optimal span of control.* *ii. The next factor that influence the span of control and reduce direct supervision require by employers is trained and experience employees who demonstrate strong independence.*	i. The manager's exceptional leadership skills and ability to communicate effectively directly influence the organization's optimal span of control. ii. The next factor that influences the span of control and reduces direct supervision required by employers is trained and experienced employees who demonstrate strong independence.
	GE 9	Misordering	None	

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Mechanics Error	ME 1	Spelling	*i. The manager accpte more responsibilities.* *ii. The ability and personal qualities of the manager including the capacity to cope with interuptions.* *iii. More time that managers spend on planing and administerative tasks reduces an organisation's span of control*	i. The manager accepts more responsibilities. ii. The ability and personal qualities of the manager including the capacity to cope with **interruptions** iii. More time that managers spend on **planning** and **administrative** tasks reduces an organisation's span of control
	ME 2	Punctuation	*i. If the employees are working in different locations it will be very difficult* *ii. Firstly attracting and retaining the number of people with the required skills expertise and competencies.*	If the employees are working in different locations, it will be very difficult. ii. Firstly, attracting and retaining the number of people with the

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				required skills, expertise and competencies.
	ME 3	Capitalisation	*i. Furthermore, **D**evelop a well-trained and flexible workforce.* *ii. Moreover, The amount of time a manager has available from other activities…* *iii. we can talk about an organisation in ghana and the nature of that organisation.*	i. Furthermore, develop a well-trained and flexible workforce. ii. Moreover, the amount of time a manager has available from other activities… iii. We can talk about an organisation in Ghana and the nature of that organisation.

Content Error	CE 1	Topic sentence	*Paragraph: To reach its competitive level, an organization must have certain key elements in place. One of the most critical factors is having personnel with appropriate skills who have experience and are capable of achieving organizational goals. This is vital because such skilled individuals are essential for maintaining an*	To reach its competitive level, an organization must have certain key elements in place.

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			effective workforce, which directly contributes to long-term success.	
	CE 2	Supporting sentence	*For an organization to reach its competitive level in order to gain, as an HRP expert, there is the need for the appropriate skills, who have experienced and are capable of achieving the organizational goals in order to maintain an effective workforce.*	**major supporting sentence**: One of the most critical factors is having personnel with appropriate skills who have experience and are capable of achieving organizational goals. **minor**:"...because such skilled individuals are essential for maintaining an effective workforce, which directly contributes to long-term success."

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Content Error	CE 3	Coherence and cohesion	***Paragraph**: Firstly, attracting and retaining skilled personnel is important for organizational competitiveness. As an HRP expert, organizations must strategically recruit professionals with the appropriate skills and experience to achieve strategic goals. This process involves comprehensive talent management, including targeted recruitment, rigorous selection, and continuous professional development through training and orientation programmes.*	There are linking words, repetitions, logical flow of paragraph and clear idea presented by each sentence. Overall, the paragraph has good coherence but could benefit from enhanced cohesion through clearer connections between sentences.

Structural Error	SE 1	Fragment	i. *The amount of time the manager has available for other activities to spend with subordinates.*	i. The amount of time the manager has

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				available for other activities limits the time he or she can spend with subordinates.
			ii. *Finally, the ability and training of the subordinate staff, the strength of their motivation and commitment and the extent of direction and guidance needed*	ii. Finally, the ability and training of the subordinate staff, the strength of their motivation and commitment, and the extent of direction and guidance needed will determine the team's overall performance.
			iii. *To begin with, the nature of the organization, complexity of the work, similarity of function and range of responisbilities*	iii. To begin with, the nature of the organization, complexity of the work, similarity of function, and range of

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				responsibilities significantly influence span of control."
	SE 2	Faulty Parallelism	i. The manager must have certain skills and ablities which helps him to cope even when there is pressure at the work place.	i. The manager must have certain skills and abilities which help him to cope even when there is pressure at the work place.
	SE 3	Wrong word order/ Wrong word choice	*i. The ability to take possession of and keep employees also help to gain organizational level competitive advantage.* *ii As an HR expect for an organization to reach its competitive, level the following are the advantages.*	i. The ability to acquire and retain employees helps to gain a competitive organizational advantage ii.As an HR **expert** for an organization to reach its competitive level, the following are the advantages.

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Structural Error	SE 4	Run on Sentences	*i. When employees work in different locations coordinating tasks and maintaining team cohesion become challenging ideally, employees should work in proximity to facilitate collaboration and achieve organizational goals more effectively.* *ii. The ability and qualities also help the organization to thrive the manager must share responsibilities without any conflicts arising.*	i. When employees work in different locations, coordinating tasks and maintaining team cohesion become challenging. Ideally, employees should work in proximity to facilitate collaboration and achieve organizational goals more effectively. ii The ability and qualities also help the organization to thrive. The manager must share responsibilities

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				without any conflicts arising.
	SE 5	Dangling Modifiers	i. *Needed with appropriate skills, expertise, and competencies, the employer must attract and retain these people.*	i. To succeed, the employer must attract and retain the number of people needed with the appropriate skills, expertise and competencies.
	SE 6	Misplaced Modifiers	None	

5.2.6 Grammatical Error

The first sentence under grammatical error (GE 1) has a tense error. The sentence "To begin with, the employer must attract and retain the number of people required with the appropriate skills, expertise and competencies" contains a tense error. The word "require" is the incorrect verb form. The correct form should be "required" to match the past participle construction describing the people that the employer wants to attract and retain.

The corrected sentence should be "To begin with, the employer must attract and retain the number of people required with the appropriate skills, expertise, and competencies." Here, "required" is the past participle and act as an adjective that describes the people needed by the employer. The same scenario is in example (ii)The sentence "Before the employer can retain the human resources, they must be equip of the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities" contains a tense error. The

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phrase “must be equip” is incorrect. “Equip” is a verb, and in this context, you need a past participle (equipped) and the correct auxiliary verb to form a passive construction. The reconstructed sentence should be “Before the employer can retain the human resources, they must be equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities.”

Prepositional error (GE 2) is the next grammatical error assessed. The sentence “When we say the nature of the organisation we are referring the overall structure and purpose of the organisation” in (i) contains a prepositional error. The verb “referring” requires a preposition to connect it to the object of the reference and the correct preposition is “to”. The sentence should read “When we say the nature of the organisation, we are referring to the overall structure and purpose of the organisation. The original sentence uses the incorrect preposition “about” after “referring,” creating a grammatical error. Replacing “about” with “to” corrects the sentence and makes the intended meaning clear. Equally, sentence (ii) “Before the employer can retain the human resources, they must be equiped of the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities” contains prepositional error. The prepositional error in the sentence is the use of “of” after “equipped.” The correct preposition to use with “equipped” in this context is “with”. The corrected sentence should be “Before the employer can retain the human resources, they must be equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities.”

Next is subject-verb agreement error which is the third grammatical error (GE 3). The first extract from the exams scripts is “A number of factors that can influences the size of an organisation”. The verb “influences” does not agree with the subject “a number of factors.” The subject is “a number of factors” (This acts as a plural subject). The verb “influences” (acts as a singular verb form). Because “a number of factors” is considered plural, the verb must also be plural. The plural form of “influence” is simply “influence”. The corrected version is “A number of factors that can influence the size of an organization “. In example (ii) “We can relate it to the vision, mission, goals and values that guides its activities”, there is subject-verb agreement error and it lies in the verb “guides”. The Subject is “vision, mission, goals and values (This is a compound

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subject, meaning it consists of multiple elements joined by “and”. Therefore, it is plural.)

The verb “guides” (is the singular form of the verb). Once the subject is plural, the verb must also be in its plural form. The corrected sentence should be “We can relate it to the vision, mission, goals, and values that guide its activities.” Also, the word “that” introduces a relative clause. The verb in the relative clause (“guides” or “guide”) must agree with the noun that “that” refers to. In this case, “that” refers to the plural subject “vision, mission, goals and values. The last example under subject-verb agreement is “The first factor that influence the size of an organisation’s span of control is the nature of organisation”. There is again an error in the subject-verb agreement. The verb “influence” does not agree with its subject within the relative clause. The main subject of the sentence is “The first factor” which is singular. The main verb of the sentence is “is” which is also singular and it correctly agrees with “The first factor”. The subject of the relative clause "that" (referring back to “The first factor,” is also singular). The verb in the relative clause is “influence” which is plural and therefore incorrect. It should rather be “influences” which is singular and agrees with “that”, which refers to the singular “The first factor”. The corrected form is “The first factor that influences the size of an organisation’s span of control is the nature of organization”.

The next grammatical error is word formation (GE 4). Example (i) depicts word formation error. The sentence is “If the employees are working in different locations, it will be very difficult for the subordinates to process it’s employee base and tasks”. The word formation error lies in the use of “it's”. “It's” is a contraction of “it is” or “it has”. “Its” on the other hand is the possessive form of “it,” indicating ownership. In this sentence, we need the possessive form to show that the employee base and tasks belong to the organisation (or the “it” being referred to). The reconstructed sentence should be “If the employees are working in different locations, it will be very difficult for the subordinates to process its employee base and tasks’. The second example is “The managers' level in the organisation, the size of the team the managers oversee, and the nature of their works.” This sentence also contains word formation error. “Works” is incorrectly used in this context. The correct form should be “work” as “work”

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is an uncountable noun when referring to tasks or duties collectively. The corrected version should be “The managers' level in the organisation, the size of the team the managers oversee, and the nature of their work”.

Next grammatical error (GE 5) is syntax. From the examination scripts the first sentence captured in the table is “When we refer outside the organization, we can talk about the size, Is it big or small? The nature, Is it private or public sector?” This sentence contains syntactic errors. First, there is the incorrect use of “refer”. The verb “refer” needs a direct object in this context. “Refer outside the organisation” is grammatically incorrect. It should be “refer to entities outside the organisation”. There is also capitalisation after comma. The words “Is” after the commas should not be capitalised. The questions “Is it big or small?” and “Is it private or public sector? are embedded within the larger sentence, not starting new sentences. Again, the phrases “Is it big or small?” and “Is it private or public sector?” are presented as separate questions but are intended to be elaborations on “size” and “nature.” They are not properly integrated into the main sentence. Finally, the questions would be better if they included “whether, like “whether it is big or small” The reconstructed sentence should be “When we refer to organisations outside our own, we can discuss their size (whether it is big or small) and their nature (whether it is in the private or public sector)”. Example (ii) also has syntax errors. “Expect” should be “expert.” The term “expect” is incorrect in this context. “Expert” refers to someone with specialised knowledge or skills, which is appropriate for an HR professional. There is no comma after “competitive level.” A comma is needed to separate the introductory clause from the main clause. This enhances readability and clarifies that the sentence is presenting a list of advantages. The phrase “the following are the advantages” lacks a clear introduction or context. A revised version of the sentence should be “As an HR expert, I believe that for an organisation to reach its competitive level, the following advantages are essential:” The last example, (iii) also contain syntax errors. The phrase “giving out orientation” should be revised to maintain parallel structure with “trained.” The verb forms should match in form. Another syntax error is found in the expression “in other for them” This is incorrect; it should be “in order for them.”. The

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last syntax error in the same example in (iii) has to do with clarity and conciseness. The sentence is slightly lengthy and could benefit from breaking it into two sentences or using clearer punctuation. The corrected sentences should be “These employees must be trained and given orientation through seminars in order for them to have an effective workforce and achieve their targeted goals”.

Error of addition is the next grammatical error which is coded (GE 6). From the first example, the sentence “Again, another factor that can influence the size of an organisation’s span of control is the physical location” contains a subtle error of addition, specifically redundancy. The words “Again” and “another” are both used to introduce an additional point. Using both together is redundant because they convey the same meaning. The reconstructed sentence should be “Another factor that influence the size of an organisation’s span of control is the physical location.”

In (ii), the sentence “Flexible managements can attract many staffs with skills to the organisation” also contains an error of addition related to word choice and plurality. The term "managements" is incorrectly used in the plural form. In this context, “management” should be used as a collective noun, which refers to the group as a whole and does not require a plural form. Moreover, the word “staffs” is also incorrect in this context. "Staff" is typically used as a collective noun and does not need to be pluralised when referring to a group of employees. The revised version of the sentence is “Flexible management can attract many skilled staff to the organisation.”

The next grammatical error (GE 7) is error of omission. In the excerpt from the examination script, sentence in example (i) “Span of control refers to the number of subordinate or employee within an organization that a manager or supervisor can effectively oversee and manage” contains an error of omission that affects its clarity and grammatical correctness. The sentence uses “subordinate or employee” in the singular form, which does not accurately reflect that span of control involves multiple people. The correct phrasing should indicate a group. The corrected sentence should be “Span of control refers to the number of subordinates or employees within an organization that a manager or supervisor can effectively oversee and manage.”

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Following sentence (i) is the second sentence “There are several factor that influence the size of span of control and I would like to highlight four of them” The sentence “There are several factor that influence the size of span of control by I would like to highlight four of them” contains an error of omission that affects grammatical correctness and clarity. The word “factor” should be in its plural form, “factors,” to agree with “several.” There is also a missing article. The phrase “the size of span of control” is missing an article before “span.” It should read “the size of the span of control. Here is a revised version of the sentence: “There are several factors that influence the size of the span of control, and I would like to highlight four of them”. Similarly, the last sentence in (iii) which reads “The first factor influencing the size of an organization's span of control is the nature of organization” has an error of omission that affects its grammatical correctness. The phrase “the nature of organization” is missing an article before “organization.” It should read “the nature of the organization” to specify which organization is being referred to. The corrected sentence should be “The first factor influencing the size of an organization's span of control is the nature of the organization.”

From the table again, (GE 8) is the error of misformation. There are two excerpts captured from the examination scripts on misformation. The first sentence “The managers exceptionally leadership skills and ability to communicate effective directly influence the organization's optimal span of control” houses errors of misformation and it does not make the sentence clear. There is the incorrect use of adverb. The word “exceptionally” is incorrectly used as an adverb modifying “leadership skills.” It should be replaced with “exceptional” to correctly function as an adjective describing “leadership skills”. The phrase “communicate effective” should rather use the adverb form “effectively” to correctly modify the verb “communicate.” The corrected version should be “The manager's exceptional leadership skills and ability to communicate effectively directly influence the organization's optimal span of control”. In like manner, several errors of misformation are in the second sentence under errors of misformation. Firstly there is the use of incorrect verb forms: “Influence” should be “influences” to agree with the singular subject “factor” and “Reduce” should be

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“reduces” to maintain parallelism with “influences’ and agree with the singular subject “factor.” There is also an incorrect verb tense. “Require” should be “required” to indicate that the supervision is needed or mandated. Lastly, the sentence contains an incorrect adjective form. “Experience” should be “experienced” to correctly function as an adjective describing the employees. The reconstructed sentence should be “The next factor that influences the span of control and reduces direct supervision required by employers is trained and experienced employees who demonstrate strong independence.”

Misordering is the last grammatical error (GE 9) assessed from the examination scripts. There were no misordering errors in all the scripts assessed.

5.2.7 Mechanics Error

The next major academic writing proficiency assessed from the examination script is mechanics error. ME 1 (spelling), ME 2 (punctuation) and ME 3 (capitalisation).

Under spelling error, we have the sentence (i) “The manager accpte more responsibilities”. The spelling error is the word “accpte”. The correct spelling accepts. In (ii) “The ability and personal qualities of the manager including the capacity to cope with interuptions.”. The spelling error is the word “interuptions.” The correct spelling is “interruptions.” The last sentence (iii) “More time that managers spend on planing and administerative tasks reduces an organisation's span of control”. This last sentence contains two spelling errors. “Planing and administerative”. The corrected sentence should be “More time that managers spend on planning and administrative tasks reduces an organisation's span of control.”

Under ME 2 which is punctuation errors, there are two sentences extracted from the examination scripts. The first sentence (i) “If the employees are working in different locations it will be very difficult” is missing a comma after the introductory clause. When a sentence begins with a dependent clause (in this case, “If the employees are working in different locations”), it should be followed by a comma to separate it from the main clause (“it will be very difficult”). This makes the sentence easier to read and understand. The corrected sentence should be “If the employees are working in different locations, it will be very difficult.”

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The sentence “Firstly attracting and retaining the number of people with the required skills expertise and competencies.” contains several punctuation errors. Comma after “Firstly” is missing. As already established, when using an introductory adverb like “Firstly,” it should be followed by a comma to separate it from the rest of the sentence. Furthermore, in the list ‘skills expertise and competencies,” commas are missing between the items. To ensure clarity, commas should separate each item in the list. The corrected sentence is “Firstly, attracting and retaining the number of people with the required skills, expertise, and competencies.

Capitalisation (ME 3) is the next writing competency assessed in the examination scripts. From the table, the first example (i) “Furthermore, Develop a well- trained and flexible workforce” contains a capitalisation error. The word “Develop” should not be capitalised unless it is the first word of the sentence or part of a title. The corrected sentence should look be “Furthermore, develop a well-trained and flexible workforce” The same applies to sentence (ii). “Moreover, the amount of time a manager has available from other activities…” The” should also not be capitalized. Finally, in (iii) the sentence “we can talk about an organisation in ghana and the nature of that organization” contains a couple of capitalization errors. The first word “we" should be capitalized as it is the beginning of the sentence. Again, the name of the country “ghana” should be capitalised because it is a proper noun. The corrected sentence should be “We can talk about an organisation in Ghana and the nature of that organisation.”

5.2.8 Content Errors

Just as it was established in the previous Technical University, the third major proficiency assessed is content errors. Precisely, the researcher looked at how students wrote their paragraphs. Emphasis was placed on the topic sentences, supporting sentences, cohesion and coherence.

Content error (CE 1) was the topic sentences, (CE 2) was supporting sentences and (CE 3) was cohesion and coherence

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The paragraph clearly introduces the main idea that organizations need specific components to be competitive. It also sets up a broad framework for what is necessary for success. This is evident in the topic sentence “To reach its competitive level, an organization must have certain key elements in place”. “There is also a major supporting sentence which is “One of the most critical factors is having personnel with appropriate skills who have experience and are capable of achieving organisational goals.” The major supporting sentence directly addresses one of the key elements mentioned in the topic sentence (personnel with appropriate skills) and also specifies that these individuals should have experience and goal-achieving capabilities. The paragraph also contains minor supporting detail (within another supporting sentence**)** which provides additional justification for why skilled personnel are important by linking them to maintaining an effective workforce and connects this effectiveness to long-term success, reinforcing its importance.

The paragraph uses transitional words like “Firstly” to introduce the main point, but there is no explicit linking between sentences beyond this initial transition. Repetition of key terms such as “skilled personnel,” “strategic goals,” and related concepts such as recruitment and development help tie ideas together.

Under (CE 3) the paragraph extracted from the examination scripts has coherence because the paragraph moves logically from introducing the importance of skilled personnel for competitiveness to explaining how organizations achieve this through strategic recruitment and talent management. Each sentence presents a clear idea:
Sentence 1 introduces why skilled personnel are important.
Sentence 2 explains what HRP experts do in this context.
Sentence 3 elaborates on the process involved in managing talent effectively.

Nevertheless, there could be improvements for better cohesion and coherence. Adding transitional phrases or words between sentences can enhance cohesion by explicitly connecting each idea to the next (e.g., using phrases like ‘Moreover,” “Additionally,” or “In addition”). Moreover, there could be elaboration on strategic goals achievement. While it is mentioned that professionals should have skills aligned with

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strategic goals, providing more detail on what these goals typically entail or how they are defined could add depth.

5.2.9 Structural Errors

SE I is fragment. The fragment, “The amount of time the manager has available for other activities to spend with subordinates,” seems incomplete or unclear in its current form. The phrase is slightly ambiguous. It is not entirely clear what “other activities” refers to or how these activities relate to spending time with subordinates. Furthermore, this sentence fragment lacks a main verb that would make it a complete sentence. To make the fragment complete, add a missing element by ensuring that your sentence includes a subject, verb, and expresses a complete thought. We can have “The amount of time the manager has available for other activities limits the time he or she can spend with subordinates.”

Similarly, in (ii) “Finally, the ability and training of the subordinate staff, the strength of their motivation and commitment and the extent of direction and guidance needed” also lacks main verb. The sentence lacks a main verb that would make it complete. It seems to list several factors but does not express what these factors do or how they relate to something else. There is again an incomplete thought. The phrase presents a series of elements (ability/training, motivation/commitment, direction/guidance) without explaining how they interact or affect something. The use of commas separates items in a list but does not clarify whether these are independent thoughts or part of a larger idea. The revised sentence should be “Finally, the ability and training of the subordinate staff, the strength of their motivation and commitment, and the extent of direction and guidance needed will determine the team's overall performance.”

Faulty parallelism is structural error two (SE 2). The sentence (i) “The manager must have certain skills and abilities which helps him to cope even when there is pressure at the workplace” does exhibit faulty parallelism. In this case, the issue arises from the phrase “skills and abilities.” The verb “helps” is singular, which creates a mismatch with the plural subject “skills and abilities." A more parallel structure would ensure that

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both subjects agree in number with the verb. To correct the sentence, it could be rephrased as: “The manager must have certain skills and abilities that help him cope even when there is pressure at the workplace. “This revision aligns the plural noun phrase with a plural verb form (“help”), thus eliminating the faulty parallelism present in the original sentence.

S E 3 is wrong word order / wrong word choice. In example (i) “The ability to take possession of and keep employees also help to gain organisational level competitive advantage”. First, there is a challenge with word choice. The phrase “take possession of” is not typically used in this context regarding employees. Instead, terms like “attract,” “retain,” or “engage” are more appropriate. The term “organisational level competitive advantage’ could be simplified to just “competitive advantage at the organisational level. The incorrect verb form (“help”) following a singular subject (“ability”). The subject is singular (“ability”), but it is followed by a plural verb form (“help”). The corrected version should be” The ability to acquire and retain employees helps to gain a competitive organisational advantage”. There is also a wrong word choice in example (ii) “As an HR expect for an organisation to reach its competitive level, the following are the advantages”. “Expect” is incorrectly used in place of “expert.” An “expert” is someone who has specialised knowledge or skills in a particular area, while “expect” refers to anticipating something. This is a noteworthy error that changes the intended meaning. The correct sentence should be “As an HR expert for an organisation to reach its competitive level, the following are the advantages.”

Next from the table is structural error 4 which is run-on sentences. The first sentence (i) “When employees work in different locations coordinating tasks and maintaining team cohesion become challenging ideally, employees should work in proximity to facilitate collaboration and achieve organizational goals more effectively” contain run-on sentence errors. The sentence combines multiple independent clauses without appropriate punctuation or conjunctions, making it difficult to read and understand. Specifically, there are two main ideas: The challenge of coordinating tasks and

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maintaining team cohesion when employees are in different locations. The ideal scenario where employees work in proximity to enhance collaboration.

There are no commas to separate the clauses, particularly before “ideally, “which makes the sentence feel cluttered and confusing. To correct the run-on sentence, the two sentences are broken into two or the appropriate punctuation is used. The corrected version should be “When employees work in different locations, coordinating tasks and maintaining team cohesion become challenging. Ideally, employees should work in proximity to facilitate collaboration and achieve organizational goals more effectively. “Similarly, in example (ii),“The ability and qualities also help the organization to thrive the manager must share responsibilities without any conflicts arising" houses run-on sentence errors. The sentence combines two independent clauses without appropriate punctuation or conjunctions, making it difficult to read and understand. To correct the error, the run-on sentence can be separated into two independent clauses with appropriate punctuation or conjunctions. The revised version should be “The ability and qualities of employees also help the organization to thrive. The manager must share responsibilities without any conflicts arising.”

Dangling modifier (SE 5) is next on the table. The excerpt from the examination script “Needed with appropriate skills, expertise, and competencies, the employer must attract and retain these people” has a dangling modifier which is the phrase “Needed with appropriate skills, expertise, and competencies”. This is because it is not clearly attached to the subject of the main clause. As it stands, it suggests that “the employer" is needed with those skills, expertise, and competencies, which is not the intended meaning. The modifier creates confusion about what or who actually needs the skills. It implies that the employer is lacking these attributes rather than indicating that the employees or candidates are the ones who need them. To correct this dangling modifier, there is the need to clarify what needs the skills, expertise, and competencies. The corrected version should be “To succeed, employers must attract and retain individuals with appropriate skills, expertise, and competencies.”

The last item from the table is misplaced modifiers (SE 6). There were no misplaced modifiers in the examination scripts assessed in Technical University 2.

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Table 7: coding matrix for the number of error occurrences for Technical University 2

Technical University 2

SCRIPT ID	GRAMMATICAL ERRORS	MECHANICS ERRORS	CONTENT ERRORS	STRUCTURAL ERRORS
1	2	8	2	3
2	4	5	0	4
3	3	4	1	2
4	4	6	1	3
5	3	2	1	2
6	2	5	0	1
7	2	4	2	4
8	1	3	0	2
9	2	4	0	3
10	3	5	1	2
11	3	4	2	3
12	4	7	0	3
13	2	6	1	2
14	2	5	2	4
15	3	5	0	3
Total errors	**40**	**73**	**13**	**41**

5.2.10 Percentage of each type of error per script of Technical University 2

To get the percentage of each type of error for University 2, the total number of each type of error per script is divided by the total number of that type of error for all the scripts and multiplied by 100

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Script 1

Grammatical errors	2/40x100=5%
Mechanics errors	8/73x100=10.96%
Content errors	2/13x100=15.38%
Structural errors	3/41x100=7.32%

Script 2

Grammatical errors	4/40x100=10%
Mechanics errors	5/73x100=6.84%
Content errors	0/13x100=0%
Structural errors	4/41x100=9.76%

Script 3

Grammatical errors	3/40x100=7.5%
Mechanics errors	4/48x100=5.470%
Content errors	1/13x100=7.69%
Structural errors	2/41x100=4.83%

Script 4

Grammatical errors	4/40x100=10%
Mechanics errors	6/73x100=8.210%
Content errors	1/13x100=7.69%
Structural errors	3/41x100=7.34%

Script 5

Grammatical errors	3/40x100=7.5%
Mechanics errors	2/73x100=2.730%
Content errors	1/13x100=7.69%
Structural errors	2/41x100=4.83%

Script 6

Grammatical errors	2/40x000=5%

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Mechanic errors	5/73x100=6.84%
Content errors	0/13x100=0%
Structural errors	1/41x100=2.46%
Script 7	
Grammatical errors	2/40x200=5%
Mechanic errors	4/73x100=5.476%
Content errors	2/13x100=15.38%
Structural errors	4/41x100=9.72%
Script 8	
Grammatical errors	1/40x000=2.5%
Mechanic errors	3/73x100=4.10%
Content errors	0/13x100=0%
Structural errors	2/41x100=4.84%
Script 9	
Grammatical errors	2/40x000=5%
Mechanic errors	4/73x100=5.47%
Content errors	0/13x100=0%
Structural errors	3/41x100=7.35%
Script 10	
Grammatical errors	3/40x100=7.5%
Mechanic errors	5/73x100=6.840%
Content errors	1/13x100=7.69%
Structural errors	2/41x100=4.83%
Script 11	
Grammatical errors	3/40x200=7.5%
Mechanics errors	4/73x100=5.476%
Content errors	2/13x100=15.38%
Structural errors	3/41x100=7.33%
Script 12	
Grammatical errors	4/40x000=10%
Mechanics errors	7/73x100=9.58%

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Content errors	0/13x100=0%
Structural errors	3/41x100=7.39%

Script 13

Grammatical errors	2/40x100=5%
Mechanics errors	6/73x100=8.210%
Content errors	1/13x100=7.69%
Structural errors	2/41x100=4.82%

Script 14

Grammatical errors	2/40x200=5%
Mechanics errors	5/73x100=6.846%
Content errors	2/13x100=15.38%
Structural errors	4/41x100=9.72%

Script 15

Grammatical errors	3/40x000=7.5%
Mechanics errors	5/73x100=6.84%
Content errors	0/13x100=0%
Structural errors	3/41x100=7.36%

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Table 8: Summary of Error Percentages of Technical University 2

Script ID	Grammatical Errors (%)	Mechanics Errors (%)	Content Errors (%)	Structural Errors (%)
1	5	10.97	15.39	7.32
2	10	6.85	0	9.76
3	7.5	5.48	7.69	4.87
4	10	8.22	7.69	7.32
5	7.5	2.74	7.69	4.87
6	5	6.85	0	2.45
7	5	5.48	15.39	9.76
8	2.5	4.2	0	4.87
9	5	5.47	0	7.32
10	7.5	6.85	7.69	4.87
11	7.5	5.48	15.38	7.32
12	10	9.58	0	7.32
13	5	8.22	7.69	4.87
14	5	6.85	15.39	9.76
15	7.5	6.85	0	7.32

This summary provides a clear overview of the distribution of error types across each script for Technical University 2.

It is evident from table 8 that Technical University 2 students also had challenges in their academic writing in all the four areas assessed. At Technical University 2, the highest percentage of errors in Table 7 and indicated on the graph below were mechanical errors, accounting for 43.71% (Total of all mechanical errors in the fifteen scripts divided by total of all the four types of errors multiplied by 100 that is 73/167x100). This indicates that students at Technical University 2 faced more challenges with punctuation, spelling, and capitalisation than with grammatical,

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structural, or content-related errors. Structural errors followed with (24.55% which is 41/167x100), mechanical errors (23.95 % which is 40/167x100) and content errors (7.78% which is 13/167x100).

In Table 8, Script 6 exhibits the highest mechanics error rate (10.97%), reflecting severe challenges with writing conventions. Mechanical errors break the flow of writing, making it harder for readers to understand. For example, wrong punctuation can change a sentence's meaning, and capitalisation mistakes can confuse proper nouns and sentence starts. Students in this University need to be trained effectively on the uses of the mechanics to improve their academic writing. This is in line with Sandrawati and Jurianto (2021) who found that capitalisation and punctuation pose significant challenges for many students and therefore addressing these issues is essential, as writing mechanics play a vital role in conveying messages clearly and effectively. Despite their struggles with language and structure, students generally had a better grasp of content-related issues. Below is a Graphical representation of all the errors in Technical University 2.

Graphical representation of all the errors committed by students in Technical University 2

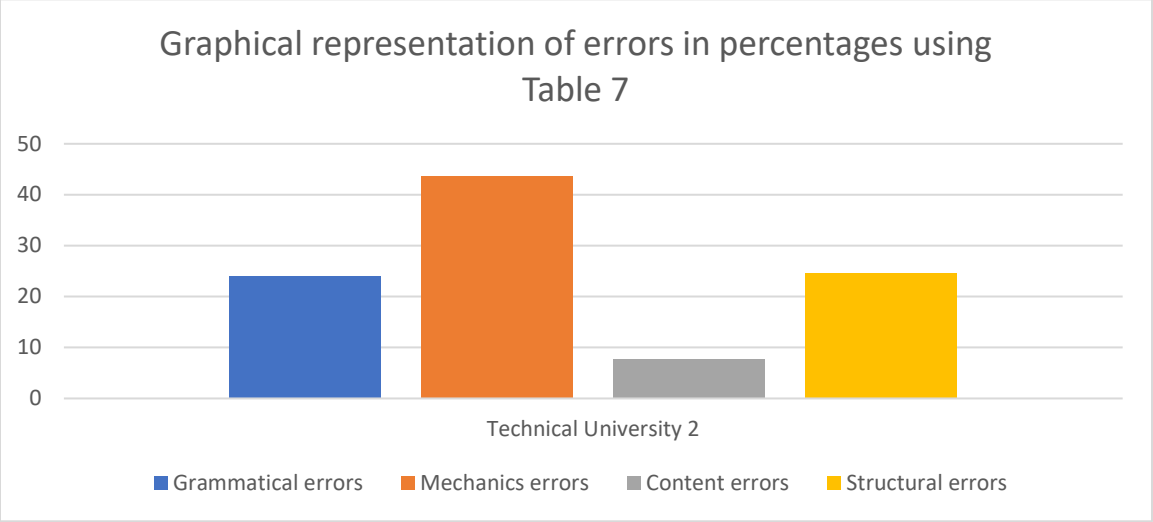


Figure 5.2: Error percentages in Technical University 2

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Table 9: Technical University 3

ERROR TYPE	CODE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES	CORRECTION
Grammatical errors	GE 1	Tense	*i. Five students confirm that there was no security man on duty.*	i. Five students confirmed that there was no security man on duty.
			ii. Some of the students took advantage of the float and steal from people.	ii. Some of the students took advantage of the float and stole from people.
			iii. We also observed the truck that carry the spinners.	ii. We also observed the truck that carried the spinners.
	GE 2	Preposition	*i. We had a personal interaction with students of the university.*	i. We had a personal interaction with students at/from the university.
			ii. It was found out that these boys called for a fight on themselves during the anniversary.	ii. It was found out that these boys called for a fight with others during the anniversary.
			*iii. We can conclude that the clash that occurred between the two faculties was **in** a result of indecency.*	iii. We can conclude that the clash that occurred between

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				the two faculties was **as** a result of indecency.
Grammatical errors cont.	GE 3	Subject-verb agreement	*i. The committee were able to interview the boys.* *ii. The doors to all the offices has been damaged.* *iii. The school have to teach the students how to behave.*	i. The committee was able to interview the boys. ii. The doors to all the offices have been damaged. ii. The school **has** to teach the students how to behave.
	GE4	Word Formation	*i. The committee members sat down to think of any other methodologies suitable for this investigational.* *ii. We learned that these two faculty members had a misunderstandment regarding an argument that leaded to a fight.*	i. The committee members sat down to think of any other methods suitable for this investigation. Ii. We learned that these two faculty members had a misunderstanding regarding an argument that led to a fight.
			*iii. I, along with my investigating team, **finded** out that the current*	iii. I, along with my investigating team, **found out**

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			SRC president and his team have caused all these problems.	that the current SRC president and his team have caused all these problems
	GE 5	Syntax	*i.The will be strong security team like police the next time we will held this occasion again.* *ii. This report about the occurance during the incident of SRC celebration.* *iii. We had the chance to view their opinion where they made us imply that it was a particular Faculty member who start the fight.*	i. There should be a strong security team like the police the next time we hold this occasion. ii. This report is about the incident that occurred during the SRC celebration. iii. We had the chance to hear their opinion, which led us to infer that it was a particular Faculty member who started the fight.

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Grammatical errors cont.	GE 6	Addition	*i. I spoke to the members of staffs.* *ii. Eight of the witnesses said its was the fault of the faculty of engineering students.* *iii. We spoke to 12 peoples.*	i. I spoke to the members of staff. ii. Eight of the witnesses said **it** was the fault of the Faculty of Engineering students. iii. We spoke to 12 people.
	GE 7	Omission	*I. There was incident that occurred that morning.* *ii. some student stole phones, money and other items.* *iii. The school should organise seminars and talk about the need for peace, unity togetherness.*	i. There was an incident that occurred that morning. ii. Some **students** stole phones, money and other items. iii. The school should organise seminars and educate students on the need for peace, unity **and** togetherness.

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	GE 8	Misformation	*i. The was a student who was wearing black T-shirt.* *ii. He was send to resolve the problem.* *iii. They goes around the campuses to observed the student.*	i. There was a student who was wearing black T-shirt ii. He was sent to resolve the problem. iii. They go around the campuses to observe the students.
	GE 9	Misordering	None	

Mechanics errors	ME 1	Spelling	*i. One of the boys insulted his colique.* *ii. According to the two Falculties, this is what happened.* *iii. Questionairs were giving to the boys to fill.*	I. One of the boys insulted his colleague. ii. According to the two Faculties, this is what happened. iii. Q**uestionnaires** were **given** to the boys to fill.

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	ME 2	Punctuation	*I. It was the fault of Faculty of Arts students; however they were not the only ones involved.* *ii. To begin the committee noticed that there was intense rivalry between the two faculties; and they resolved it.* *iii. Lastly restrictions should be placed on the float organised every year.*	i. It was the fault of the Faculty of Arts students; however, they were not the only ones involved. ii. To begin, the committee noticed that there was intense rivalry between the two faculties, and they resolved it. ii. Lastly, restrictions should be placed on the float organised every year.
	ME 3	Capitalisation	*i. according to the two faculties, this is what happened.* *ii. We got to know that the src board did something wrong.*	i. According to the two Faculties, this what happened. ii. We got to know that the SRC board did something wrong.

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Content errors	CE 1	Topic sentence	i. *The main cause of the clash was due to the ongoing election campaign for electing new leaders for the various departments*	i. The sentence clearly identifies the main issue (the clash) and its cause (the election campaign), which is essential for a topic sentence.
	CE 2	Supporting sentences	No supporting sentences	
	CE 3	Cohesion and Coherence	There is coherence and cohesion in the sentence	
Structural errors	SE 1	Fragment	i. *Although the clash was minimal.*	i. Although the clash was minimal, it still raised concerns among the management of the school.
			ii. Avoidance of discrimination.	ii. There should be avoidance of discrimination

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				to prevent future clash.
	SE 2	Faulty parallelism	*i. The committee **conducted** a thorough investigation and **come** out with a conclusion.* *ii. The SRC should increase and **strengthening** security during such events.*	i. The committee conducted a thorough investigation and came out with a conclusion. ii. The SRC should increase and strengthen security during such events.
	SE 3	Wrong word order/wrong choice of words	*i. Thank you for giving as such opportunity.* *ii. The students were too overclouded.* *iii. Interviews were been held in the school.*	i. Thank you for giving us such an opportunity. ii. The students were too overcrowded. iii. Interviews were held in the school.

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	SE 4	Run on sentences	i. *The documents were scattered the windows were broken.* *ii. Many students were injured, many SRC items were destroyed.*	i. The documents were scattered; the windows were broken/ The documents were scattered, and the windows were broken. ii. Many students were injured, and many SRC items were destroyed.

Structural errors Cont.	SE 5	Dangling modifiers	*i. Having observed the place where the incident occurred, some pictures and notes were taken on the damages.*	i. As the committee members observed the place where the incident occurred, we took some pictures and notes on the damages.

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			ii. *Determining the best Faculty to prevent misunderstanding, the school should be able to improve communication*.	ii. The school should be able to improve communication by determining the best Faculty to prevent misunderstanding.
	SE 6	Misplaced modifiers	i. *We spoke to some students at the SRC office who witnessed the clash yesterday.*	i. At the SRC office, we spoke to some students who witnessed the clash yesterday

5.2.11 Grammatical Errors

Grammatical errors (GE 1) are tense errors. In sentence (i) “Five students confirm that there was no security man on duty”, there is tense inconsistency. The sentence contains a tense inconsistency between the present tense verb “confirm” and the past tense verb “was.” This creates confusion about the timing of the actions being described. The students are currently confirming something, but they are referring to a past situation (the absence of a security man). The suggested revision should be “Five students confirmed that there was no security man on duty.” Likewise, in sentence (ii) “Some of the students took advantage of the float and steal from people”, tense inconsistency arises. The sentence uses the past tense “took” for “took advantage,” but it switches to the present tense “steal.” This creates a mismatch in verb tenses, leading to confusion about when the actions took place. To correct this tense inconsistency, both verbs should reflect the same time frame. The reconstructed sentence should be “Some of the students took advantage of the float and stole from people”. The same tense inconsistency is found in sentence (iii) “We

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also observed the truck that carry the spinners". Here again, the verb "observed" is in the past tense, but "carry" is in the present tense. This creates a discrepancy in tenses, making the sentence unclear.

Grammatical Error (GE 2) is preposition. The sentence in (i) "We had a personal interaction with students of the university" is generally clear, but it contains a minor preposition error that can affect the overall clarity and naturalness of the expression. The phrase "students of the university" is grammatically correct, but it can sound a little awkward in this context. A more natural phrasing would be "students at the university" or "students from the university."

The sentence "It was found out that these boys called for a fight on themselves during the anniversary" in (ii) contains a prepositional error that does not make the sentence clear and meaningful. The use of the preposition "on" in the phrase "called for a fight on themselves" is incorrect. This phrasing suggests that the boys are somehow initiating a fight directed at themselves, which is illogical and confusing. A more appropriate preposition in this context would be 'with." The phrase should indicate that the boys are seeking a fight with other people rather than implying they are fighting against themselves. The corrected sentence should be "It was found out that these boys called for a fight with others during the anniversary." There is also a prepositional error in sentence (iii) "We can conclude that the clash that occurred between the two faculties was in a result of indecency. "The phrase "in a result of" is incorrect. The correct preposition to use in this context is "as." The revised sentence should be "We can conclude that the clash that occurred between the two faculties was as a result of indecency."

Grammatical Error (GE 3) is subject-verb agreement errors. The first sentence "The committee were able to interview the boys" contains a subject-verb agreement error.

The word "committee" is a collective noun, which refers to a group of individuals acting as a single entity. Therefore, in this context auxiliary verb "was" is preferable. The reconstructed sentence should be "The committee was able to interview the boys." In the second sentence "The doors to all the offices has been damaged" contains a

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subject-verb agreement error. The subject of the sentence is “The doors,” which is plural. Therefore, the verb must also be plural to maintain agreement. The verb ”has” is singular and does not agree with the plural subject “doors.” The correct plural form of the verb is “have.” The revised sentence is “The doors to all the offices have been damaged.”

Word formation error (GE 4) is next on the table. There is a word formation error in the sentence “The committee members sat down to think of any other methodologies suitable for this investigational”. The term “investigational” is incorrectly used in this context. It does not fit well as a noun in this sentence. The correct noun form to use in this context would be “investigation.” This change clarifies that the methodologies are suitable for the investigation being referred to. The reconstructed sentence should be “The committee members sat down to think of any other methodologies suitable for this investigation.”

In this excerpt from the examination script “We learned that these two faculty members had a misunderstandment regarding an argument that leaded to a fight” there are two word formation errors. “misunderstandment” is not a recognized word in standard English. Also, the verb “leaded” is incorrectly used in this context. The correct past tense of “lead” (to guide or direct) is “led.” “Leaded” refers to something that contains lead, which is not applicable here. The corrected sentence should be “We learned that these two faculty members had a misunderstanding regarding an argument that led to a fight.”

The last excerpt from the examination scripts on word formation also contains errors. "I, along with my investigating team, finded out that the current SRC president and his team has caused all these problems".

The term “finded” is incorrect and it is not a recognised form in standard English. The correct past tense of the verb “find” is “found.” The reconstructed sentence should be “I, along with my investigating team, found out that the current SRC president and his team have caused all these problems.”

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GE 5 is syntax. The sentence "The will be strong security team like police the next time we will held this occasion again" in (i) contains several syntax errors. First, the phrase "The will be" is not correct. The writer should have used "There should be" which expresses a recommendation, suggestion, or obligation. It indicates what is considered desirable or necessary in a given situation. The phrase "strong security team" should include an article before "strong." It should read "a strong security team." Again, there is no article in the phrase "like police" To specify that you are referring to law enforcement personnel, the accepted way is to introduce the article "the" before "police". Another syntax error is in the phrase "we will held". This is improper. The correct future tense form is "we will hold." Finally, the phrase "this occasion again" sounds odd. The sentence can be simplified by removing "again". The reconstructed sentence should be "There will be a strong security team like the police the next time we hold this occasion."

In sentence (ii) "This report about the occurance during the incident of SRC celebration" contains numerous syntax errors. The word "occurance" is misspelled. The correct spelling is "occurrence". "The phrase "during the incident of SRC celebration" is not clear. It would be clearer to use "during the SRC celebration incident" or "during the incident at the SRC celebration." The sentence lacks a main verb to complete its structure. It seems like it should be a complete sentence with a verb, such as "This report is about the incident that occurred during the SRC celebration incident." The word order is slightly confusing There should have been an introduction of a verb like "is", then "about" is placed after the verb. The corrected sentence should be "This report is about the incident that occurred during the SRC celebration."

There are also some syntax errors in the last sentence (iii) 'We had the chance to view their opinion where they made us imply that it was a particular Faculty member who start the fight" The phrase "view their opinion" sounds weird and could be replaced with "hear their opinion". The word "where" in the phrase "where they made us imply" is unfitting in this context. "Where" is typically used to indicate a place. In its place, "when" or "in which" could be used if you are describing a situation or condition.

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However, the sentence structure suggests that “when” might not be the best choice here. A more appropriate word might be “in that” or simply rephrasing the sentence for clarity. Again, the phrase “made us imply” is unclear. If you mean that their opinion led you to infer something, you might say “led us to infer” or “made us think.” Lastly, the verb “start” should be in the past tense, “started,” to agree with the subject “who.” The revised sentence should be **“**We had the chance to hear their opinion, which led us to infer that it was a particular Faculty member who started the fight.”

Next on grammatical errors is error of additions which is (GE 6). From example (i) “The sentence “I spoke to the members of staffs” contains an error of addition, specifically the unnecessary pluralisation of the word “staff.” The word “staff” is a collective noun that refers to a group of employees. It is typically used in the singular form, even when referring to multiple individuals within that group. Adding an “s” to make it “staffs” is incorrect. The revised sentence should be "I spoke to the members of staff.".

The second sentence (ii) “Eight of the witnesses said its was the fault of the faculty of engineering students. “Its” should be “it's”. “It's” is a contraction of “it is,” which is the correct usage here. The corrected sentence should be “Eight of the witnesses said it was the fault of the engineering students.” “Its” is a possessive pronoun, meaning something belongs to it. “It's” is a contraction of “it is” or “it has.” The last sentence (iii) “We spoke to 12 peoples” contains an error in the use of the word “peoples.” The correct term to use here is “people,” which is a plural noun referring to a group of individuals. **“**People**”** is the correct plural form when referring to a group of individuals. The corrected sentence should be “We spoke to 12 people.”

Error of omission is the next grammatical error (GE 7) assessed. The sentence” There was incident that occurred that morning” contains an error of omission, specifically the absence of an article before the noun “incident.” The correct form should include the article “an” to indicate that you are referring to one specific incident. In English, singular countable nouns typically require an article (“a” or “an”) before them. In this

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case, “incident” is a singular countable noun, so it needs the indefinite article “an.” Sentence (ii)

also contains an error of omission, specifically the lack of the plural form “students” after “some.” The word “student” should be pluralized to “students” to correctly match the plural determiner “some”. “The corrected version should be “Some students stole phones, money, and other items.” The final sentence (iii) “The school should organise seminars and talk about the need for peace, unity togetherness. There is an omission of “and” before togetherness. The corrected sentence should be “iii. The school should organise seminars and educate students on the need for peace, unity and togetherness.

Grammatical Error (GE 8) is misformation. The first sentence under misformation “ The was a student who was wearing black T-shirt starts with “The,” which is incorrect. The correct word to use here is “There,” which is used to indicate the existence of something. The sentence also lacks an article (“a”) before “black T-shirt,” which is necessary for lucidity and grammatical accuracy. The next excerpt in (ii) “He was send to resolve the problem” has a misformation error, precisely in the use of the verb “send” instead of the correct form “sent.” The verb “send” is in the base form, but in this context, it should be in the past participle form “sent” because it is used in the passive voice with the verb “was.” The sentence is in the passive voice, which requires the past participle form of the verb. In this case, “sent” is the correct form to use with “was.”

Moreover, the sentence “They goes around the campuses to observed the students” in (iii) has some misformation errors, in the use of the verb “goes” and the verb “observed,” as well as the lack of an article before “campuses” and the incorrect form of “campuses.” The subject “they” is plural, so the verb should also be plural. The correct form is “go,” not “goes,” which is singular. The verb “observed” is in the past tense, but in this context, it should be in the infinitive form “observe” because it follows “to.” The noun "student" should be pluralized to "students" because the context suggests multiple students are being observed. The reconstructed sentence is “They go around the campuses to observe the students.”

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The final grammatical error is Misordering error (G E 9). From all the scripts assessed there was none.

5.2.12 Mechanics Errors

The first mechanics error (ME 1) assessed was spelling. Three excerpts were taken from the examination scripts. Sentence (i) “One of the boys insulted his colique”. The sentence contains a spelling error, specifically in the word “colique,” which should be spelt as “colleague.” The correct spelling is “colleague,” which refers to a person with whom one works or is associated in a profession or business. The corrected sentence should be “One of the boys insulted his colleague” The second sentence (ii) ii. According to the two Faculties, this is what happened. example contains spelling error. The word “falculties’ is not recognized in English. The correct spelling is ‘faculties,” which refers to divisions within a university or other educational institution, or to the mental or physical abilities of a person. In summary, the correction addresses the spelling error by using the correct term “faculties,” ensuring that the sentence is grammatically correct and understandable. The corrected sentence is “According to the two Faculties, this is what happened”. The last sentence “(iii) “Questionairs were giving to the boys to fill.” The word "Questionairs" is also not known in English. The correct spelling is “Questionnaires,” which refers to a set of questions used to gather information from people. Again, the verb “giving” should be in the past tense “given” to match the past tense of the sentence.

The next mechanics error (ME 2) is punctuation. The sentence “It was the fault of Faculty of Arts students; however, they were not the only ones involved” contains punctuation error. A comma should come after “however.” The word “however” is a conjunctive adverb that introduces a contrasting idea. When used to connect two independent clauses, it should be preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma. The comma after “however” is necessary to separate it from the rest of the sentence and improve clarity. In the next example, “To begin the committee noticed that there was intense rivalry between the two faculties; and they resolved it” contains some punctuation errors. First, a comma should typically come after “To begin” in this context. The phrase “To begin” is an introductory phrase, and it is common practice to

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separate introductory phrases from the main clause with a comma. Also, the semicolon is incorrectly used to connect two clauses that are closely related and could be joined with a comma. A semicolon is typically used to separate two independent clauses that are closely related in meaning but could stand alone as separate sentences. In this case, a comma is sufficient because “and” is used to connect the clauses. In the same vein, sentence (iii) “Lastly restrictions should be placed on the float organised every year” has the same punctuation error like (ii). “Lastly” is also an introductory word that indicates the final point or conclusion, hence a comma is needed after “lastly” to separate it from the main clause.

The last mechanics error (GE 3) is capitalisation. Sentence (i) “according to the two faculties, this is what happened. “According” would have to be capitalised because it begins a sentence. “Faculties" should be capitalised because it refers to specific faculties. The corrected version should be “According to the two Faculties, this is what happened. There is also punctuation error in sentence (ii) “We got to know that the src board did something wrong”. **“**src” should be capitalised because it is an acronym or abbreviation for a specific entity or organisation (“Student Representative Council”).
The corrected sentence
Should be “We got to know that the SRC board did something wrong.”

5.2.13 Content Errors

Under content errors, paragraphs were assessed based on topic, sentence, major supporting sentence and minor supporting sentence. In example (i) “The main cause of the clash was due to the ongoing election campaign for electing new leaders for the various departments”. From the examination script, the excerpt in (i) was the only information in the paragraph. The sentence provided was a single statement rather than a collection of sentences. That sentence serves as a topic sentence because it introduces the main idea or cause of the clash. To support the topic sentence, a major supporting sentence could provide more detail about how the election campaign led to the clash but no supporting sentence was there to support the topic sentence. A minor supporting sentence offers additional details or specific examples that further support the major supporting sentence but again no such sentence was provided.

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Cohesion refers to how well the different parts of a sentence or text are connected to each other. In the example provided, cohesion is maintained through the use of logical connections between words and phrases. This is evident in the use of prepositional phrases like “due to the ongoing election campaign” and “for electing new leaders” to connect ideas. These phrases help explain the cause and purpose, respectively. Although there are no explicit conjunctions like “and,” “but,” or “or,” the sentence uses “due to” to link the cause (election campaign) to the effect (clash). Cohesion could have been improved if additional linking words or phrases were used to connect this sentence to surrounding sentences or ideas. However, to improve cohesion, additional linking words or phrases could be used to connect this sentence to surrounding sentences or ideas. Coherence refers to how well the ideas in a sentence or text make sense together and flow logically. The sentence presents a clear cause-and-effect relationship: the election campaign is the cause of the clash. This is coherent because it logically explains why the clash occurred. The sentence conveys a straightforward message about the reason for the clash, making it easy to understand.

However, to enhance coherence, the sentence could be part of a larger narrative that provides more context about the clash and its consequences.

5.2.14 Structural Errors

The first structural error (SE 1) is fragment. Sentence (i) “Although the clash was minimal.” Is not complete. The word “although” introduces a dependent clause, which typically sets up a contrast with an independent clause. As it stands, the sentence does not provide the contrasting idea or complete thought that would follow “although.” To make it a complete sentence, it should be followed by an independent that explains what the minimal clash contrasted with. The corrected version should be “Although the clash was minimal, it still raised concerns among the management of the school. Example (ii) “Avoidance of discrimination” is also a fragment because it lacks a verb to express a complete thought. It is a noun phrase consisting of a noun (“avoidance”) and a prepositional phrase (“of discrimination”), but it does not have a subject-verb structure necessary for a complete sentence.

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To correct a fragment, you need to add a verb or connect it to an independent clause. The reconstructed sentence should be “There should be avoidance of discrimination to prevent future clash.

Faulty parallelism (SE 2) is the next structural error. The sentence “The committee conducted a thorough investigation and come out with a conclusion” contains a faulty parallelism error. This occurs because the verb tenses used in the sentence are not consistent. The sentence starts with “conducted,” which is in the past tense, indicating a completed action. However, it then switches to “come,” which is in the base form of the verb and should be “came” to match the past tense of “conducted. “In a parallel structure, similar elements should be presented in a similar form. Here, both actions (“conducted” and “come”) should be in the same tense to maintain parallelism. Here is the corrected version “The committee conducted a thorough investigation and came out with a conclusion.” Similar to sentence (i), the sentence the sentence “The SRC should increase and strengthening security during such events” contains a faulty parallelism error. The sentence starts with “increase,” which is in the infinitive form (implied by “should increase”), but then switches to “strengthening,” which is in the gerund form. To maintain parallelism, both verbs should be in the same grammatical form. The corrected sentence should be “The SRC should increase and strengthen security during such events.”

Structural error (SE 3) is wrong word order or wrong choice of words. In the sentence “Thank you for giving as such opportunity” has some errors related to word choice and word order. The word “as” is incorrectly used here. The correct word to use in this context is “us,” which is the object pronoun for the recipients of the opportunity. Also, the phrase “such opportunity” should be reframed as “such an opportunity.” The reconstructed sentence should be “Thank you for giving us such an opportunity.” In sentence (ii) “The students were too overclouded.” There is a wrong choice of a word. “Overclouded” should be replaced by “overcrowded. In the last example, “Interviews were been held in the school” The sentence uses “were been,” which is incorrect. The correct verb form should be “were held” The word order is incorrect due to the misuse

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of the verb forms. The reconstructed sentence should be “Interviews were held in the school.”

Run-on sentence (SE 4) is the next table.

The sentence “The documents were scattered the windows were broken” is a run-on sentence. A run-on sentence occurs when two independent clauses. Both “The documents were scattered” and “the windows were broken” are independent clauses because they each have a subject and a verb, and they express complete thoughts. There is no punctuation or conjunction. To correct the sentence, a Comma and a Conjunction can be used or a semicolon can be used to join the two independent clauses. The reconstructed sentence should be “The documents were scattered; the windows were broken.” In the last sentence, “Many students were injured, many SRC items were destroyed cannot be joined by only a comma. Just as we saw in the previous example, these sentences can be joined with “a comma “and” or they can be joined with only a semi-colon.

Next structural error (SE 5) is dangling modifier. The sentence “Having observed the place where the incident occurred, some pictures and notes were taken on the damages" contains a dangling modifier error. The phrase “Having observed the place where the incident occurred” is a participial phrase intended to modify the subject of the sentence. However, the subject that follows (“some pictures and notes”) does not logically perform the action described by the modifier. The modifier implies that “some pictures and notes” observed the place, which does not make sense.

To fix the dangling modifier, the subject of the sentence should logically perform the action described by the modifier. The corrected sentence should be “As the committee members observed the place where the incident occurred, we took some pictures and notes on the damages.” The second sentence “Determining the best Faculty to prevent misunderstanding, the school should be able to improve communication.” Contains a dangling modifier error. The phrase “Determining the best Faculty to prevent misunderstanding” is intended to modify the subject of the sentence, but it does not logically connect to “the school.” The modifier implies that “the school” is

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determining the best Faculty, which might not be the intended meaning. To fix the dangling modifier, a subject should be introduced to logically performs the action described by the modifier'" The corrected sentence should be "The school should be able to improve communication by determining the best Faculty to prevent misunderstanding."

Misplaced modifier (SE 6) is the last structural errors assessed. The only excerpt in the table is "We spoke to some students at the SRC office who witnessed the clash yesterday". This sentence contains a misplaced modifier because the phrase "who witnessed the clash yesterday" is intended to modify "students." However, its placement in the sentence could lead to ambiguity about what it modifies. As it stands, it suggests that the students were at the SRC office and that they witnessed the clash yesterday, which is likely the intended meaning. However, the structure can be confusing because it could imply that the SRC office itself witnessed the clash. Although the sentence is understandable, it could be clearer by repositioning the modifier or restructuring the sentence to eliminate any potential confusion. To clarify the meaning and ensure that the modifier clearly refers to "students," the sentence should be revised so that the modifier "who witnessed the clash yesterday" is placed directly after "students," making it clear that it is the students who witnessed the clash. The reconstructed sentence should be".

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Table 10: Coding matrix for the number of error occurrences for Technical University 3

UNIVERSITY 3	SCRIPT ID	GRAMMATICAL ERRORS	MECHANICS ERRORS	CONTENT ERRORS	STRUCTURAL ERRORS
	SCRIPT 1	2	1	4	8
	SCRIPT 2	1	0	3	5
	SCRIPT 3	2	1	3	4
	SCRIPT 4	4	3	5	6
	SCRIPT 5	0	0	1	2
	SCRIPT 6	2	1	3	5
	SCRIPT 7	2	1	2	4
	SCRIPT 8	3	4	5	8
	SCRIPT 9	1	2	3	4
	SCRIPT 10	2	3	4	6
	SCRIPT 11	3	0	2	4
	SCRIPT 12	2	0	3	7
	SCRIPT 13	3	1	4	6

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	SCRIPT 14	3	1	4	5
	SCRIPT 15	2	0	3	5
Total errors		32	18	49	89

5.2.15 Percentage of each type of error per script for Technical University 3

To get the percentage of each type of error for University 3, the total number of each type of error per script is divided by the total number of that type of error for all the scripts and multiplied by 100.

SCRIPT 1

- Grammatical Errors: 2/32×100=6.25%
- Mechanics Errors: 1/18×100=5.55%
- Content Errors: 4/49×100=8.16%
- Structural Errors: 8/89×100=4.49%

SCRIPT 2

- Grammatical Errors: 1/32×100=3.12%
- Mechanics Errors: 0/18×100=0%
- Content Errors: 3/49×100=6.12%
- Structural Errors: 5/89×100=5.61%

SCRIPT 3

- Grammatical Errors: 2/32×100=6.25%
- Mechanics Errors: 1/18×100=5.55%
- Content Errors: 3/49×100=6.12%
- Structural Errors: 4/89×100=4.49%

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SCRIPT 4

- Grammatical Errors: 4/32×100=12.5%
- Mechanics Errors: 3/18×100=16.66%
- Content Errors: 5/49×100=10.20%
- Structural Errors: 6/89×100=6.74%

SCRIPT 5

- Grammatical Errors: 0/32×100=0%
- Mechanics Errors: 0/18×100=0%
- Content Errors: 1/49×100=2.04%
- Structural Errors: 2/89×100=2.24%

SCRIPT 6

- Grammatical Errors: 2/32×100=6.25%
- Mechanics Errors: 1/18×100=5.55%
- Content Errors: 3/49×100=6.12%
- Structural Errors: 5/89×100=5.61%

SCRIPT 7

- Grammatical Errors: 2/32×100=6.25%
- Mechanics Errors: 1/18×100=5.55%
- Content Errors: 2/49×100=4.08%
- Structural Errors: 4/89×100=4.49%

SCRIPT 8

- Grammatical Errors: 3/32×100=9.37%
- Mechanics Errors: 4/18×100=22.22%
- Content Errors: 5/49×100=10.20%

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- Structural Errors: 8/89×100=8.98%

SCRIPT 9

- Grammatical Errors: 1/32×100=3.12%
- Mechanics Errors: 2/18×100=11.11%
- Content Errors: 3/49×100=6.12%
- Structural Errors: 4/89×100=4.49%

SCRIPT 10

- Grammatical Errors: 2/32×100=6.25%
- Mechanics Errors: 3/18×100=16.66%
- Content Errors: 4/49×100=8.16%
- Structural Errors: 6/89×100=6.74%

SCRIPT 11

- Grammatical Errors: 3/32×100=9.37%
- Mechanics Errors: 0/18×100=0%
- Content Errors: 2/49×100=4.08%
- Structural Errors: 4/89×100=4.49%

SCRIPT 12

- Grammatical Errors: 2/32×100=6.25%
- Mechanics Errors: 0/18×100=0%
- Content Errors: 3/49×100=6.12%
- Structural Errors: 7/89×100=7.86%

SCRIPT 13

- Grammatical Errors: 3/32×100=9.37%
- Mechanics Errors: 1/18×100=5.55%

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- Content Errors: 4/49×100=8.16%
- Structural Errors: 6/89×100=6.74%

SCRIPT 14

- Grammatical Errors: 1/32×100=3.12%
- Mechanics Errors: 4/18×100=22.22%
- Content Errors: 5/49×100=10.20%
- Structural Errors: 3/89×100=7.69%

SCRIPT 15

- Grammatical Errors: 2/32×100=6.25%
- Mechanics Errors: 0/18×100=0%
- Content Errors: 3/49×100=6.12%
- Structural Errors: 5/89×100=8.47%

Table 11: Summary of Error Percentages of Technical University 3

Script ID	Grammatical Errors (%)	Mechanics Errors (%)	Content Errors (%)	Structural Errors (%)
1	6.25	5.55	8.16	4.49
2	3.12	0	6.12	5.61
3	6.25	5.55	6.12	4.49
4	12.5	16.66	10.12	6.74
5	0	0	2.04	2.24
6	6.25	5.55	6.12	5.61
7	6.25	5.55	4.08	4.49
8	9.37	22.22	10.20	8.98
9	3.12	11.11	6.12	4.49
10	6.25	16.66	8.16	6.74

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Script ID	Grammatical Errors (%)	Mechanics Errors (%)	Content Errors (%)	Structural Errors (%)
11	9.37	0	4.08	4.49
12	6.25	0	6.12	7.86
13	9.37	5.55	8.16	6.74
14	3.12	22.22	10.20	7.69
15	6.25	0	6.12	8.47

From Table 10, The analysis of error percentages at Technical University 3 reveals significant challenges with structural errors, including fragments, faulty parallelism, wrong word choice, run-on sentences (poor punctuation), dangling modifiers, and misplaced modifiers. The high frequency of structural errors is 47.34% (Total of all structural errors in the fifteen scripts divided by total of all the four types of errors multiplied by 100 that is 89/188x100). Content errors were (26.06% which is 49/188x100), grammatical errors (17.02% which is 32/188x100) and mechanical errors (9.57% which is 18/188x100).

In Table 11, University 3 has the highest percentage of structural errors with Script 8 showing the highest rate (8.98%). This highlights difficulties in organising ideas and ensuring a coherent flow. Additionally, students at this University faced difficulties in developing clear arguments and supporting evidence, leading to content errors. Grammatical and mechanical errors are less prominent but still vary across individual scripts. A graphical representation of the errors in Technical University 3 is represented below.

Graphical representation of all the errors committed by students in Technical University 3.

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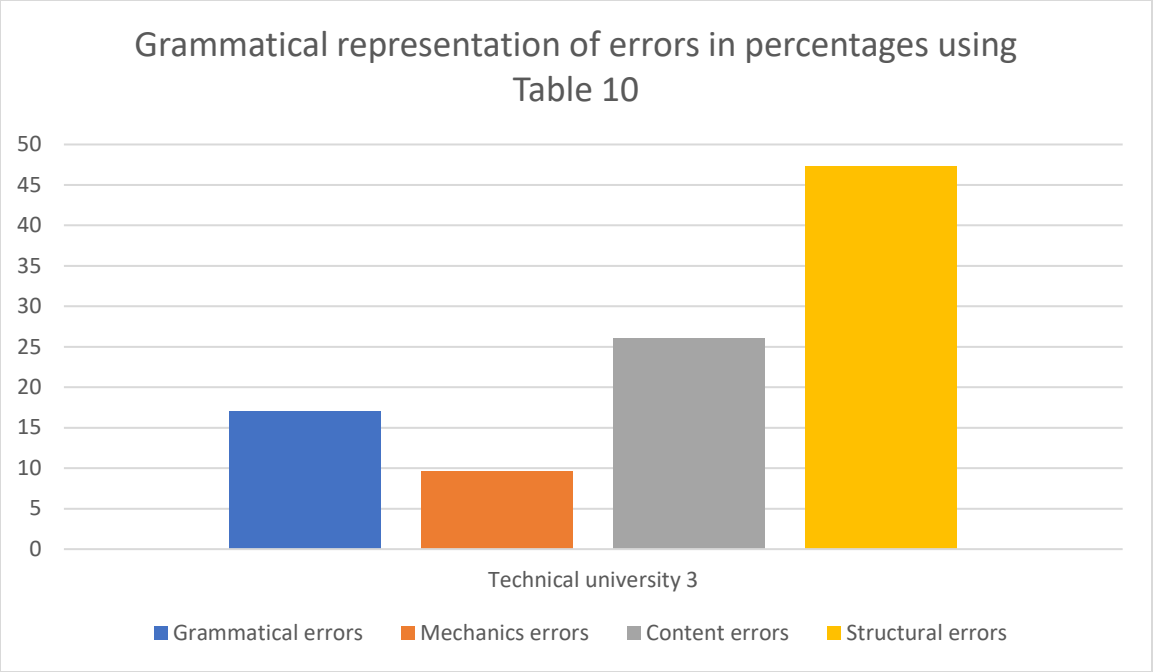


Figure 5.3: Error percentages in Technical University 3

Table 12: TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY 4

ERROR TYPE	CODE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES	CORRECTION
Grammatical errors	GE 1	Tense	*i. Ghana is **bless** with resources that can help the country to develop.* *ii. Natural resources help **improving** our economy.* *iii. The natural resources should be **convert** into **finish** goods.*	i. Ghana is blessed with resources that can help the country to develop. ii. Natural resources help improve our economy. The natural resources should be converted into finished goods.
	GE 2	Preposition	*i. This results in chaos, conflicts and*	This results in chaos, conflicts and

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			*misunderstanding **among** each other.*	misunderstandings among themselves.
			ii. There is the need of the good leader to provide steps for processing cocoa into finished goods like cocoa powder, making of chocolate drinks and toffees.	ii. There is the need for the good leader to provide steps to process cocoa into finished goods like cocoa powder, making chocolate drinks, and toffees.
			*iii. Good leaders of a country ensure that natural resources are used **for** make products that are beneficial **at** the people in the country.*	iii. Good leaders of a country ensure that natural resources are used to make products that are beneficial to the people in the country.
	GE 3	Subject-verb agreement	*i. Natural resources is found in the environment.*	i. Natural resources are found in the environment.
			*ii. Leadership means a person who **lead** a group or organisation.*	ii. Leadership means a person who leads a group or organization
			iii. The leaders makes money from selling the natural resources.	iii. The leaders make money from selling the natural resources.
Grammatical errors Cont.	GE4	Word Formation	*i. Ghana has a lot of naturals resourcings like gold, **petrols**, cocoa, etc.*	i. Ghana has a lot of natural resources like gold, oil, cocoa, etc.

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			*ii. Secondly, the leaders will never **using** the resources to develop the country; rather, they will **gives** them to another country.*	ii. Secondly, the leaders will never use the resources to develop the country; rather, they will give them to another country.
			*iii. Also, the level of education of our leaders cannot **making** the country to develop by using its natural resources.*	iii. Also, the level of education of our leaders cannot make the country develop using its natural resources.
	GE 5	Syntax	*I. My fellow Ghanaians, are we living in higher standards which is capitally no.*	I. My fellow Ghanaians, are we living in higher living standards? The answer is clearly no.
			ii. Ghana's natural resources such as cocoa manufacturing chocolates, choco drinks and exporting for money can help improve the nation.	ii. Ghana's natural resources, including cocoa used to manufacture chocolates and chocolate drinks, can be exported to earn money and help improve the nation.
			iii. *A good leadership can therefore said to be the only way a country can develop*.	iii. Good leadership can therefore be said to be the only way a country can develop

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	GE 6	Addition	*i. A bad leadership will destroy a good country and its resources and also the sky.* *ii. Many are of the view that Ghana's natural resources can help the country and so to develop, even if the country has bad leadership.* *iii. Without education, how can one get ideas to manufacture for equipment?*	i. A bad leadership will destroy a good country and its resources. ii. Many are of the view that Ghana's natural resources can help the country develop, even if the country has bad leadership. iii.. Without education, how can one get ideas to manufacture equipment?
Grammatical errors Cont.	GE 7	Omission	*i. The country cannot achieve its specific aims long time visions.* *ii. A countrys development can be hindered when it has all natural resources but lacks competent leaders.* *iii. Most of people in Ghana are well educated.*	i. The country cannot achieve its specific aims and long time visions. Ii A country's development can be hindered when it has all natural resources but lacks competent leaders. iii. Most of the people in Ghana are well educated.
	GE 8	Misformation	*I .The natural resources can help the country to develop in the **follow** ways*	i. The natural resources can help the country to develop in the following ways

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			Ii .The leaders of Ghanaian instead of using the available resources to help the country tend to used them to develop themself. *iii. Bad leaders will not even **used** the money to develop the country.*	ii. The leaders of Ghana instead of using the available resources to help the country tend to use them to develop themselves. iii. Bad leaders will not even **use** the money to develop the country.
	GE 9	Misordering	*i. The leaders can negotiate with other countries to help convert into finished goods the natural resources that have the knowledge.* .	i. The leaders can negotiate with other countries to help convert natural resources into finished goods, utilising the knowledge they have.
Mechanics errors	ME 1	Spelling	*i. A good leader should try and avoid **inporting** items that can be processed in the country.* *ii. Corruption and **bribely** on the part of leaders in Ghana cannot help the country to develop.*	I. A good leader should try and avoid **importing** items that can be processed in the country. ii. Corruption and bribery on the part of leaders in

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			iii. *Other resources such as water, forest and others have been* ***distroyed****.*	Ghana cannot help the country to develop. Other resources such as water, forest and others have been destroyed
	ME 2	Punctuation	*I. Furthermore; They will export the cocoa to other countries.* *ii. Ghanas natural resources such as gold; diamond and cocoa can help the country to develop.*	I. Furthermore, they will export the cocoa to other countries. ii. Ghana's natural resources such as gold diamond and cocoa can help the country to develop.
	ME 3	Capitalisation	i. *To start with,* ***ghana*** *has been divided into two due to politics*.	To start with, Ghana has been divided into two

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			ii. *furthermore, Taking Ghana for instance*	because of politics. ii. Furthermore, taking Ghana for instance

Content errors	CE 1	Topic sentence	To begin with, natural resources can help the country to develop. For instance, extracting and exporting cocoa to different countries will help the country financially but without a good leader, we cannot export it since it is the duty of a leader to see to it that there is a free flow of work. To any company, country, organisation or institution, there is not going to be unity in the country. Any sub-head can take a decision of his or her choice and this results in chaos, conflicts and misunderstanding among people.

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	CE 2	Supporting sentences	For instance, extracting and exporting cocoa to different countries will help the country financially but without a good leader, we cannot export it since it is the duty of a leader to see to it that there is a free flow of work.
	CE 3	Cohesion and Coherence	The text struggles with logical flow. There is no explanation linking leadership quality to resource exploitation. Abrupt introduction of “unity” concept without contextual preparation. There is no cohesion. There is also missing transitions between ideas as well as inconsistent terminology (“sub-head” vs “leader”).

Structural errors	SE 1	Fragment	i. *Ghana's natural resources, a potential for development*	i. Ghana's natural resources

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			ii. *The amount of money Ghana earns from gold exports*	offer a potential for development. ii. The amount of money Ghana earns from gold exports is enough to develop the country.
	SE 2	Faulty parallelism	i. *If leaders of a country lack proper education, they would not have any idea and planning.* ii. *When there are good leaders, Ghana's economy will grow, we will import less, exporting more, and have a strong economy*	I .Leaders of a country who lack proper education would not have any ideas or be able to plan effectively ii. When there are good leaders, Ghana's economy will grow, we will import less, we will export more, and we

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				will have a strong economy
	SE 3	Wrong word choice	*i. Ghana will not develop with all these natural resources when it is been led by a bad leader.* *ii. Bad leadership can destroy the country.* *iii. Good leadership contributes a lot to the development of a country and its natural resources.*	i. Ghana will not develop with its abundant natural resources under poor leadership. ii. Poor leadership can cause significant harm to the country. iii. Good leadership makes a significant contribution to the sustainable development of a country and effectively manages its

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				natural resources.
	SE 4	Run on sentence	i. *Ghana has a lot of natural resources like gold, oil, cocoa, if the country has a bad leader what will he or she do with them they will export them to different countries to sell and take the money but they will not even use the money to develop the country*	i. Ghana is endowed with a variety of natural resources, including gold, oil, and cocoa. However, if the country is led by a poor leader, these resources might be exported to other countries for sale, with the revenue not being used for national development

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Structural errors cont.	SE 5	Dangling modifiers	i. *Exporting these resources, the money that could help build schools and hospitals is taken away without any benefit to the citizens.* ii. *Providing employment opportunities, natural resources are important for many industries.*	i. When these resources are exported, the money that could help build schools and hospitals is taken away without any benefit to the citizens. ii. Natural resources play a significant role in providing employment opportunities.
	SE 6	Misplaced modifiers	i. *The money that could help build schools and hospitals is taken away without any benefit to the citizens.*	i. The money generated from exporting these resources could help build schools and hospitals, but instead, it is

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				taken away without any benefit to the citizens.
			ii. *Natural resources play a role in providing opportunities for employment that are significant.*	ii. Natural resources play a significant role in providing employment opportunities.

5.2.16 Grammatical Errors

As it has been discussed for the first three universities, grammatical errors are coded from GE 1 to GE 9. GE 1 is tense error. In sentence (i) “Ghana is bless with resources that can help the country to develop,” there is a tense error. The verb “is bless” should be “is blessed.” The corrected sentence ought to be “Ghana is blessed with resources that can help the country develop**.** “Is” is a linking verb in the present tense, which requires the past participle “blessed” to form the correct passive voice. “Natural resources help improving our economy” is the second example under tense. This sentence also contains a tense error. The verb “help improving” should be “help improve." The reconstructed sentence should be “Natural resources help improve our economy**.** The verb “help” is often used in the present tense to indicate a general or habitual action. When “help” is used with another verb, it typically takes the base form of that verb, which in this case is “improve,” not “improving.” The gerund form “improving” is not needed here. The last sentence “The natural resources should be convert into finish goods.” There is a tense error here. The verb “should be convert” should be “should be converted.” “Should be” is a modal verb phrase used in the present tense to express obligation or recommendation. It requires the past participle

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of the main verb, which in this case is “converted,” not “convert.” Additionally, the word “finish” should be “finished” to correctly describe the type of goods being referred to. The corrected version should be “The natural resources should be converted into finished goods

GE 2 is prepositional error**.** The first sentence (i) **“**This results in chaos, conflicts and misunderstanding among each other has prepositional error”. The phrase “among each other” should be “among themselves". The sentence should therefore be “This results in chaos, conflicts, and misunderstandings among themselves. Sentence (ii) **“**There is the need of the good leader to provide steps for processing cocoa into finished goods like cocoa powder, making of chocolate drinks and toffees. The phrase “the need of”’ should be “a need for,”. The corrected sentence should be “There is a need for a good leader to provide steps for processing cocoa into finished goods like cocoa powder, making chocolate drinks and toffees. Finally, sentence (iii) “Good leaders of a country ensure that natural resources are used for make products that are beneficial at the people in the country.” The sentence contains a prepositional error. The phrase “for make” should be “to make,” and “at the people” should be “for the people.” Here is the corrected sentence:

Good leaders of a country ensure that natural resources are used to make products that are beneficial for the people in the country. “To make” is the correct infinitive phrase to use after “used,” indicating the purpose of using the resources. “For the people” is the correct prepositional phrase to indicate who benefits from the products.

The next grammatical error (GE 3) is subject verb agreement. The first excerpt on subject verb agreement from the examination script is “Natural resources is found in the environment. “The sentence contains a subject-verb agreement error. The subject “natural resources” is a plural noun, so the verb should also be plural. The corrected sentence should be “Natural resources are found in the environment”. Using “is” instead of “are” would be incorrect because it is the singular form of the verb. The next example is “Leadership means a person who lead a group or organisation.” The subject “a person” is singular, so the verb should also be singular. However, the

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sentence structure suggests that “leadership” is the main subject, which is a bit confusing. The corrected sentence should be “Leadership means a person who leads a group or organization.” The final example under subject-verb agreement is “The leaders makes money from selling the natural resources.” This sentence, just like the previous ones contain subject-verb agreement error. The subject of the sentence is “leaders” which is a plural noun. Therefore, the verb should also be in the plural form to agree with the subject. So, the sentence should read “The leaders make money from selling the natural resources. In this corrected version, the verb “make” is in the plural form, which correctly agrees with the plural subject “leaders.”

Word formation (GE 4) is the next grammatical error assessed. From the examination scripts, excerpt in sentence (i) “Ghana has a lot of naturals resourcings like gold petrol cocoa etc.” has some word formation errors. First “naturals” should be “natural”. “Natural” is an adjective used to describe resources. “Naturals” is incorrect in this context”. “Resourcings” should also be **“**resources”. “Resources” is the correct noun form. “Resourcings” is not a valid word in English. Finally, **“**petrols” should be “petrol**”**. “Petrol” is correct, adding an “s” makes it plural, which is unnecessary in this context. In a list like this, the singular form is typically used. The corrected sentence should be “Ghana has a lot of natural resources like gold, petrol, cocoa, etc.” In sentence (ii) “Secondly, the leaders will never using the resources to develop the country; rather, they will gives them to another country” also contains word formation errors and verb usage. **“**Will never using” should be **“**will never use”. The right form is “will use” because “will” is followed by the base form of the verb, which is “use” in this case. **“**Will gives” should also be “will give”. The subject-verb agreement requires “give” because “will” is followed by the base form of the verb, and “give” is the base form of the verb desirable here. The reconstructed sentence should be “Secondly, the leaders will never use the resources to develop the country; rather, they will give them to another country.” The last sentence (iii) “Also, the level of education of our leaders cannot making the country to develop by using its natural resources” has one word formation error. The verb “cannot” is used to express inability, and it should be followed by the base form of the verb “make” not the present participle “making”. This is how

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the corrected sentence should be “Also, the level of education of our leaders cannot make the country develop by using its natural resources.”

The next grammatical error (GE 5) is syntax. The first sentence “My fellow Ghanaians, are we living in higher standards which is capitally no “has syntax error. The phrase “higher standards” is a bit vague. It would have been clearer to specify what kind of standards being referred to (e.g., living standards, economic standards). Again, the expression “which is capitally no” is not grammatically correct. The word “capitally” is an adverb meaning in a capital manner or as a capital offense, which does not fit in this context. This how the corrected sentence should be “My fellow Ghanaians, are we living in higher living standards? The answer is clearly no.” In sentence (ii)” Ghana’s natural resources such as cocoa manufacturing chocolates, choco drinks and exporting for money can help improve the nation”, the words in the sentence are not arranged correctly according to the rules of the language. The phrase “cocoa manufacturing chocolates” is not clearer. It would have been better to “say cocoa used to manufacture chocolates”. For clarity sake, choco drinks should have been “chocolate drinks” and “exporting for money” could be substituted with “exporting for financial gain” or "exporting to earn money." The corrected sentence should be “Ghana's natural resources, including cocoa used to manufacture chocolates and chocolate drinks, can be exported to earn money and help improve the nation”. The last example under syntax is “A good leadership can therefore said to be the only way a country can develop.” “Can therefore said” is not correct. The correct phrase should be “can therefore be said” to maintain proper verb agreement and syntax.

Error of addition (GE 6) is the next grammatical error. The sentences extracted from the examination scripts contains unnecessary or incorrect information added to the sentence. In sentence (i) “A bad leadership will destroy a good country and its resources and also the sky”, the phrase “and also the sky” is an error of addition because it introduces an unrelated and unrealistic element (the sky) that does not logically fit with the destruction caused by bad leadership. The corrected version without the error would be “A bad leadership will destroy a good country and its resources.” In the second sentence “Many are of the view that Ghana's natural

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resources can help the country and so to develop, even if the country has bad leadership issues" also contains an error of addition. The part that introduces an error of addition is "and so to develop" The word "so" is unnecessary and disrupts the flow of the sentence. It seems like an attempt to connect ideas, but it is not needed here. The reconstructed sentence should be "Many are of the view that Ghana's natural resources can help the country develop, even if the country has bad leadership." In example (iii) the sentence, "Without education, how can one get ideas to manufacture for equipment?" has an error of addition. The problematic part is "to manufacture for equipment" The phrase "for equipment" seems superfluous and unclear. Naturally, we would say "to manufacture equipment" rather than "to manufacture for equipment.

Grammatical error (GE 7) is error of omission. For the first example, there is the omission of a conjunction "and" in the sentence "The country cannot achieve its specific aims long time visions". There should be a conjunction "and" joining "its specific aims to "long time visions" Conjunctions are key for defining the semantic connections between parts of a sentence or between a clause and the text preceding it. Their omission or improper use can create ambiguity, making it harder to understand the intended relationships between these elements. The corrected sentence should be "The country cannot achieve its specific aims and longtime visions. In the sentence, "A countrys development can be hindered when it has all natural resources but lacks competent leaders" in (ii), there is an omission of an apostrophe in the phrase "A countrys", hence making the sentence incorrect. The correct form should be "a country's development," where the apostrophe indicates possession. The apostrophe is essential to show that the development belongs to or is associated with the country. In the last example, " Most of people in Ghana are well educated", there is an article omission in the phrase "most of people" The definite article "the" has been omitted and should therefore be introduced in this phrase to make it grammatical. The reconstructed sentence should be "Most of the people in Ghana are well educated."

The last but one grammatical error (GE 8) is misformation. The sentence "The natural resources can help the country to develop in the follow ways" contains a word formation error related to the word "follow." The word "follow" should be "following".

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The correct phrase should be “in the following ways” because “following” is the correct form to use when listing items or methods. In the example (ii) the sentence “The leaders of Ghanaian instead of using the available resources to help the country tend to used them to develop themself" contain some misformation errors. One is in the phrase “of Ghanaian”. This is not correct; it should be “of Ghana”. “Ghanaian” is an adjective used to describe something or someone from Ghana, whereas “Ghana” is the noun referring to the country itself. Second, is the verb “tend to used” which is also incorrect. The correct phrase should be “tend to use” because “tend to” is followed by the base form of the verb. Next is incorrect use of the word “themself”. In this context, the correct reflexive pronoun is “themselves” as it refers to a plural subject (leaders). The corrected sentence should be” The leaders of Ghana instead of using the available resources to help the country tend to use them to develop themselves. In the last example under misformation errors, the sentence “Bad leaders will not even used the money to develop the country” has issues with misformation. There is incorrect verb form. The word “used” is in the past tense or past participle form, but it should be in the infinitive form “use” to match the future tense indicated by “will.” There is also lack of consistency in verb tense. The sentence starts with “will,” which indicates future tense, but then incorrectly uses “used” which is not consistent with future tense. The corrected sentence should be “Bad leaders will not even use the money to develop the country”.

The final grammatical error (GE 9) assessed from the examination scripts of students of Technical University 4 is misordering. A misordering error in language happens when parts of a sentence are placed in the wrong order, which makes the sentence confusing or incorrect. The only misordering sentence extracted from the examination script is “The leaders can negotiate with other countries to help convert into finished goods the natural resources that have the knowledge.” The phrase “that have the knowledge” seems out of place. It is not clear what “the knowledge” refers to in this context, and it appears to be modifying “natural resources,” which does not make sense in this context. Natural resources typically do not “have knowledge”. The sentence is confusing because it suggests that natural resources have knowledge, which is not accurate. It is likely meant to convey that leaders or countries have the

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knowledge to turn natural resources into finished goods. The reconstructed sentence should be “The leaders can negotiate with other countries to help convert natural resources into finished goods, utilising the knowledge they have.”

5.2.17 Mechanics Error

The first mechanics error (ME 1) is spelling. Spelling remains a central skill in the digital age, significantly enhancing effective communication, credibility, literacy development, and career success. In sentence (i) “A good leader should try and avoid inporting items that can be processed in the country.” The word “inporting” is misspelled. The correct spelling is “importing.”The corrected sentence should be “A good leader should try and avoid importing items that can be processed in the country.” Similarly, in (ii) “Corruption and bribel**y** on the part of leaders in Ghana cannot help the country to develop.” The word ‘bribely” is incorrectly spelled; it should be “bribery”. The last sentence under spelling “Other resources such as water, forest and others have been distroyed” also contains spelling error. The word “distroyed” is misspelled. The correct spelling is “destroyed” and the corrected Sentence is “Other resources such as water, forests, and others have been destroyed.”

Punctuation (ME 2) is the second item under mechanics. The sentence “Furthermore; They will export the cocoa to other countries” contains a punctuation error that affects its clearness. There is an incorrect use of semicolon. A semicolon is used to separate two independent clauses that are closely related in meaning. However, in this sentence, in the sentence above is not an independent clause, and it should be followed by a comma, not a semicolon. “They” is incorrectly capitalized. It should not be capitalized unless it begins a sentence, which is not the case here since “Furthermore” is part of the same sentence. The corrected sentence should be “Furthermore, they will export the cocoa to other countries.” In sentence (ii)” Ghanas natural resources such as gold; diamond and cocoa can help the country to develop,” also contains punctuation errors. A semicolon is used to separate two independent clauses that are closely related in meaning. However, in this sentence, it is incorrectly used to separate items in a list. A comma should be used instead. Also, the word “Ghanas” is missing an apostrophe, which is necessary to indicate possession. The

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reconstructed sentence should be “Ghana's natural resources, such as gold, diamond, and cocoa, can help the country to develop.”

The last mechanics error (ME 3) is capitalisation. Capitalisation helps readers understand the significance and context of words, especially proper nouns and titles. Incorrect capitalization can lead to confusion or misinterpretation of the intended meaning. The sentence in (i) “To start with, ghana has been divided into two due to politics” contains a capitalization error and does not make the sentence very clear. The word “ghana” should be capitalised because it is a proper noun, referring to the country of Ghana. The corrected sentence should be “To start with, Ghana has been divided into two due to politics.” In the last sentence of ME 3. The sentence “furthermore, Taking Ghana for instance" has error in capitalization. The word “furthermore” should be capitalised because it is the first word of the sentence. Again**,** the word “Taking” is capitalised, but it should not be unless it is the first word of a sentence.

Content errors (CE 1, CE 2 and CE 3) denote topic sentence, supporting sentences, cohesion and coherence respectively. From the table in Technical University 4 under CE 1, we have the sentence “To begin with, natural resources can help the country to develop”. This is a good topic sentence because the main idea that natural resources can contribute to a country’s development is introduced. However, the students did not give any supporting sentences to support the topic sentence introduced. The student could have expanded the topic sentence by adding supporting sentence like “For instance, exporting cocoa to other countries can help the country's finances. However, good leadership is needed to ensure that everything runs smoothly”. Also in CE 3, the paragraph “Cocoa is a common commodity. Sometimes, leaders are important. The weather affects many things. Exporting cocoa to other countries can be profitable” lacks cohesion and coherence it jumps between topics that are not ever related. The ideas seem disconnected because there are no cohesive devices. Also, no concepts that are not related for example, “the weather affects many things” which does not connect to the other ideas logically. Finally, the sentence lacks a clear focus making it incoherent. The corrected version could be “Extracting and exporting cocoa

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to different countries can significantly boost the country's financial resources. However, this process requires effective leadership to ensure its success. Moreover, a good leader plays a crucial role in maintaining a smooth workflow, which is essential for successful exports." In the corrected paragraph the ideas are logically connected because they build upon each other to give an explanation of why leadership is invaluable for the success of cocoa exports. There is a clear cause-and-effect link between leadership and export success. Again, the use of "however" gives a lucid transition between the first two sentences, showing a contrast and promoting cohesion. The pronoun "its" in the second sentence also refers back to "this process" maintaining cohesion by linking ideas. Finally, repeating "successful exports" in sentence three ties back to the initial idea, reinforcing cohesion.

5.2.18 Structural Errors

The first structural errors (SE 1) assessed is fragment. A fragment looks like a sentence but lacks one or more important component to make it complete. In (i) The phrase "Ghana's natural resources, a potential for development" is a sentence fragment because it lacks a main verb to express a complete thought. The subject is "Ghana's natural resources". "A potential for development" describes the subject but does not form a complete sentence because it lacks a main verb. To make this phrase a complete sentence, main verb should be added to it. The reconstructed sentence should be "Ghana's natural resources offer a potential for development." In like manner, In example (ii)The phrase "The amount of money Ghana earns from gold exports" is a sentence fragment because it lacks a main verb to express a complete thought. In this sentence fragment, "The amount of money Ghana earns" is the subject. "From gold exports" describes the source of the money but does not form a complete sentence because it lacks a main verb. The fragment can be a complete sentence if a main verb is added. The reconstructed sentence could be "The amount of money Ghana earns from gold exports is enough to develop the country.

The next structural error (SE 2) is faulty parallelism. Faulty parallelism happens when elements in a sentence or phrase that should be parallel (similar in meaning or function) do not have the same grammatical structure. Sentence (i) "leaders of a

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country lack proper education, they would not have any idea and planning" contains faulty parallelism. Firstly, the sentence uses a comma without a conjunction to connect two independent clauses. This creates a comma splice, which is not the primary issue of faulty parallelism but contributes to the sentence's overall lack of clarity. Furthermore, the sentence implies a cause-and-effect relationship but does not structure it clearly. The phrase "they would not have any idea and planning" mixes two concepts ("idea" and "planning") that are not parallel in structure. To correct the sentence and address the parallelism issue, it should be rephrased to ensure that the elements are structured similarly. The reconstructed sentence should be "Leaders of a country who lack proper education would not have any ideas or be able to plan effectively." There is also an incorrect parallel structure in example (ii) "when there are good leaders, Ghana's economy will grow, we will import less, exporting more, and have a strong economy." The phrases "Ghana's economy will grow," "we will import less," "exporting more," and "have a strong economy" are not parallel in structure. Specifically, "exporting more" is a gerund (a verb form ending in "-ing" that functions as a noun), while the other phrases are complete clauses. To correct the faulty parallelism, all elements in the list must have the same grammatical structure so that we have "When there are good leaders, Ghana's economy will grow, we will import less, we will export more, and we will have a strong economy."

Wrong word choice (SE 3) is next on the table. Wrong word choices refer to words or phrases that may not be the most effective, clear, or appropriate for conveying the intended meaning. In sentence (i) "Ghana will not develop with all these natural resources when it is been led by a bad leader" contains some word choices. The phrase "when it is been led" is grammatically incorrect. It should be "is led". Another issue is with the expression "bad leader". It conveys a negative impression. Substituting it with "poor lead" or "ineffective leader" might be more formal and suitable in many contexts. Also, the phrase "when it is been led" is not grammatically correct. The normal way to express the condition might be "under poor leadership" or with poor leadership". The corrected sentence should be "Ghana will not develop with its abundant natural resources under poor leadership." In the second example under

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wrong word choice, we have “Bad leadership can destroy the country and its resources.” Using “Bad leadership” is an informal adjective. As it was established in the previous example, using “poor” or ineffective” might be more suitable for formal writing. Also, in the phrase “destroy the country,” there is an exaggerated verb. Using “destroy” could be seen as an exaggeration unless the context clearly supports such a severe outcome. It would be suitable to use “harm the country” or “cause significant damage to the country”. The corrected sentence should be. “Poor leadership can cause significant harm to the country. In example (iii), the sentence “Good leadership contributes a lot to the enhance clarity and formality”, **“**contributes a lot” is understandable but a more formal way should be “makes a significant contribution” or “plays a central role. “Again, the phrase “development of a country” is a general term that could be more specific depending on the context. For example, “economic development,” “social development,” or “sustainable development” might be more precise. The revised sentence should be **“**Good leadership makes a significant contribution to the sustainable development of a country and effectively manages its natural resources**.”**

The next structural error (SE 4) is run on sentence. The only sentence under run on sentence from the table is “Ghana has a lot of natural resources like gold, oil, cocoa, if the country has a bad leader what will he or she do with them they will export them to different countries to sell and take the money but they will not even use the money to develop the country”, has several issues. To begin, the sentence combines multiple independent clauses without proper punctuation, making it difficult to follow. It should be broken up with commas, semicolons, or even separate sentences for clarity. The phrase “what will he or she do with them” is rather informal. A more formal way might be “how will they utilise these resources.” The sentence jumps between ideas without clear transitions. It would be clearer to separate the ideas into distinct sentences. Finally, the use of “they” without a clear antecedent can be confusing. It should be clear whether “they” refers to the leader or the country. The reconstructed sentence should be “Ghana is endowed with a variety of natural resources, including gold, oil, and cocoa. However, if the country is led by a poor leader, these resources might be

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exported to other countries for sale, with the revenue not being used for national development."

The next proficiency assessed is dangling modifiers which is the fifth structural error (SE 5). The first example is "Exporting these resources, the money that could help build schools and hospitals is taken away without any benefit to the citizens" also contains a dangling modifier issue. The phrase "Exporting these resources" is intended to describe the action of taking away the money, but it is incorrectly attached to "the money." It should be clear that it is the action of exporting that leads to the money being taken away. The sentence structure makes it unclear who or what is performing the action of exporting and taking away the money. The corrected sentence should be "When these resources are exported, the money that could be used to build schools and hospitals is taken away without benefiting the citizens."

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Table 13: Coding matrix for the number of error occurrences for Technical University 4

Technical University 4

SCRIPT ID	GRAMMATICAL ERRORS	MECHANICS ERRORS	CONTENT ERRORS	STRUCTURAL ERRORS
1	7	5	2	3
2	5	4	0	2
3	4	2	0	1
4	6	5	1	3
5	6	4	3	2
6	4	3	0	1
7	7	6	0	4
8	3	1	0	0
9	4	4	2	3
10	8	5	0	4
11	6	6	4	3
12	3	2	0	1
13	3	2	0	1
14	4	3	0	1

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15	2	1	2	1
Total errors	**72**	**53**	**14**	**30**

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5.2.19 Percentage of each type of error per script for Technical University 4

To get the percentage of each type of error for University 4, the total number of each type of error per script is divided by the total number of that type of error for all the scripts and multiplied by 100.

Script 1

- Grammatical errors 7/72x100=9.72
- Mechanics errors 5/53x100=9.43
- Content errors 2/14x100=14.28
- Structural errors 3/30x100=10

Script 2

- Grammatical errors 5/72x100=6.94
- Mechanics errors 4/53x100=9.43
- Content errors 0/14x100=0
- Structural errors 2/30x100=6.66

Script 3

- Grammatical errors 4/72/x100=5.55
- Mechanics errors 2/53x100=3.77

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- Content errors 0/14/x100=0
- Structural errors 1/30x100=3.33

Script 4

- Grammatical errors 6/72x100=8.33
- Mechanics errors 5/53x100=9.43
- Content errors 1/14x100=7.14
- Structural errors 3/30x100=10

script 5

- Grammatical errors 6/72x100=8.33
- Mechanics errors 4/53x100=7.54
- Content errors 3/14x100=21.42
- Structural errors 2/30x100=6.66

Script 6

- Grammatical errors 4/72x100=5.55
- Mechanics errors 3/53x100=5.66
- Content errors 0/14/x100=0

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- Structural errors 1/30x100=3.33

Script 7

- Grammatical errors 7/72x100=9.72
- Mechanics errors 6/53x100=11.32
- Content errors 0/14/x100=0
- Structural errors 4/30x100=13.33

Script 8

- Grammatical errors 3/72x100=4.16
- Mechanics errors 1/53x100=1.88
- Content errors 0/14x100=0
- Structural errors 0/30x100=0

Script 9

- Grammatical errors 4/72x100=5.55
- Mechanics errors 4/53x100=7.54
- Content errors 2/14x100=14.28
- Structural errors 3/30x100=10

script 10

- Grammatical errors 8/72x100=11.11
- Mechanics errors 5/53x100=9.43
- Content errors 0/14x100=0
- Structural errors 4/30x100=13.33

Script 11

- Grammatical errors 6/72x100=8.33

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- Mechanics errors 6/53x100=11.32
- Content errors 4/14x100=28.57
- Structural errors 3/30x100=10

Script 12

- Grammatical errors 3/72x100=4.16
- Mechanics errors 2/53x100=3.77
- Content errors 0/14x100=0
- Structural errors 1/30x100=3.33

Script 13

- Grammatical errors 5/72x100=6.94
- Mechanics errors 3/53x100=5.66
- Content errors 4/14x100=28.57
- Structural errors 2/30x100=6.66

Script 14

- Grammatical errors 4/72x100=5.55

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- Mechanics errors 3/53x100=5.66
- Content errors 0/14x100=0
- Structural errors 1/30x100=3.33

script 15

- Grammatical errors 2/72x100=2.77
- Mechanics errors 1/53x100=1.88
- Content errors 2/14x100=14.28
- Structural errors 1/30x100=3.33

Table 14: Summary of Error Percentages of Technical University 4

Script ID	Grammatical Errors (%)	Mechanics Errors (%)	Content Errors (%)	Structural Errors (%)
1	9.72	9.43	14.28	10
2	6.94	9.43	0	6.66
3	5.55	3.77	0	3.33
4	8.33	9.43	7.14	10
5	8.33	7.54	21.42	6.66

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6	5.55	5.66	0	3.33
7	9.72	11.32	0	13.33
8	4.16	1.88	0	0
9	5.55	7.54	14.28	10
10	11.11	9.43	0	13.33
11	8.33	11.32	28.57	10
12	4.16	3.77	0	3.33
13	6.94	5.66	28.57	6.68
14	5.55	5.66	0	3.33
15	2.77	1.88	14.28	3.33

From Table 13, grammatical error rates the highest percentage. The high frequency of grammatical errors is 42.60% (Total of all grammatical errors in the fifteen scripts divided by total of all the four types of errors multiplied by 100 that is 72/169x100). Mechanical errors percentage is (31.36% which is 53/168x100), content errors (8.28% which is 14/168x100) and structural errors (17.75% which is 30/168x100).

In Table 14, script 10 shows the highest rate of grammatical errors (11.11%) reflecting major difficulties in sentence structure, grammar and language use.

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Graphical representation of all the errors committed by students in Technical University 4

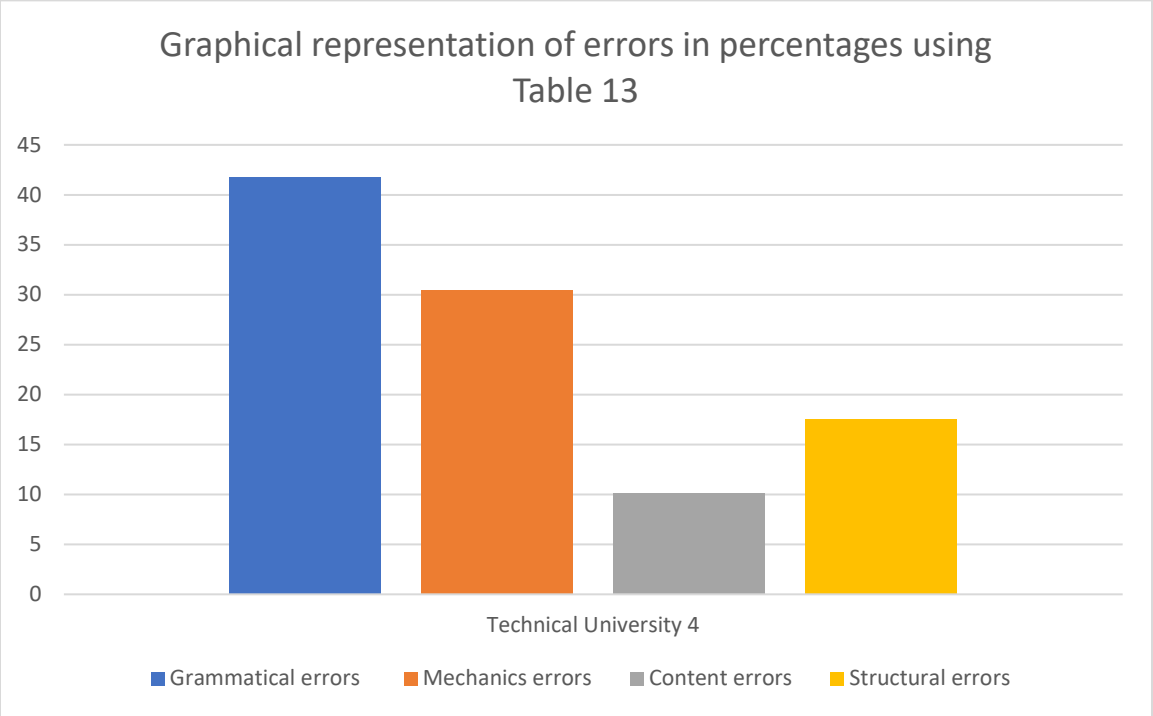


Figure 5.4: Error percentages in Technical University 4

Section 2: Research Question 2

5.3 What are the challenges encountered by Technical University final-year students in their academic writing?

The literature suggests that tertiary students face challenges in academic writing (Boakye & Adika, 2020; Aishal, 2021; Afeadie & Kpeglo, 2022; Demana, 2023). This section aims to identify the academic writing challenges encountered by students in technical universities in Ghana. To achieve this, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with ten students from each of the four technical universities. Focus Group Discussion is a type of research methodology in which a small group of participants meets to discuss a specific topic or issue in order to generate data. The interaction between the moderator and the group, as well as the interaction between group members, is the main feature of a Focus Group. The goal is for the researcher to gain an understanding of the participants' perspectives on the topic under discussion. In a

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Focus Group Discussion, the interviewer (also known as the moderator) asks research participants specific questions about a topic or issue in a group discussion. Focus Groups, as opposed to individual interviews, add the dimension of member interactions. The interaction among group members should be prioritised when conducting the Focus Group. Instead of asking questions, the moderator encourages group members to communicate with one another, exchanging ideas and comments on each other's experiences or points of view.

The FGD, developed by the researcher, served as one of the primary data collection tools for this study. The section contained questions about academic writing and the challenges faced by students. The researcher moderated the FGDs held at the selected technical universities to gather insights.

Each session lasted about 36 minutes. Audio recordings and field notes were also taken during the FGD sessions

Mugenda (1999) argues that raw data from the field is challenging to interpret, highlighting the necessity of data management. Data management involves exploring the collected data from a survey or experiment and making assumptions and inferences (Creswell, 2005). To handle the data in this study, thematic analysis (TA) was employed—a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (“themes”) within qualitative data (Clarke et al., 2015). Additionally, Creswell and Poth’s (2018) Analysis Spiral Plan was applied to the responses. As shown in Figure 4.2, the data from Focus Group Discussion were collated and organised into smaller components. Headings and subheadings were used for each question and participants’ responses were labelled in step 1. The transcripts were read carefully and eminent ideas were derived from the data for step 2. In step 3, codes and themes were identified from the data. Codes were organised into themes by creating separate sections and moving relevant text excerpts under each theme. In step 4, data was analysed with each theme to develop interpretations. Finally, findings were summarised visually and diagrammes were used to show how these themes interconnect in the context of academic writing challenges.

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5.3.1 Focus Group Discussion- Technical University 1

This discussion took place on the 30th of July, 2024. The students were 10 and they sat around a table for the discussion. I was the moderator facilitating the discussion and ensuring that all voices were heard. The discussion lasted about 36 minutes.

5.3. 2 Main Theme: Challenges of academic writing

This section aimed to uncover the academic writing challenges faced by university students at the tertiary level. These are addressed under three main sub-themes.

5.3.3 Sub-theme 1: Do you enjoy academic writing?

The participants were asked whether they liked academic writing or not. Some of the responses are illustrated in conversation 1.

Conversation 1

P1: No, because sometimes during examination, you forget the spelling of some of the words you've learnt, and sometimes because you have studied so many topics, you find it difficult remembering what you have learnt. Academic writing is difficult.

P2: No, because to me, it's easier to express yourself verbally than writing because sometimes it's difficult to put words together in a written form to make meaning.

P3: Yes, for example, writing examination which is one example of academic writings, I enjoy it because at the end of the day it becomes a form of assessment.

P4: I like it in a way because as a student when I write exams and the results are out, I am able to know whether I am improving or not.

The responses imply that most students do not like academic writing because it is a difficult task to them. This finding is in consonance with that of Choudhury (2013) and Kusuma and Sofendi (2024) who found that writing in English can be one of the most challenging skills for foreign language learners to master, yet it is an essential component among the four key language skills.

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5.3.4 Sub-theme 2: Have you had any academic writing challenges before?

The participants were asked to divulge whether they have ever encountered academic writing challenges. Below is the response from the participants.

All participants: Yes madam

All the participants responded in the affirmative confirming that they have all had challenges in their academic writing before This response aligns with AlMarwani (2020) where students have expressed that academic writing is a particularly challenging task. Facing challenges with writing assignments for example, can increase stress and anxiety, ultimately affecting students' overall well-being. Poor writing skills can lead to lower grades, which in turn impacts students' academic performance and progress.

5.3.5 Sub-theme 3: What are some of the challenges you encounter in your academic writing? The participants were asked to give specific examples of the challenges they face in their academic writings. Some of their responses are captured in conversation 2.

Conversation 2:

P1: Basically, grammatical errors are very challenging, concord, tense, prepositions etc. Hmm sometimes even spelling errors.

P2: For me, my challenges are with punctuations and spellings and poor sentence construction.

P3: Sometimes, I am unable to paragraph my writings very well. Sometimes when I introduce the main idea, I don't continue explaining it.

P4: Madam, there are times, in your mind you know what to write but how to write it in English is challenging. I don't have enough vocabulary to put my sentences together.

P5: The challenges are many but mostly, I have challenges with subject-Verb agreement. Sometimes I find it difficult to identify the subject in the sentence and so I choose any verb.

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P6: Critically thinking and organising my paragraph has always been a challenge to me.

P7: Some of the words in English sound the same but different in meaning example, seize and cease so sometimes in writing you take one for another. Sometimes British spelling and American spelling also become a challenge. For example, organization and organisation, realise and realie. I get confused when I'm writing and I have to use words like that.

P8: My challenge is the use of punctuations marks. Sometimes I am not able to use the right punctuations expected in my writing. Sometimes too choosing the right words in my writing is a problem for me.

P9: Generally, I make lots of grammatical errors in my writing. My sentence construction is poor.

P10: Yes, I have a challenge in using past tense and past participle. There are times, I start with a present tense and end in the past.

These responses indicate that the writing process is inherently challenging, compounded by both external pressures and the intrinsic difficulty of articulating ideas in written form. Students often struggle to overcome significant language barriers, such as *vocabulary limitations and grammar complexities*, which can severely hinder their academic writing. These obstacles not only make it difficult to convey thoughts clearly and effectively but also add an additional layer of stress, as students strive to meet academic expectations and deadlines. Consequently, the journey to mastering writing skills becomes a multifaceted endeavour that requires considerable effort, persistence, and support. This is consistent with Rahman et al. (2024) findings that students face various issues, including grammar difficulties, limited vocabulary, weak critical thinking and poor paragraphing in their academic writings.

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5.3.6 Sub-theme 4: What are some of the reasons for encountering those challenges in your academic writing?

Conversation 3:

P1: Most lecturers only give feedback mainly on the completed work, but they don't guide us on how to improve during the writing process itself.

P2: Lack of practice (speaking and writing the English language).

P3: Sometimes we face these challenges because we do not read wide so we lack the vocabulary.

P4: Some lecturers rush in their teaching, they think we already know what they are teaching because we learned English from the secondary schools but the truth is that we forget most of the things we learnt from secondary school.

P5: My interest is not in the English language but in the main courses for my programme.

P6: *Examination pressure, so sometimes you have the idea but there is no time to think about the idea carefully and write so, you rush and make mistakes.*

From these responses, it is evident that there are several reasons that account for the challenges students face in their academic writing. *Ineffective teaching methods used by lecturers, lack of writing opportunities, that is insufficient time for writing practice in class, poor reading habit of students and inadequate feedback from lecturers*. These responses align with Mwangi (2017), who discovered that many students faced challenges in second language (L2) writing. Common issues included incorrect spelling, improper pluralisation of nouns, poorly constructed sentences, and neglect of fundamental grammar rules such as capitalisation and punctuation. Additionally, difficulties in paragraph structuring and argument development were among the challenges identified.

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5.4 Lecturer's perspective on challenges students face in their academic writing-Technical University 1

5.4.1 Main Theme: Challenges students face in their academic writing

Largely, students have mixed feelings about academic writing. Although some appreciate the prospect to develop their critical thinking and communication skills, others may find it challenging. Most of them may struggle to find motivation and enjoyment in academic writing. Nevertheless, academic writing remains an indispensable skill that can benefit students in countless aspects of their academic and professional lives. Five sub-themes were identified here.

5.4.2 Sub-theme 1: What are the perceptions of final-year students of technical universities on academic writing?

To understand the perceptions of final-year students on academic writing, the lecturers from the four technical universities selected were asked to share their views on how students perceive academic writing. The lecturer from Technical University 1 stated that:

> *"I think that generally students don't like it because they perceive that it is difficult. And because they use their mother tongue more, they find it difficult speaking let alone writing. In a nutshell, they perceive academic writing to be difficult*."

From the response of the lecturer from Technical University 1, it is palpable final year Technical University students do not like academic writing because *they perceive it to be problematic*. This finding is in consonance with that of AlMarwani (2020) who found that students perceive academic writing to be trying.

5.4.3 Sub-theme 2: Do you think final-year students of technical universities have challenges in their academic writing?

The lecturer responded:

> *Yes, they encounter a lot of challenges in their academic writing.*

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On the part of the lecturer, academic writing is not easy for students in the technical universities and they always encounter challenges whenever they are writing.

5.4.4 Sub-theme 3: what are some of the challenges students face in their academic writing?

The lecturer from Technical University 1 responded:

> *If you even compare when they come to the first year and the third year, though they've done English over the years, the difference in their proficiency is not that much. I think they don't pay so much attention to the language. They might have the idea that you don't use this or that at this point, but using it becomes a problem. Because they are not used to using it, they don't use it. As for knowledge they have it, if you ask them, they know but in their proficiency it doesn't show. I think the challenge is also with the teaching." For me, I think I have taught you so you should know, but sometimes when we keep repeating it might help but time, the number of students and other things but we don't have the time to do that kind of reinforcement. Because we have a structured course outline, we need to follow that course outline. For example, if I'm teaching a student and the feedback is not good, I don't have the time to go back for that reinforcement because I need to go to the next topic. So, I feel that we don't have enough time to do that reinforcement.*

The responses from the lecturer in Technical University 1 indicate that the proficiency level is very low and though students have studied English in the secondary school before, and even in the university, they are taught Communication Skills and English language, they are still unable to use the language satisfactorily. Again, the issue of *time and large classes prevent the lecturers from going back to teach again what the students could not grasp*. This supports Amoakohene's (2017) assertion that that even after completing two semesters of the Communicative Skills programme, students continued to face significant difficulties in producing error-free texts.

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5.4.5 Sub-theme 4: What are some of the errors you see in their academic writing?

The lecturer was asked to make known some of the errors that are evident in students' academic writing. The lecturer from Technical University 1 mentioned that:

> *In their writings you see so many grammatical errors and punctuation errors, as for punctuations. It's even serious. Structural errors, how to put the sentence together. You see that there are a lot of errors but the main errors are subject-verb agreement and punctuations.*

This response indicate that students struggle with *vocabulary, grammar and syntax,* making it difficult to express their ideas clearly. Students are also challenged in *organising their thoughts and ideas in a coherent manner*.

5.5 Focus Group Discussion Technical University 2

The discussion took place on Friday, the 9th of August, 2024. It started at 10 am and ended at 10:35 am

5.5.1 Main Theme: Challenges of Academic Writing

In this section, students in Technical University 2 were expected to unravel their academic writing challenges These are addressed under four main sub-themes.

5.5.2 Sub-theme 1: Do you enjoy academic writing?

The participants were to share their views on their interest in academic writing. The following are some of the responses that students gave and these are demonstrated in conversation 4.

Conversation 4:

> *P1: Yes, because if you are writing any examination or assignment, it helps you to improve on what you have learnt.*

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P2: Yes, assignment, it helps improve in your learning, because as you are preparing to do the assignment you are compelled to read and research on the slides the lecturer has given you.

P3: Yes, for example, mid semester helps you to improve on the final exams, in the sense that if you do not do well in the mid semester exams you will know how to go about your final examination.

P4: No, because in exams the time given to us is very short, so you are not able to think and write all that you want to.

P5: No, it is very difficult putting words together and trying to write meaningful sentences gives me headache.

P6: No, I am not relaxed especially when I am writing examination. I have to be extra careful with my sentence construction because the lecturer will deduct marks if I make mistakes.

Some participants admit that *academic writing is invaluable in their academic journey* because it boosts their knowledge and research skills. Students learn to pick relevant information from different studies, improving their understanding of specific subjects and the wider academic field. However, other students do not like academic writing because *it is tedious and it puts so much pressure on them.*

5.5.3 Sub-theme 2: Have you had any academic writing challenges before?

The participants were invited to share whether they had ever faced challenges in academic writing. Their responses are detailed below.

All participants: Yes madam

The response from all the participants in the FGD indicate that each one of them have had academic writing challenges before. This attest to the fact that academic writing is a real challenge to students in the technical universities.

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5.5.4 Sub-theme 3: What are some of the challenges you encounter in your academic writing?

In this session participants were asked to enumerate some challenges they face in their academic writing. The following are some responses they gave in conversation 5:

Conversation 5:

P1: Madam, if I take examination for example, sometimes some English words used in the questions are difficult to understand and some are also difficult to spell. I sometimes spell a word and leave a letter out and sometimes too I add a letter which is not supposed to be there.

P2: Time factor, for example sometimes you are given 30 or 40 minutes to answer the questions but according to your strategy or how you plan to answer the question, that 30 minutes may not be sufficient for you to answer the question.

P3: Punctuations and spelling mistakes, I struggle, I don't know when I have to put a comma or a full stop. Sometimes, when you are writing you know the word but spelling it becomes a problem. Other times too you don't even know how to spell the word.

P4: As for me madam, my problem is spellings and punctuations. Hmmm!

P5: Madam, sometimes you understand the question very well in your local dialect but transferring it into English language and writing it becomes difficult, sometimes if you have to explain, you have all the explanation in your mind in the local dialect but the English words to put that together is not there.

P6: Tenses and subject verb agreement are also challenges we face, sometimes you have to use past tense but you tend to use present tense.

P7: Sometimes the vocabulary to use to construct the sentence is not there.

P8: Paragraph writing and ambiguities, concord, wrong choice of words. As for the errors they are many. (laughs)

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Following students admitting that they encounter academic writing challenges, they were further asked to give examples of some of the challenges. Several examples were given which clearly shows that academic writing is a challenge to technical universities. Most of the examples fell under *mechanical, grammatical and content errors.* Similar study that aligns to this finding is Giawa, Tampubolon and Sipayung (2024) who concluded in their study that students faced challenges with word selection, verb usage, and word choice. Additionally, some students struggled with accurately applying irregular verb forms in their writing. Based on the data, the researcher identified four types of grammatical errors: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

5.5.5 Sub-theme 4: What are some of the reasons for encountering those challenges in your academic writing?

The participants were requested to outline reasons behind their inability to write well. Some of their responses are captured in conversation 6.

Conversation 6:

P1: We don't learn the English language like we do for our main courses in Secretaryship and Management Studies. Generally, I will say we don't read, so, we lack the vocabulary to put sentences together.

P2: Most of us are from the secretarial school, we didn't know we are going to learn English. We thought we are going to be taught only the secretarial courses.

P3: Madam, I think we also don't speak the English language like we speak our local dialect, so we are not fluent in our speech and it shows in our writing.

P4: The lecturers assume we have learnt English in the Secondary school so they don't take their time to teach us.

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P5: The time allocated to learn English is only two hours a week. The two hours is not enough for us to be taught and also do more exercises for the lecturers to check and correct us if there were errors in our answers.

The responses given by the participants indicate that students of technical universities have *poor attitude to the learning of the English language*. Also, from their responses it is clear that *lecturers do not take their time to teach and finally there is limited time for teaching and learning the English language*. These findings are consistent with Nkrumah (2020) and Sulaiman, Ibrahim and Razak (2024) who asserted that the perception of some Technical University students concerning language courses in general is very disappointing.

5.6 Lecturer's perspective on the challenges that students face-Technical University 2

5.6.1 Main Theme: Challenges students face in their academic writing

Under this section, the researcher wanted to know the views of the lecturer in charge of teaching English on the challenges she/he thinks Technical University students encounter in their academic writings. Covered in this section are four sub-themes.

5.6.2 Sub-theme 1: What are the perceptions of final- year students of technical universities on academic writing?

To know whether students like academic writing or not, the lecturer in Technical University 2 was asked to speak on how students perceive academic writing. The English lecturer of Technical University 2 explained that:

Students have negative and positive perceptions on academic writing. On the negative perception, they see writing to be a burden probably because they are lazy or they don't want to start anything at all. In their minds they see themselves not capable of putting words together to get about a page or two or even getting forty pages and above especially if they are writing their theses. Some of them think that when it comes to academic writing it is so boring for them. They ask themselves; how can I sit down and read and write so many

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pages? To them, it is time consuming and they wish they are not tasked to write at all. They see themselves as incapable. At times when you give them assignment it pains them to even go to the library and research., they want to pick everything from the book. They don't value writing or education in general. Sometime, they don't see the relevance of writing. They ask themselves what benefits they stand to get if they waste all their time writing an essay. When you push them to write they think they are not getting anything better when they write. Sometimes in class when you ask them to summarise something they become so anxious; they begin to look at each other and the moment anxiety set in, you should know there is trouble.

On the positive perception, some of them think they want to show their skill, some of them have the flair to speak and write. Some of them go to the library and research to do their assignments and show that they are on top of the class. They want everybody to know that they were able to do the assignment given to them. They find pleasure in showing their skills. Some of them also think that when they write they are putting their thoughts through, and madame will know that they are good. I gave an assignment to a particular class and they were to write a letter to a business partner on something. There was a particular student who wrote a very good letter, about three pages. When I asked him how he could write that much; he told me he got information from the internet but he did not write verbatim. He managed to paraphrase. So, to some of them they have the flair to come out and showcase their skills but some of them too would never make any initiative to write well. From the lecturer's response, it is evident that most student have a negative perception as far as academic writing is concerned. It looks burdensome to them having to put words together to write something meaningful. However, there are few students who feel challenged to do better when they are confronted with academic writing and they strive to face that challenge and they succeed.

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5.6.3 Sub-theme 2: Do you think final-year students of technical universities have challenges in their academic writing? The lecturer from Technical University 2 responded that:

(Laughs) Challenges? A lot! Errors are everywhere in their academic writings

5.6.4 Sub-theme 3: What are some of the challenges students face in their writing?

Hmmmm! Their punctuations, very bad and so sometimes you don't even get the import of what they want to say because the sentence is not well punctuated. And then, their concord as well. Though we teach them concord in the first year, I think by the time they get to the final year, they have forgotten everything about concord. Their sentence construction is very bad, their errors are just too many. Spelling is also a challenge to them. For some, even when it comes to two letter words some of them mispel. Sometimes too in the quest to finish the examination early some of them can write anything. They are unable to manage their time in the exams hall. Some don't even understand the research work, they write anyhow. They have problems with homonyms, homophones and homographs. They don't know which is which. So, I tell them as secretaries they are supposed to know all these because they will write letters and reports and if you write something to your business partner in China or anywhere else and you are missing words, the business partner won't understand. Even when you dictate notes for them to write, you will still find errors when you go round checking their notes. Putting words together to get a whole page or more seems a burden to them.

5.6.5 Sub-theme 4: What are some of the errors you see in their writings?
The lecturer from Technical University 2 stated that:

In their writings, you mostly see spelling mistakes, punctuation errors, capitalisation. Subject -Verb agreement is a huge problem for Secretaryship

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students and all other students I teach. I also find errors of omission and addition, poor sentence construction, dangling modifiers and misplaced modifier. They are just many.

5.7 Focus Group Discussion- Technical University 3

This discussion took place on the 12th of August, 2024. With 10 participants sitting around a table, I moderated the discussion. The session lasted about 37 minutes.

5.7.1 Main Theme: Challenges of academic writing

5.7.2 Sub-theme 1: Do you enjoy academic writing?

The participants gave several responses. In conversation 7 are some elicited responses.

Conversation 7:

P1: No, not at all, it is so stressful

P2: Yes, sometimes, because it makes you a critical thinker.

P3: No, especially when it comes to report writing, some of us don't know the procedures involved in writing a report and also, how to join the words to make good sentences so it makes academic writing difficult. So, everything about academic writing hmmmm!. All we want is fast writing.

The responses from the participants in Technical University 3 also shows that academic writing is important and students get some benefits from it. In spite of the benefits some students still do not like it.

5.7.3 Sub-theme 2: Have you had any academic writing challenges before?

Conversation 8 captures few elicited responses from the participants.

Conversation 8:

P1: Always madam

P2: Most of the time

P3: Sometimes

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It is obvious from their responses that they do have challenges in their writings.

5.7.4 Sub-theme 3: What are some of the challenges you encounter in your academic writing?

Some of their responses are captured in conversation 9.

Conversation 9:

P1: Madam, my challenge is, during examination sometimes you get to the exams hall and because of tension you forget everything you have read. Spelling even three letter words become challenging.

P2: Being consistent with the academic tone is a challenge for example, when we are writing informally, we tend to write short form like 'u' instead of 'YOU' so when we are writing anything academic, we tend to forget ourselves and bring in those contracted words.

P3: I don't have the vocabulary so expressing myself in writing is difficult.

P3: Yes, inability to express our ideas very well to make the lecturers understand becomes a challenge to us.

P4: Following from what has been said, somethings you answer the questions with your own idea and the lecturers mark you down because they want what is exactly in the handout they gave you. This discourages us. P5: Integrating sources in a writing is also challenging. Citing sources using either APA OR MLA is very confusing. Sometimes you may have the exact information in mind but how to cite it becomes a challenge.

P6: Another challenge is how to construct sentences effectively. There are times you are time bound in an examination room. Sometimes the invigilators can scare you; you get so confused for example, you know that if you are writing

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a paragraph you have to start with your introduction, body and conclusion but sometimes you can just write anything.

P7: One challenge is poor communication on the side of the lecturers. Some of them come unprepared and so we don't understand what they teach so in writing examinations we struggle.

P8: We lack confidence. We don't believe in ourselves because when we use our own ideas lecturers mark us down, so at the examination hall we are not motivated to think and write anything.

P9: Madam another challenge is that when we write our examination, scripts are not brought to us for us to know the errors we committed. So, if what you wrote is not right for example, you carry that mistake along.

P10: Madam, we have problems with grammatical constructions, spelling mistakes, punctuations, capitalisation, paragraph development, poor sentence, construction, choice of words, ambiguity, inability to adapt to the right format in writing reports, letters etc.

It is evident from the responses that there are so many challenges that participants face with regards to academic writing. *Grammatical error, mechanics errors, structural errors and content errors*. Poor paragraph development, sometimes crafting the topic sentence become challenging. If they can craft an effective topic sentence, the rest becomes easier, as they can build around it to elaborate on their ideas impeccably.

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5.7.5 Sub-theme 4: What are some of the reasons for encountering those challenges in your academic writing?

The answers in conversation 10 give some reasons for students' challenges in academic writing.

Conversation 10:

P1: Madam, it is poor reading habit. We don't make an effort to read English like we do for other courses.

P2: Hmmmm! Madam, the vocabulary to use is not there.

P3: The lecturers don't take their time to teach and to correct us when we write. A typical example is after examination, when the scripts are marked, we don't see our marked scripts, so if there were errors, we carry it on to the next exams.

P4: We don't have time to practice the use of the English language. We only meet for two hours in the whole week.

P5: Time constraints during examination time. Sometimes you have the idea but you need time to put the ideas together but by the time you realise, you have been asked to stop work.

P6: We do not have the chance to write essays more because lecturers complain that the class size is large, so they prefer to give us multiple choice questions.

The responses from the participants are clear indication that several reasons account for their challenges in academic writing. *Time constraint in the examination hall and inadequate time in using the English language* are contributory factors to their inability to write well. These findings align with Mumtaz (2021), who observed in his study that students were capable of organising their ideas coherently and brainstorming effectively to generate relevant content. However, he also noted that students required sufficient practice to enhance their vocabulary, enabling them to express themselves more effectively to their readers.

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5.8 Lecturer's perspective on students' academic writing challenges-Technical University 3

5.8.1 Main Theme: Challenges students face in their academic writing

In this section, the researcher aimed to understand the lecturer's perspective on the challenges faced by Technical University 3 students in their academic writings. This section is divided into four sub-themes.

5.8.2 Sub-theme 1: What are the perceptions of final-year students of technical universities on academic writing?

To understand whether students enjoy academic writing, the English lecturer at Technical University 3 was asked to share her insights on how students perceive academic writing. She explained that:

> *Oh! For students, because academic writing is always a task for them, nobody likes it. They don't! Because it is a heavy task for them. And so eeem! With academic work everything is based on reading. They want you to always stand before them and tell them everything. So, it is a big challenge.*

This finding aligns with the assertions of Akhtar, Hassan and Saidalvi (2020), who argued that writing is widely regarded as the most challenging skill for ESL students. They identified this as a key factor contributing to the negative attitudes and perceptions ESL students often have toward English writing.

5.8.3 Sub-theme 2: Do you think that final-year students of technical universities have challenges in their academic writing? The lecturer from Technical University 3 responded that:

> *Hmmm! They have so many challenges and it shows in their writings all the time. For me I always attribute their challenges to foundation. How the foundation of language was built. That is a challenge I see. The foundation is not solid. As lecturers, we make effort to help them do something but because they don't have the foundation, you teach them today, tomorrow they forget*

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what you have taught them. For me, once you have the foundation, you always have to apply or build on what you already have. It's like every week you have to start afresh.

The response from the lecturer in Technical University 4 indicate that the challenges Technical University students faced can be traced back to *poor foundation in the English language from their Junior High School* (JHS which is equivalent to Grade 8-9) and Senior High School (SHS which is equivalent to 10-12) before entering the university. This finding is consistent with Bayiri (2018) who discovered that students were not proficient in the use of grammatical concord as a result of poor foundation they had in their previous level (JHS) before entering senior high school.

5.8.4 Sub-theme 3: What are some of the challenges students face in their academic writing?

The lecturer in Technical University 3 was asked to disclose some of the difficulties students face with regards to academic writing. The lecturer mentioned that:

Understanding the questions set is sometimes a challenge to them. And once they don't understand they write anything. So, at times they deviate in an attempt to answer the questions. Sometimes they even write meaningless sentences. Meaningless! Because they don't know where to place the various word classes so, they mix them up. The students themselves do not have the culture of reading on their own. They have not cultivated the habit of learning on their own and so it affects their language.

The response from the lecturer regarding students challenges in academic writing indicate that because of *inadequate or poor reading,* students are unable to produce meaningful written texts. This means that there is a positive correlation between reading and writing performance. This finding is confirmed in the research by Nguyen (2022) who asserted that reading habits and writing performance are said to be closely interconnected and that the data obtained from interview with respondents

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demonstrates that most of the respondents strongly believed that there was a significant correlation between reading habits and writing performance.

5.8.5 Sub-theme 4: What are some of the errors you see in their writings?

According to the lecturer of Technical University 3, she explained:

> *For instance, their concord, their tenses, they write fragment instead of full sentences. Punctuation errors are mostly seen in their writings. It makes marking really difficult because you, the lecturer, have to read over and over again to make meaning of what they have written. Sometimes they will write a sentence with a good topic sentence alright but there will not be supporting sentences to further explain the topic sentence. Others are not able to write a topic sentence at all, let alone developing it.*

The response from the lecturer in Technical University 3 shows that students of technical universities generally have *grammatical errors, mechanics errors and content errors.*

5.9 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY 4

The discussion took place on the 16th of January, 2025. It started at 12 noon and ended at 12:35.

5.9.1 Main-Theme: Challenges of Academic Writing

In this section, students at Technical University 4 were expected to identify their academic writing challenges. These challenges are addressed under four main sub-themes.

5.9.2 Sub-theme 1: Do you enjoy academic writing?

Participants were asked to share their interest in academic writing. Here are some of their responses, shown in conversation 11.

Conversation 11:

P1: Madam, truly speaking I don't like academic writing. It's so stressful.

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P2: As for me, the tension involved in examination writing is enough for me to hate academic writing.

P3: I don't like it at all because you try to put some words together to write an essay or report but at the end of the marking, your grade is very discouraging.

P4: Sitting down and looking for words to put together to write an essay is very difficult. Sometimes too you have the words but putting them in sentences is also a challenge.

P5: I enjoy it, though sometimes, it can be very tedious. For example, if I write examination or do an assignment and I do very well, it builds my confidence. It also gives me an impression that I have communicated well and that makes me happy.

P6: I like it because I feel so good if I write an English examination or assignment and I perform well. It builds my confidence level.

The responses from the students indicate that most of them have *negative attitudes towards English*. The negative attitude towards academic writing is due to *fear of examination, anxiety and lack of motivation*. On the other hand, some of the participant also enjoy it because of the benefits they get from it. This can be related to Sulaiman et al. (2024) when they attested that In Malaysia's TVET and higher education systems, students with a positive attitude and strong motivation are more likely to overcome the challenges of learning English and achieve proficiency. Bidin et al. (2009) discovered a significant correlation between students' attitudes and their achievement in English language learning among Malaysian university students.

5.9.3 Sub-theme 2: Have you had any academic writing challenges before?

All participants: Yes madam

P1: As for academic writing challenges, I face it anytime I am writing.

P2: Madam, it is always challenging anytime I am writing using the English language.

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From the responses, it is obvious that academic writing is a complex process for students of technical universities.

5.9.4 Sub-theme 3: What are some of the challenges you encounter in your academic writings?

In order to know some of the challenges that students face in their academic writing, the participants were asked to outline some of the challenges they face in academic writing and the responses are shown in conversation 12.

Conversation 12:

P1: Trying to remember everything I have been taught is sometimes not easy.
P2: When it comes to assignment, lecturers tell us to research and submit the assignment. After getting the information from the internet, I am unable to use my own words to rewrite; so, I copy it just like that and I don't get the marks I am looking for.

P3: Using punctuation marks, hmmm! Madam I struggle.

P4: As for me madam, I don't know how to use prepositions properly. Sometimes too I write and omit the main verb.

P5: Madam, spelling errors and at times I am not able to choose the right words in constructing my sentences.

P6: We have been taught that when we are listing items, we should ensure that each item follows the same grammatical form but I always have a challenge doing that.

P7: Madam I have a challenge with words having the same pronunciation but different spelling. I get confused if I have to use such words.

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P8: I sometimes make mistake in tense especially the past participle.

P9: Generally, we make grammatical errors in our academic writings.

The students' responses clearly show that they encounter many challenges in their academic writing: wrong word choice, subject-verb agreement, punctuations etc. This finding is consistent with the research by Jemenez, Comison, Dionio, Clarin and Vallejo (2024) who found that students often struggle to grasp subject-verb agreement, tense consistency, sentence structure, and proper punctuation and it is challenging for students to establish a clear flow of ideas and create a coherent structure for their academic writing.

5.9.5 Sub-theme 4: What are some of the reasons for encountering those challenges in your academic writings?

The participants were asked to give details of what brings about challenges in their academic writings. Conversation 12 captured the responses.

Conversation 12:

P1: Madam, our attitude to learning the English language is poor. Personally, I have the impression that we don't study the English language.

P2: Our focus is on other courses like typing, management, Secretarial Practice etc. and we neglect the English Language because most of us are from the secretarial schools and we thought we are going to learn only the practical course and not English language.

P3: Lecturers too do not give us enough feedback for us to know whether we are writing well or not.

P4: We don't write more essays, sometimes it is objective questions. When we write essays more, that is where lecturers will identify our sentence

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construction, word formation, tenses etc. and correct us if we committed some errors.

P5: I think the we didn't get good foundation in English from our primary schools and secondary schools.

P6: We only use two hours a week for the teaching and learning of the English language. We are unable to do much.

P7: The class size is large so some of us hide behind the students who are good especially when we have to do group assignment.

P8: The lecturers should embrace our point of view in terms of writing. We cannot write everything you expect us to write. Education is broad, we all have our *point of view so when we write and is in line with what we are supposed to write, they should embrace. If there is a mistake, come to class, do the corrections with us. Let's share our views.*

P9: some of the lecturers don't make the teaching of the course interesting so we are also not encouraged to read.

The participants gave several responses itemising different challenges they face, highlighting challenges emerging from the lecturers' point of view and their own negative attitude to the English languages. The findings aligns with the study of Akhtar,Hassan. and Saidalvi, (2020) which emphasised that ESL students demonstrated a lack of interest in academic writing. Although they acknowledged the importance of academic writing, they were unwilling to invest the effort required to learn and enhance their skills in this area.

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5.10 Lecturer's perspective-Technical University 4

5.10.1 Main Theme: Challenges students face in their academic writing

In this section, the researcher sought to delve into the lecturer's perspectives on the academic writing challenges encountered by fourth-year Technical University students. The discussion is organised into four sub-themes for clarity.

5.10. 2 Sub-theme 1: What are the perceptions of final-year students of technical universities on academic writing?

To gauge whether students enjoy academic writing, the English lecturer at Technical University 4 was asked to share his insights on students' perceptions. The lecturer explained:

> *They think writing is difficult and because writing is difficult, they don't have interest in it. They think they shouldn't be doing writing at all. They come here they shouldn't be doing writing at all. They don't like it because they think that if I have come to offer Secretaryship and Management Studies, everything should be Secretaryship and Management Studies which turns to be a bit technical so coming to write as in doing English shouldn't be part of it.*

5.10.3 Sub-theme 2: Do you think final-year students of technical universities have challenges in their academic writing?

The lecturer from Technical University 4 stated that:

(laughs) Yes, they have a lot of challenges

5.10.4 Sub-theme 3: What are some of the challenges students of technical universities face in their academic writing?

The response below was given by the lecturer of Technical University 4.

> *They are not able to construct good sentences especially, in their project work. Even in their writing of semester exams you give them any work at all you see that the sentences are poorly constructed. Spellings is also another area of difficulty. They are not able to spell. Poor uses of punctuations are all over and it makes reading very difficult. If you are assessing those students, it becomes*

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very difficult. You don't understand what they actually mean. Let me add this, their sentence construction is something else. At times you see a final year student of the university writing only simple sentences alone. That is bad! Their understanding of sentence structures is very poor and that affect their writing.

5.10.5 Sub-theme 4: What are some of the errors you see in their academic writings?

The lecturer from Technical University 4 stated that:

I see a lot of errors in their writings. One major area I see is the use of short forms of words in the writings. Social media language is not helping their writing at all. In a group assignment submitted to be, one group kept writing the letter "n" for the word "and". Meaning, that is the way the leader writes and he gave the work to the group members and nobody saw any error because it could mean that, they all write in that manner. Another area I see is transliteration. Transferring their local language into their writing. Using social media language in their writing is also another area of concern. Grammar errors, prepositional errors, punctuation errors-apart from full stop and comma other forms of punctuation they don't have any understanding at all.

From the lecturer in Technical University 4, one major concern in students' academic writing is the *short forms of words they use*. The students are aware that academic writing is a formal writing and such contracted forms are not allowed, yet in their scripts, you see many short forms of words. This finding is related to that of Asafo-Adjei, Mensah, Klu and Swanzy-Impraim (2023) who found that Students often fall into the trap of using short forms in their academic writing. This presents a significant challenge and can hinder their English language writing performances.

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Section C. Objective 3

5.11 What are the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year Technical University students?

To address the third research question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the lecturers who graded the scripts and a Focus Group Discussions with the students who wrote the examination. The data from these interviews are presented, analysed, and discussed in relation to the research question: “What are the possible intervention strategies to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year Technical University students?” Additionally, Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral was utilised to analyse the data for this research question.

The second section of the FGD guide contained questions on whether the students have been receiving any support to help them overcome their academic writing challenges and what they think can be done for them to improve on their academic writing proficiency. Also, the second section of the interview guide for lecturers also asked similar questions from the lecturers. The researcher moderated the FGDs held at the selected technical universities and also conducted an interview with the lecturers in the selected technical universities to gather insights.

Focus Group Discussion- Technical University 1

5.11.1 Main Theme

Possible intervention strategies to improve the academic writing proficiency of Technical University students.

This section aimed to bring to light what can be done to support Technical University students to improve their academic writing. This theme is organised into two sub-themes.

5.11.2 Sub-theme 1: Have you had any form of supports from lecturers or from the university to help you overcome those challenges?

The students were asked to divulge whether or not they receive supports from lecturers to help them overcome the challenges they face.

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All participants: No, there is no support from the university or from the lecturer.

The participants responses indicate that *they do not receive any support whatsoever from either the university as a whole or from the English lecturer*. A lack of support can significantly hinder students' ability to produce high-quality academic writing, resulting in lower grades and diminished academic success. This, in turn, can impact their progress within academic programmes and limit future career opportunities.

5.11.3 Sub-theme 2: What are some of the supports you think can be offered to students to overcome these challenges?

Some of the responses are found in conversation 1.

Conversation 1:

P1: They should give us more essays to write, and after we have written they should mark and discuss with us. I think it will help us a lot.

P2: Madam, in my opinion, we should have extra time for the lecturers to actually teach us how to write. Because we do not know how to write; in conducting research to do the assignments our lecturer gives us, sometimes some of us take information from the internet and present it just as we found on the internet. We don't do anything about it. If we get at least one extra hour instead of the two hours we have for English, I think some of these challenges could be dealt with.

P2: Yes, to add to that I strongly support the increment in the time. If we have about three hours to learn the English language, the lecturer can use two hours to teach and the next hour for feedbacks and other support we need.

P3: There is a course in short hand that teaches us that how we pronounce words will determine how we spell them. I suggest our English lecturer do same for us when we are learning English. This will help us to know the pronunciation and spelling of most words so that our spelling errors could be improved. But again, time is limited because we have to cover all that is in the course outline.

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P4: Madam, let me share this! Somebody told me that if I want to improve my English language, I should take a new word from the dictionary, learn the meaning and use it in a sentence. I think lecturers can assist us to do that here in the university. Perhaps they can form an "English club" for us, task a student to read a prescribed book and can and tell the club members what she/he has learnt. I think this will help us improve.

P4: I support the creation of English club to an extent. Some students may not like to join and so we may not have everybody benefiting. I suggest that we design an elective course where everybody will be involved and maybe name it vocabulary building or something, just like Communication Skills You know Communication Skills we do it for one year but this one I am suggesting it is done throughout our stay in the university. So, the lecturer comes to class, give you words and ask you to go and form sentences with them, it will also help us improve on our writing.

Supportive environments help students practice writing regularly, which improves their grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure.

5.12 Interview with the English lecturer in Technical University I

5.12.1 Main theme:

"Possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year Technical University students.

5.12.2 Sub-theme 1: Are there any support systems put in place to help final-year students of technical universities overcome their academic writing challenges?

The lecturer from Technical University 1

stated that:

I don't see any support system because the structure of our programme here is, you teach, you conduct class exercises, mid-semester exams and then end

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of semester exams and after the exams you mark and then enter the grade. If you enter the grade and the student passed, that is okay, whether he was able to write well in some areas or not. As long as the student is able to cross the line, there is no other remedial for them. And those who fail, who are not able to pass, when they re-register and they are coming back, classes are not organized for them, which I will call the support system, it is not done. And they come back and still perform poor writing and even worse.

In Technical University 1 the lecturer also clearly stated that *there is no support system put in place to help the students in any way.* This has far-reaching implication on the writing proficiency of the students in the sense that, they would continue to face challenges with grammar, organisation and coherence in their writing. These difficulties can result in poorly constructed arguments and weak reasoning, ultimately affecting the clarity and persuasiveness of their work.

5.12.3 Sub-theme 2: What do you think are some of the supports that can be given to Technical University student overcome their academic writing challenges?

The lecturer mentioned that:

For me, we can have what we call the "Writing Clinics", where we identify certain areas they have a challenge, and we try to let them write, check the writing and help them. We can also have what we call "Peer Writing". You write and you give it to your peer to review it for you. I think if we are able to do that it will help. Another thing is that if they write frequently, they would improve, but here, they only write at the end of the semester examinations, that is all, or one assignment and mid-semester examination that is it. So, if we are able to help them write consistently that will help them improve on their writing. But the numbers too (laughs) how do we assess them? Also, on the issue of re-sit, before they write the re-sit, we should have some form of lecture for them, just to help them. Sometimes, you can have one, two or three students from

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different departments writing the re-sit. We can put them together just to refresh their memory on what they have been taught already.

5.14 Focus Group Discussion- Technical University 2

5.14.1 Main Theme

Possible intervention strategies to improve the academic writing proficiency of Technical University students

This section seeks to identify strategies to assist Technical University students in enhancing their academic writing skills. The theme is divided into two sub-themes for a comprehensive approach.

5.14.2 Sub-theme 1: Have you had any form of supports from lecturers or from the university to help you overcome those challenges?

P1: Yes, sometimes the lecturers organise presentations for us. These presentations indirectly help us to improve our writing because after presenting, we get feedback from our colleagues or lecturers. This helps us reflect and improve our communication skills, including writing.

P2: We also get some supports in the form of counseling. For example, in level 100 (first year) of our programme we had this lecturer who taught us Secretarial English. He was very good to us. He used to advise us that we should improve our reading.

P3: Yes, there is a particular lecturer who always teaches us how to study at home after lectures.

P4: Some of the lecturers always encourage us to be participative in class. Asking questions and contributing to whatever is happening in class. This also help us to improve on our sentence construction and when we have to write, we are able to construct good sentences.

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P5: Madam I think I agree with all the supports given to us that my colleagues have mentioned but personally, I think they can do more to support us.

The students in Technical University 2 answered in affirmative with regards to the support they receive from lecturers to improve on their academic writing. According to the students, they receive support in the form of *counselling and lecturers giving them more opportunities to do a presentation to sharpen their communication skills and consequently their writing skills*. Notwithstanding, one respondent indicated that the support they are receiving is not sufficient. The implication is that if more support systems are put in place, their academic writing would improve.

5.14.3 Sub-theme 2: Sub-theme 2: What are some of the supports you think can be offered to students to overcome these challenges?

Some of the responses are found in conversation 1.

P1: Lecturers should organise more presentations for us. As we read on the topic and jot down some points for the presentation, we sharpen our thinking and writing skills. The more we do presentations, we can improve on our sentence construction.

P2: I also think if the lecturers are organising a programme and there is the need for them to engage we the students, they should engage us to also give us that opportunity to also participate in the programme. I think this can also help.

P3: I suggest our English lecturers give us more time for presentations because when we are preparing for a presentation, we often research and organize our thoughts by writing notes, outlines, or drafts. This process helps improve

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our writing skills by encouraging us to structure information logically and articulate our ideas clearly.

P4: When it comes to mid-semester exams and assignments, they should bring the feedbacks. They should specify the errors we committed, correct them and discuss with us in class so that we don't repeat the same errors in examination.

P6: Right form level 100, they should help us with more quizzes and debates sessions.

P7: Madam, if the lecturers can provide us with tutorial videos and educational Apps that will help us in our research. It could also help us improve on our English.

P8: I also think that they should organise writing workshops. English language is a formal language and wherever you go it is accepted. So, if you don't know to write, no matter how much you can express yourself orally, at the end of it the paper also shows. So, I think in their curriculum, they should include writing workshops so when we come to class, more writing ok, we should write more. We should practice it more. And then sometimes too they should challenge us. Maybe task us to go and watch something online and write a report on that. When we come, they should sit with us. They shouldn't just take the report and don't bring us feedback. Sit with us, let us write…. oooh this sentence… I think that and that, do it this way, write it this way. I think this will also go a long way to help us improve our writing.

The participants suggested so many support systems that lecturers can adopt to help them deal with the challenges they face in academic writing.

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5.15 Interview with the English lecturer in Technical University 2

5.15.1 Main theme

"Possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year Technical University students

5.15.2 Sub-theme 1: Are there any support systems put in place to help final-year students of technical universities overcome their academic writing challenges?

The lecturer from Technical University 2 responded that:

> *Yes, I try to do something. At times when I find out that a particular student has a problem, I ask the student to see me after lectures. Sometimes I sit down with them and try to guide them construct their sentences well. Sometimes I do. Again, when we give them exercises, I take them through after marking for them to know their mistakes. These are few things I try to do but it is not enough because we don't have time.*

The lecturer from Technical University 2 confirmed that she does offer support system to the students but claimed that because of inadequate time she has not been able to do much.

5.15.3 Sub-theme 2: What do you think are some of the supports that can be given to Technical University students to overcome their academic writing challenges?

> *Okay, I suggest that we are given more time, maybe the two hours should be increased to three hours a week so that we can continue to engage the students when they make errors in their writing. The extra hour can help us give them more feedback.*

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Following from the previous discussion the lecturer admitted that if *the hours of teaching is increased from two hours to at least three hours a week*, she could offer more support to help the students improve on their writing.

5.16 Focus Group Discussion- Technical University 3

5.16.1 Main Theme: Possible intervention strategies to improve the academic writing proficiency of Technical University students.

This section aims to identify strategies to help Technical University students improve their academic writing skills. The theme is divided into two sub-themes for a comprehensive approach.

5.16.2 Sub-theme 1: Have you had any form of supports from lecturers or from the university to help you overcome those challenges?

> *Not really, apart from the marked assignment they sometimes discuss with us in class.*

5.16.3 Sub-theme 2: what are some of the supports you think can be offered to students to overcome these challenges?

> *P1: The lecturers can help us on public education. They can teach on social media platforms so that students can learn from that place. You see, our generation, we are always on the social media so if they are teaching there it can help.*

> *P2: The lecturers shouldn't assume that we have learnt English from the Secondary school so we know it already. Some of us didn't get the foundation right so we might have forgotten most of the things we studied in secondary school before coming to the university.*

> *P3: There should be frequent quizzes and exercises.*

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P4: Sometimes the words in the questions are difficult, they should bring it to our level.

5.17 Interview with the English lecturer in Technical University 3

5.17.1 Main theme:

"Possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year Technical University students.

5.17.2 Sub-theme 1: Are there any support system put in place to help final-year students of technical universities overcome their academic writing challenges? The lecturer from Technical University 3 stated that:

Sometimes, when I realise a class is very weak in their writing, for example, having challenges in their spellings, I introduce dictation. So, they know that before a class or after a class, I will do dictation so they are forced to read and so, with time I see them improving. Once a while, I let them write letters and bring to me to read. I read and discuss the errors with them the next time I meet them.

5.17.3 Sub-theme 2: What do you think are some of the supports that can be given to Technical University students to overcome their academic writing challenges?

The lecturer from Technical University 3 suggested that:

More one on one engagement with the students can help them improve. But this can be done if we have extra time. Also, the class size should be reduced so that a lecturer can have time to engage all of them. Lecturer to student ratio should be proportional.

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5.18 Focus Group Discussion- Technical University 4

5.18.1 Main Theme: Possible intervention strategies to improve the academic writing proficiency of Technical University students

This section focuses on identifying strategies to enhance the academic writing skills of Technical University students. For a thorough analysis, the theme is categorised into two sub-themes.

5.18.2 Sub-theme 1: Have you had any form of support from lecturers or from the university to help you overcome those challenges?

All the participants: No, there is no support system.

P1: Madam, we are always rushing to finish the course outline so time for support hmmmmm no!

5.18.3 Sub-theme 2: what are some of the supports you think can be offered to students to overcome these challenges?

The students from Technical University 4 were also asked to give some suggestions on what should be done to support them write better. The following are some of the responses:

P1: Lecturers should give us feedback on our assignments, class quizzes and end of semester examination.

P1: We should have one more hour for English where we can have time to practice more.

P3: We should be trained more on academic writing.

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5.19 Interview with the English lecturer in Technical University 4

5.19.1 Main theme: Possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year Technical University students

5.19.2 Sub-theme 1: Are there any support systems put in place to help final-year students of technical universities overcome their academic writing challenges?

The lecturer from Technical University 4 explained that:

> *Okay, I can speak for this school. I don't see any support system put in place. Even in my class I can't say I have any support system apart from referring them to the internet and some materials on the internet. I don't really have any laid down support system that I use for the students because of how the semester and everything is structured so I don't have the time to do that. So, no support from the university and no support from me as a lecturer.*

5.19.3 Sub-theme 2: What do you think are some of the supports that can be given to Technical University students to overcome their academic writing challenges?

The lecturer from Technical University 4 suggested that:

> *I think we should have more reading materials. What makes a student improve their writing and their proficiency is when they read more in the language. They should have book just for extensive reading, reading for fun, it will help them to pick up. So, for example, those who are reading Secretarial English, I think we should prescribe books for them. Not books that will teach them grammar and punctuation etc. but just books whether it is a motivational book or whatever, even story books or even articles. Something outside the main course, just for them to know how the language is used.*

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5.20 Cross sectional examination

Cross examination of the errors across the four selected technical universities was done, but prior to that, there was a brief background of all the technical universities selected for the study and the common features they have were also discussed.

5.20.1 Background of Technical University 1

This university was established in the 50s. The focal point of the university is Engineering and Oil and Gas. The university is committed to providing quality technical tertiary education. It has a number of faculties: Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty

of Applied Arts and Technology, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Built and Natural Environment, Faculty of Allied Health and Sciences, Faculty of Maritime and Nautical Studies, Faculty of Business Studies and Faculty of Media Technology and Liberal Studies. The Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies is one of the departments under Faculty of Business Studies.

5.20.2 Background of Technical University 2

This university was also established in the 50s. The focal point of this university is centered around providing quality education in science, technology, engineering and entrepreneurship with a strong emphasis on Technical and Vocational Training. It has the following faculties: Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology, Faculty of Built and Natural Environment, Faculty of Creative Arts and Technology, Faculty of Engineering and Technology, Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development, Faculty of Health Sciences and Business School. The Secretaryship and Management Studies is under the Business School.

5.20.3 Background of Technical University 3

This Technical University was established in the late 60s. The focal point of this Technical University is positioned around providing career-focused higher education in engineering, science, and technology-based disciplines, with a strong

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emphasis on practical orientation and entrepreneurial development. The university's niche area is Electrical and Electronics Engineering, around which many of its academic programmes revolve. Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Applied Science and Technology, Faculty of Built Environment and Applied Arts and Faculty of Business and Management Studies are the faculties in this university. Secretaryship and Management Studies department is situated in the Faculty of Business and Management Studies.

5.20. 4 Background of Technical University 4

Established in the late 40s, The core mission of this university is to provide competency-based, practice-oriented training in engineering, science, and technology-related disciplines, with a strong emphasis on applied research and technology transfer. There are five faculties: Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Built Environment, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Applied Arts and Faculty of Business. The Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies is one of the Departments in the Faculty of Business

These Technical Universities transitioned from technical schools, technical institute, polytechnics and now to technical universities. The Government of Ghana established these technical universities as part of a comprehensive strategy to strengthen the country's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system (Technical Universities Act, 2016) The government acknowledged the vital role of TVET in advancing Ghana's industrialisation agenda, as it equips the workforce with essential practical skills. To reinforce this, technical universities were established to provide higher education with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines and technical and vocational training.

To gain admission into the technical universities in Ghana to pursue a bachelor programme, a credit in English language is required (Nkrumah, 2020). Despite the rigorous admission requirements, there is widespread consensus among university lecturers that students often lack the necessary language proficiency to not only survive but also excel in their chosen academic disciplines (Feast, 2002). Most

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lecturers in the Technical Universities have complained about the academic writing performances of the students. This is consistent with Nkrumah (2020) who said that complaints about students' low proficiency in English, particularly in their participation in class discussions and their performance in writing assignments and examinations, have frequently been raised in staff common rooms as well as during department and faculty meetings, such as award meetings. Majority of the students in the technical universities have the perception that English language is not important because they are in the TVET education to acquire technical and professional skills needed for employment. However, they forget that they cannot completely achieve those skills if they are handicapped in the language of instruction (English language). This assertion is in line with Jalili-Grenier and Chase (1997 cited in Nkrumah, 2020) that language proficiency is essential for students to: (a) comprehend and absorb course materials effectively, and (b) communicate clearly and confidently in class discussions, presentations, assignments, and examinations.

The main focal point of these technical universities is engineering, science and technology. In all the selected Technical Universities, Secretaryship and Management Studies is under the Faculty of Business. This has given rise to a challenge. First, the Faculty of Business is challenged by the focal point of the universities. Although, when you integrate business education with technical fields it promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and enables students to better understand the business dimensions of technology and innovation, but there is also a serious challenge. In the area of balancing resource allocation between technical and business programmes, sometimes, it results in competition for funding and facilities. In all the selected technical universities, only two hours a week is given to the lecturers to teach the English language. Majority of the courses take three credit hours each. English lecturers are unable to teach other aspects of the English language related courses because of time constraints.

The Secretaryship and Management Studies department is also challenged by the faculty in which it is situated. The challenge then comes by the faculty shifting the

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contents of the Secretaryship and Management course to more of managerial activities instead of grammar and contents related creation. so, the students end up doing more of corporate law and law of operations and so forth, instead of doing more grammar and content related creation. So, it happens that when faculty representatives meet to assign classes and time for teaching, the representatives of the Faculty of Business who are there do not give much attention to grammar, content creation and anything related to communication and English language. But in the hearts and minds of people, Secretaryship department should have people who are well versed in English language and communication in general.

Most of the students that come to do the programmes are also from the Government Secretarial schools and other technical and vocational training centres. Some of them had poor academic backgrounds and were weak in the English language but they took them in the Government Secretarial schools to give them some skills, and now, to upgrade themselves, they found themselves in the Technical Universities, so the weakness continues unabated. Although they are taught Communication Skills in the first year and they continue to take the English language, they do more management courses than literature, creative writing and English related courses. Sometimes, their grades in the English language from pre-university education are weak but they are given admission to the technical universities because they have secretaryship background. All these and other challenges hinder the academic writing proficiency of the students in the technical universities in Ghana.

5.21 Comparing grammatical errors across the four technical universities

In this section, the researcher used cross sectional examination to analyse all the data presented from the four Technical University. In conducting the research, the same study tools (document and interview) were used for all the four Technical Universities and so cross examination was used to discuss the errors. In cross examining the errors for the four Technical Universities, the checklist that the researcher used to compare the written works of final year university students was referred (See 2.25)

The study revealed that all the students in the four Technical Universities had challenges in grammatical, mechanics, content and structural errors. In Technical

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University 1, the students committed more grammatical errors than mechanic, content and structural errors. More of the errors were on tense and subject-verb agreement. Tense misuse can create confusion by mixing up the timeline in the text while subject-verb agreement errors disrupt sentence structure and meaning. Although the grammatical errors in Technical University 2 were relatively fewer compared to other categories, they remain important and need attention. It is vital to address these errors because they can still impact the overall quality and clarity of the writing. In Technical University 3, the grammatical errors were quite low, but there were structural that need attention. Students in Technical University 4 committed the second highest grammatical errors. In an attempt to create complex sentence structures, the students struggled with maintaining agreement between clauses, using conjunctions and punctuation.

Grammatical errors are widespread across all the four technical universities, with Technical University 1 demonstrating the weakest performance. This finding aligns with Botchwey and Opoku (2023) and Owusu (2021) studies that highlight grammatical accuracy as a significant challenge for Ghanaian students.

5.21.1 Comparing mechanics errors across the four Technical Universities

Students in Technical University 2 committed the highest mechanics errors followed by Technical University 1. Most of the students in Technical University 2 had challenges in spelling. The minimal mechanics errors were committed by students in Technical University 3 but there were severe structural errors. Technical University 4 students' mechanics errors were rather moderate. While the mechanics errors in Technical University 1 comprised frequent punctuation and capitalization errors, that of Technical University 4 had inconsistent spelling of words. Mechanical errors, especially those related to spelling and punctuation, are common in Technical University 2. Research suggests that this is due to a lack of focus on foundational writing conventions within the curriculum (Amoakohene, 2019; Nartey & Dorgbetor, 2014).

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5.21.2 Comparing content errors across the four technical universities

Technical University 3 students committed the highest content errors. The sentences were unclear and the explanations were insufficient. In Technical University 4, there were moderate issues with supporting details. Students had difficulties in providing clear and relevant evidence to back up main ideas. Although the students used some supporting sentences, those supporting sentences were not enough and some were inconsistent, weakening the overall argument. In Technical University 2, some of the students had supporting details in their sentences but the supporting details were not directly related to the main idea hence the effectiveness of the argument was reduced. Finally, the minimal contents errors were found in Technical University. The students adhered to strong topic sentence. The students understood the subject and they had the ability to develop ideas in a way that is relevant and concise, with very few deviations or irrelevant details. Technical University 3's high rate of content errors highlights challenges with critical thinking and the integration of evidence. These struggles point to a gap in the emphasis placed on analytical writing within EAP programmes.

5.21.3 Comparing structural errors across the four technical universities

In the examination scripts, the highest structural errors emerged from Technical University 3. There were lots of fragmented sentences and a lack of cohesive flow. Fragmented sentences disrupt the readability of the text, often leaving ideas incomplete or disconnected. Similarly, poor cohesive flow hampers the logical progression of ideas, making it difficult for readers to follow the intended message. Although in Technical University 4, structural errors were limited, the arrangement of words and phrases in the sentences did not have uniformity and clarity. In Technical University 2, the students had difficulties in arranging ideas and reasoning in a clear and coherent way, but in Technical University 1, the paragraph coherence was moderate. The Technical University 3 faces significant challenges with structural clarity, highlighting gaps in training on academic writing frameworks. Research suggests that these structural weaknesses often arise from misaligned curricula and

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insufficient feedback, both of which hinder students' ability to develop coherent and organized academic work. Research indicates that structural weaknesses often originate from misaligned curricula and insufficient feedback, both of which hinder the development of clear and cohesive writing skills (Nartey & Dorgbetor, 2014).

It is evident from the four technical universities that students have more challenges in grammatical and mechanics errors. This finding is in consonance with Owusu (2021) whose study revealed that students of technical universities frequently make a variety of errors in their texts, including mechanical, grammatical, and punctuation mistakes. Consistent with Atatsi and Amoakohene (2019), the findings confirm three types of errors committed by Technical University students who were randomly selected and tested across three academic levels. Technical University 3's structural errors underscore systemic gaps within the curriculum, as highlighted in studies that advocate for revising EAP programs to address these weaknesses effectively (Atatsi & Amoakohene, 2019).

From the objective 2 of the study which is "What are the challenges encountered by Technical University students in their academic writing" several responses were given by the students in the FGD. Also, several responses were given by the four English lecturers on the challenges they think the students face in their academic writing. From the responses from students and the lecturers, some common themes emerged.

5.22 Theme 1: Challenges with grammatical and mechanics, content and structural errors and lack of vocabulary

All the students in the four technical universities disclosed that they have challenges in the major four areas assessed (grammatical, mechanical, content and structural errors). Students often face difficulties in expressing their ideas effectively in academic writing, primarily due to limited familiarity with a diverse range of vocabulary. Consequently, they find it challenging to select the precise words needed to convey their thoughts with clarity and accuracy. All four English lecturers attested to the fact that in their marking of examination scripts and assignments, they come across diverse errors- from grammatical to structural. The students and the lecturers both

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mentioned errors like subject-verb agreement, tense, spelling, errors of omission and addition, misformation errors, paragraph development errors, fragments, and many more as some errors normally seen in their students' writings. The students associated the grammatical challenges with the fact that they do not read widely. They spend lots of time reading other courses in Secretaryship and Management Studies than they do in the English language. They also attributed the challenge of poor proficiency in their academic writing to the fact that they lack the practice and use of the English language.

5.23 Theme 2: Negative perception of the English language

All the students in the four Technical Universities stated that they have a negative perception of the English language. They explained that most of them are from the Vocational, Technical and Secretarial schools, where English is not regarded as a primary subject within the curriculum; instead, it is treated merely as a requirement for students to pass. They came to the technical universities with the perception that they were going to learn Secretaryship and Management Studies- how to oversee the scheduling and planning of meetings, appointments, and events, ensuring that everything is properly coordinated so they thought that speaking fluent English is for people who are into law and economics and other related field. For them, they do not see English as their core concern and for that matter they do not even devote time to learn English like they do for their main courses. In other words, they see English as irrelevant to their practical courses. From the lecturers' point of view, students generally perceive academic writing (English) to be difficult. Hence, their writings have been affected negatively because of some of the reasons already mentioned.

5.24 Theme 3- Poor feedback from lecturers

Across the four Technical Universities, students proclaimed that there is inadequate feedback from the English lecturers. They expect lecturers to give them more assignment and quizzes, mark them and come to class and discuss all with them, pointing out their mistakes and showing them how to correct themselves. Two of the

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lecturers stated that they do that sometimes but because of *inadequate time* they are unable to do much. The other two mentioned they are *time bound* so they are unable to give such feedbacks to the students.

5.25 Theme 4: Lack of writing practice

It was evident from the responses that the students did not have the *opportunity to write more essays as a way of practicing writing*. It was only during examination, an assignment or mid-semester exams that they got the opportunity to write. Even with those, most of the students testified that it was heavily dominated with Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) rather than essay type of questions that give them room to write more. The lecturers from the four Technical Universities confirmed what the students said and attributed the reason to *class sizes*. Two of the lecturers commented that class *sizes are huge so giving students essay questions to write and mark is always challenging* so they resort more to multiple choice questions and one essay. The other two mentioned that they use the MCQs in quizzes but in the final examination, at least they give one compulsory essay type of question for every student to write.

5.26 Theme 5: Inadequate credit hours for learning the English language

Surprisingly, all the students across the universities said that, *the two credit hours for learning the English language is not enough for them to have in-depth interactive sessions with their lecturers*. They explained that there are so many things they are unable to do because they have only two hours in the whole week for learning the English language. They mentioned that most of the core courses are three credit hours but English is two credit hours so they are unable to get enough tuition that will aid them to write proficiently. The lecturers asserted that with just two hours of credit instruction, students can be introduced to basic writing concepts, but this is not enough to achieve the proficiency needed for academic success. Developing the complex skills required for academic writing demands more comprehensive instruction and practice.

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5.27 Theme 6: No writing tutorials

Students in the four selected universities also stated that *no writing tutorials are organised for them to learn the process of writing and for the lecturers to address their specific writing challenges.* On the part of the students, lecturers come to teach them grammar and other related topics but sessions that focus on reviewing drafts, improving structure, fixing grammar, and offering suggestions for better writing is either lacking or insufficient.

5.28 Theme 7: Assumptive lecturers

The students also declared that *some of the English lecturers assume they have learnt English from the pre-university institutions that they came from* so in teaching some of topics they rush them through, with the pre-conceived idea that they have learnt them from their secondary schools before coming to the university. Most of the students across the four Technical Universities divulged that they are from the Vocational, Technical and Government Secretarial schools where *there is insufficient focus on language skills*. So, their background in the English language is already weak before enrolling in technical universities. However, lecturers think because they have been taught the English language there are certain things they should know. The students further explained that, before they enter the university, they might have forgotten some of the topics if not most of the topics they were taught in their pre-university institutions.

5.29 Theme 8: No support system

On the issue of support systems that students get to help them improve their academic writing, students from technical universities 1 and 4 said that *they do not receive any support system from the school or from the English lecturers to help them improve their academic writing proficiency*. Likewise, the English lecturers from both universities posited that *they have not seen any support put in place for the students and they have not made any arrangements for such support because of the nature of activities within the semester.* One intriguing thing that came from the discussions

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with the lecturers is that no support is given before the examination and even after the examination when some students are not able to pass the course. They explained that if some students are unable to pass the course and they register to re-sit, still there is no support put in place by the university for the lecturers to take the students through the course before writing the re-sit examination. The result is that some students even perform worse than the first time they wrote. In Technical Universities, 1 and 3 the students and lecturers alleged that sometimes they receive *support in the form of discussions on the assignments given to them by the lecturers, and other times they receive counselling from lecturers on how to improve their academic writing.* The lecturers from these two universities said they try *to assist students in the same direction but because of inadequate time, they are unable to do much.* They supported the students' assertion by saying that *two hours a week for teaching and learning the English language is not enough*.

5.30 Possible interventions to solve the academic writing challenges of Technical University students

In this section, the researcher relied heavily on the responses that students and lecturers gave when they were asked to suggest what could be done to avert students' academic writing challenges. Again, themes that emerged from the conversations with students and the four lecturers are presented, discussed, and analysed below.

5.30.1 Theme A: Writing workshops

The students and lecturers from the four Technical Universities proposed that there should be writing workshops for the students. Thus, a collaborative learning space where writers can enhance their skills through guided practice, instruction, and constructive feedback. For these writing workshops to be successful, the Technical Universities should provide Language Laboratories for English students just as workshops are provided for the students to do their practical work in their core courses. This workshop should focus on grammar, mechanics, content and structure of sentences that constantly challenge students anytime they have the opportunity to

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write. At the workshop, lecturers should be able to give students several exercises to do, identify the type of errors the students commit, and address them. Another strategy that lecturers can use at the writing worship is to provide the students with a “help sheet” which captures the most common errors that were found in the examination scripts of the students in a particular Technical University. These sheets will act as handy reference guides that will help Technical University students quickly spot and fix errors without the need to comb through lengthy grammar books. Again, a strong English vocabulary is valuable for secretaries as it enables them to draft professional documents, compose emails, manage schedules, and interact effectively with colleagues, clients, and partners. There should be at least a prescribed book, either a literature book, storybook, motivational book, or even a novel that English students of the Technical University will read to build on their vocabulary. This suggested book should not be substituted with their textbook that teaches them grammar and other English-related courses. By reading this prescribed book alongside the textbooks, they will chance on new words, and by that, their vocabulary will improve.

5.30.2 Theme B: Students’ motivation

One major challenge that was revealed during the interaction with the students and the lecturers from the technical universities was the *negative perception of the English language in TVET education.* As highlighted by Aina, Ogundele, and Olanipekun (2013), many TVET students erroneously believe that language should not be a focal point in their field. Their perspective stems from the notion that TVET primarily emphasises the acquisition of practical scientific knowledge, which involves harnessing creative minds, developing manipulative skills, and fostering attitudes often cultivated through extensive laboratory and workshop practice, rather than through language studies. This perception was made known when the students gave the responses during FGD that they thought they were going to *read only their practical courses and not English.* English plays an indispensable role in TVET and higher education as the global lingua franca. Students need to access international knowledge, resources, and industry standards, enabling them to connect with the broader academic and professional world (Shrestha et al., 2016). In higher education, English serves as a primary medium for instruction and research, particularly in fields

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such as science, technology, and engineering. Its role facilitates student engagement with global academic communities and advancements at the forefront of these disciplines (Kedzierski, 2018). Given the invaluable role that the English language plays, it is not out of place to motivate Technical University students to change their negative attitude towards learning English. Sulaiman and Razak (2024) aver that motivation plays a pivotal role in language learning, directly influencing the effort students invest in mastering the language. Studies show that motivated learners are more likely to acquire English effectively and utilise it confidently in practical scenarios.

5.30.3 Theme C: Feedback from lecturers

Technical University students can stay motivated to keep improving if they constantly receive feedback from their lecturers on their writing. If lecturers devote time to student and sit with them to discuss their writing challenges concerning grammar, mechanics, content and structural errors, it will go a long way to help the students improve.

Lecturer feedback is important for improving students' writing because it helps the students sharpen their skills, recognise their strengths and weaknesses, and improve their writing performances. If students write assignments or examinations and after marking, they do not get the opportunity to know their mistakes, then they will carry those mistakes along and there will not be any improvement in their writing. Research has shown that teacher feedback is one of the most influential factors in shaping student learning outcomes (Bitchener, 2012 cited in Fitriyah, Ningrum & Gozali 2024). Despite the impact that teacher feedback has on academic writing proficiency, it is sad to know that some lecturers are unable to offer this support to students. So, the Technical University students who do not get this support go through the English language yet the level of academic writing proficiency remains the same. In the structured interview with the four English lecturers in the technical universities, two disclosed that they were unable to give this feedback because of time. They explained that they have only two credit hours to teach English in the whole week and that the two hours is sometimes not sufficient for teaching, conducting quizzes, and giving assignments let alone going further to give feedback to students. These Technical University students are special students who need to be accorded maximum attention

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because of their background in English probably because of their attitude and perception of the English language being studied at the tertiary level and so more time is needed to teach and give them the right feedback they need.

5.30.4 Theme D: Increase English credit hours

Most of the courses that Secretaryship and Management Studies students offer are three credit hours but English language is two credit hours. Considering the quantum of work to do, thus, teaching all aspects of the English language and at the same time offering support for these students to improve in their academic writing, two hours is limited. Limited teaching time for lecturers can greatly hinder the development of academic writing skills among Technical University students by restricting the depth of instruction, the quality of feedback, and the availability of practice opportunities. Academic writing involves learning skills like planning, revising, building arguments, and using the right language. With limited time, lecturers focus on delivering content rather than teaching these skills, leaving students without a strong writing foundation. Proposing an increase in the credit from two hours to three hours will give lecturers the chance to give more essay type of questions and more assignments to students and students may not miss out on valuable opportunities to participate in meaningful writing exercises and revisions which are significant for developing strong academic writing skills.

5.30.5 Theme E: Review of the English language curriculum

To enhance students' academic writing skills, the English curriculum could benefit from several additions. Firstly, incorporating literature into the curriculum is essential. A prescribed literary text could be introduced for students to read and analyse, as engaging with diverse literary works exposes them to a broad range of vocabulary, sentence structures, and rhetorical devices. This exposure fosters correctness and variety in their writing—critical aspects of academic work. Additionally, studying the structure of literary texts enables students to grasp effective organisation techniques

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for their writing. For instance, they could learn to craft convincing introductions, coherent body paragraphs, and impressive conclusions.

Secondly, integrating peer review and collaborative activities into the curriculum could further enrich Technical University students' academic writing abilities. Collaborative exercises encourage critical thinking, provide constructive feedback, and help students refine their ideas and expression.

5.30.6 Theme F: Writing tutorials

Another intervention that is needed across the four technical universities for the final-year of Secretaryship and Management Studies is writing tutorials. These sessions are tailored to address particular writing challenges, like improving grammar, refining structure, or enhancing clarity. As noted earlier, most of them came to the university with a weak background in the English language. An interview response from one of the lecturers revealed that some of them cannot even spell two-letter words. A pathetic situation like this needs to be given maximum attention. This is where writing tutorials come in. For such students in the university, lecturers should have direct interaction with them and provide tailored advice based on the student's specific needs and challenges. When more writing tutorials are organised for the students, it will go a long way to improve their writing proficiency.

5.30.7 Theme G: Open minded lecturers

Recalling the challenges students faced in the technical universities, students disclosed that most of the lecturers have the perception that students have studied English in their pre-university institutions so they do not take their time to take them through the Secretarial English course. To help the students improve their academic writing, lecturers should not be assumptive but open-minded and seek to know students' perspectives, encourage dialogue, and base their teaching on evidence and students' needs rather than preconceived notions.

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5.31 Chapter Summary

This chapter was divided into three sections. The presentation, analysis and discussion of data related to research question one ("How is the writing proficiency in final-year students' academic writing in technical universities in Ghana?") were carried out in the first part of the chapter. In the second part of the chapter, the presentation, analysis and discussion of data pertaining to research question two ("What are the challenges encountered by Technical University final-year students in their academic writing?") were also carried out. The last part of the chapter responded to research question 3 ("What are the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year Technical University students?")

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CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

Writing is a fundamental skill that university students must master to achieve their academic goals. Among these, academic writing plays a crucial role, as it directly impacts students' academic performance by enhancing their ability to communicate ideas effectively. Research conducted in Ghana and beyond highlights the numerous challenges students face in academic writing. In Ghana, studies focusing on traditional (comprehensive) universities reveal that many students lack proficiency in academic writing. However, comparatively, little research has been conducted on students' writing in technical universities. This study, therefore, set out to assess the academic writing proficiency of final-year university students. The following research questions guided this investigation:

1. How is the writing proficiency of final-year students' academic writing in technical universities in Ghana?
2. What are the challenges encountered by Ghanaian Technical University final-year students in their academic writing?
3. What are the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year university students in the technical universities in Ghana?

The study is qualitative. Using multiple sampling techniques, Ghana was first divided into a southern zone and a northern zone, and two technical universities were purposively selected from each zone. Also, purposively, the Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies, final-year students of Secretaryship and Management Studies and examination scripts were selected. Fifteen (15) scripts from the four (4) technical universities were conveniently selected, Secretarial English Lecturers were purposively selected and finally, a convenient sampling of ten (10) students from each technical university amounting to forty (40) participants were selected for the Focus Group Discussions. The data for the study was obtained from

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the examination scripts of final year Secretaryship and Management Studies students, semi-structured interviews with lecturers, and Focus Group Discussions with the students.

Error Analysis supported by Isaacson's (1996) five aspects of student writing were used to analyse the examination scripts. Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral was followed to analyse the data from semi-structured interviews. This chapter presents the key findings of the study, along with the conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Summary of findings

This section recounts the major findings for each research question, presented sequentially from Research Question One to Research Question Three.

6.1.1 How is the writing proficiency of final-year students' academic writing in Technical Universities in Ghana?

Existing studies in non-Technical Universities indicate that many students have flaws in their academic writing (Raoofi, Binandeh & Rahmani, 2017; Mandor, 2021; Arhin, Essuman & Arhin, 2021). What pertains in Ghanaian Technical Universities was the focus of this enquiry. The examination scripts analysed in the previous chapter (Chapter Five) provide valuable insights into the academic writing proficiency of Technical University students. The errors were analysed according to the rubrics for assessing academic writing proficiency in Technical Universities in Ghana (See 2.25).

6.1.2 Summary of the findings for Research Question 1

The writing proficiency of final-year students in Technical Universities in Ghana showed notable variations depending on the university and the types of errors identified.

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1. **Grammatical Errors:**
    - Universities 1 and 4 had the highest grammatical error rates, with some scripts exceeding 50%. This indicates significant challenges in sentence structure and language usage.
    - Universities 2 and 3 showed relatively lower grammatical error rates, suggesting better proficiency in grammar.

2. **Mechanics Errors**:
    - Mechanics errors were frequent across all universities but were most prevalent in University 2, where some scripts reached up to 62.5%.
    - University 4 also showed widespread mechanics error rates, from no errors in some scripts to significant issues in others.

3. **Content Errors:**
    - Content errors were generally low across all universities, indicating that students had a good understanding of their subject matter.
    - However, University 3 showed slightly higher content error rates compared to the others, with some scripts exceeding 30%.

4. **Structural Errors:**
    - Structural errors was a significant issue for all universities, particularly in Universities 3 and 4, where some scripts exceeded 66%. This highlights difficulties in organising ideas logically and maintaining coherence.

6.2 What are the challenges encountered by Ghanaian Technical University final-year students in their academic writing?

The literature suggests that university students struggle with academic writing, and that they often exhibit weaknesses in areas such as language use, structure, content, written English proficiency, synthesis in writing and proper application of academic

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writing styles, as noted by Chokwe (2013), Mwangi (2017), Agor (2018), Fenyi and Morrison (2023), and Partwary et al. (2023).

1.Challenges with Grammatical and Structural Errors

Students in the four Technical Universities struggle with academic writing due to issues like subject-verb agreement, tense errors, spelling mistakes, punctuation, omissions and misformation. Limited vocabulary and poor reading habits worsen these challenges. Additionally, students focused more on Secretaryship and Management Studies courses, neglecting English language practice, which results in low proficiency.

2. Negative Perception of the English Language

Many students perceived the English as irrelevant to their core practical courses. Coming from schools where English is not emphasised, they view it as just a requirement to pass rather than a valuable skill. This negative outlook reduces their motivation to learn and improve their writing. The lecturers also revealed that the students find academic writing particularly difficult.

6.2.1 Summary of findings for Research Question 2

1. Inadequate Feedback from Lecturers

Students are dissatisfied with the lack of detailed feedback on assignments and quizzes. While some lecturers try to provide comments to students, time constraints often prevent the lecturers from giving thorough guidance. This limits students' ability to identify and to correct their mistakes effectively.

2. Limited Writing Practice

Writing opportunities were scarce because assessments focus heavily on Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs). Large class sizes make it difficult for lecturers to assign and grade essays. Sometimes lecturers include one essay question, but those single questions are not enough to help students develop the strong writing skills needed in their academic pursuit.

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3. Insufficient Credit Hours for English Language Learning

The weekly two credit hours for English classes were considered inadequate for meaningful learning. That limited time restricts interactive sessions and the comprehensive teaching needed to improve writing proficiency.

4. Lack of Writing Tutorials

There are no dedicated tutorials addressing students' specific academic writing challenges. Lecturers focus on grammar and related topics, but they do not offer personalised feedback, draft reviews or guidance to improve writing structure.

5.Assumptive Teaching Approach

Lecturers often assume that students have mastered basic English language skills in pre-university schools. However, many students come from backgrounds with little emphasis on language skills, leading to rushed teaching that fails to address their knowledge gaps.

6.Lack of Support Systems

Students lack institutional or lecturer-led support systems to improve their academic writing skills. Even those retaking failed courses do not receive additional support. Occasional discussions or counseling sessions are offered, but time constraints limit their effectiveness.

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6.3 What are the possible intervention strategies that can be used to improve the academic writing proficiency of final-year university students in the technical universities in Ghana?

Enhancing writing proficiency is important for preparing students in Technical Universities to excel in their future careers. By adopting effective strategies to improve these skills, universities can empower their students to write clearly so that the students can make significant contributions to their respective fields.

6.3.1 Summary of findings for Research Question 2

Students and lecturers from the four Technical Universities proposed *writing workshops to enhance writing skills through guided practice and feedback*. These workshops, supported by Language Laboratories, should focus on grammar, structure, and common errors, using exercises and “help sheets” for quick reference. Additionally, students should read prescribed literature to build their vocabulary alongside their textbooks, improving overall language proficiency for academic and professional success.

TVET students often perceive the English language as less important than practical skills, focusing on hands-on training over language studies. However, the English language is vital as the global lingua franca, providing access to international knowledge and industry standards, especially in science and technology. Motivating students to value the English language is significant, as motivation directly impacts language learning, enabling confident and effective use in real-world scenarios.

Also, Lecturer feedback is vital for Technical University students to improve their writing by identifying strengths and weaknesses. However, time constraints often limit lecturers’ ability to provide detailed feedback, despite its proven impact on learning outcomes. Given students’ unique challenges and attitudes toward English, more dedicated time is needed to support their academic writing development effectively.

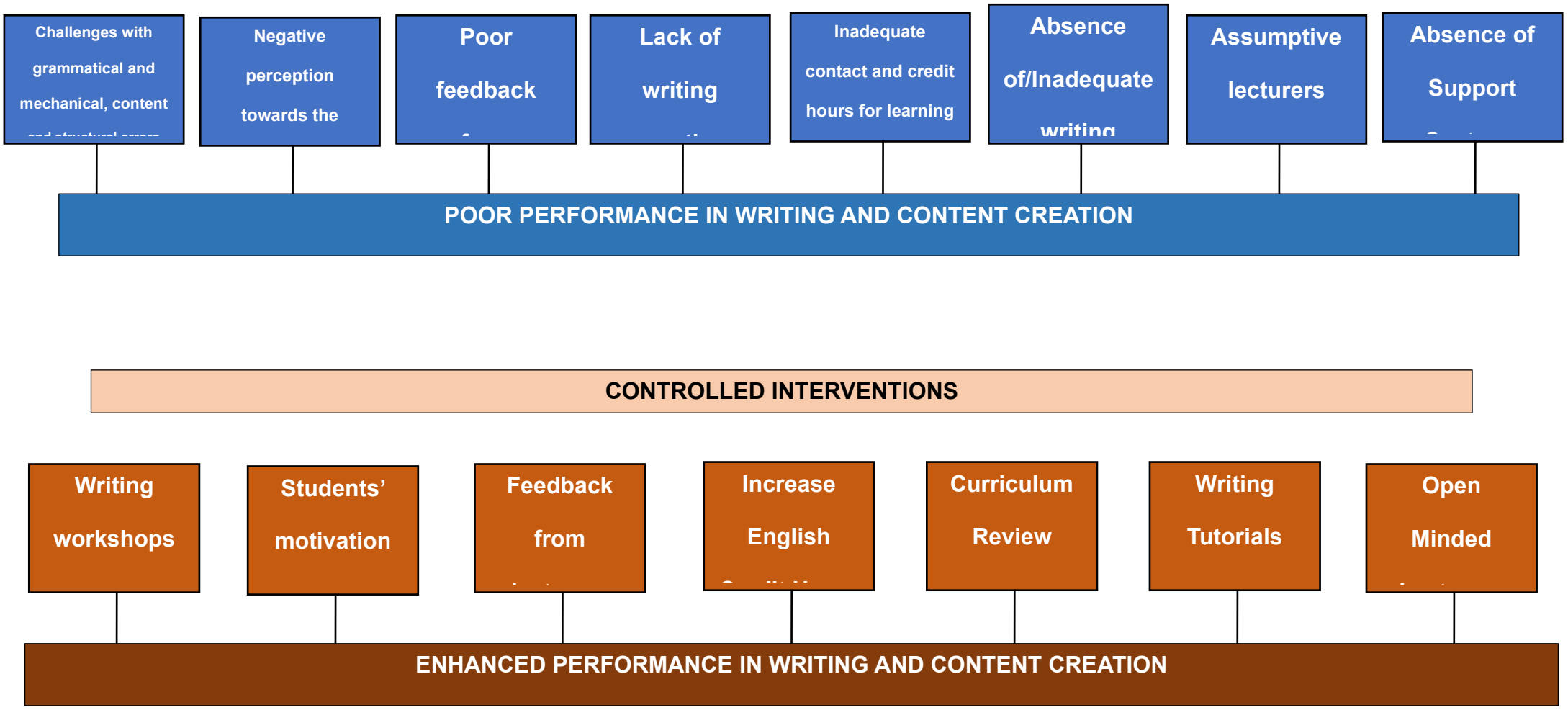
Increasing English credit hours from two to three is crucial for Secretaryship and Management Studies students, as the current (two credit hours) limits or restricts teaching depth, feedback quality and practice opportunities. More time would allow for additional essays, assignments and revisions, fostering stronger academic writing

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skills essential for students' success. Again, to improve academic writing, the English language curriculum should include literature for vocabulary and structure insights, and peer review for critical thinking and feedback. These additions would significantly enhance students' writing skills. Moreover, writing tutorials are essential for final-year Secretaryship and Management Studies students, addressing specific challenges like grammar and structure. Given many students' weak English backgrounds, these tailored sessions provide personalised guidance, significantly improving writing proficiency and preparing them for future success. Finally, lecturers should be open-minded, understanding students' perspectives and needs rather than assuming prior English proficiency. Tailoring instruction based on evidence and dialogue is essential for improving academic writing.

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MODEL OF PROBLEMS THAT TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES FACE RELATIVE TO WRITING AND CONTENT CREATION AND THE PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS



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6.4 Implications for Theories

This physical presentation and its problems and solutions have added to the literature on theories that relate to writing skills and abilities, particularly in Technical Universities in Ghana. This model will likely be implemented in other parts of the world where students from similar academic backgrounds are found.

6.5 Implications for practice

Given the mixture of the problems identified and the solutions therein, practically, in dealing with the problem of Technical Universities:

Management of Technical Universities should allot more teaching time (3 credit hours) to teach the English language. The curriculum should be reviewed to include content such as an introduction to literature to beef up students' reading ability. Regularly assigning essay questions is recognised as an effective strategy for improving students' writing skills. This approach offers students continuous opportunities to practice organising their thoughts, developing arguments, and expressing ideas clearly in writing. Frequent essay writing not only familiarises students with academic conventions but also strengthens their ability to structure essays effectively while enhancing grammar, vocabulary and overall coherence. Through consistent engagement with writing tasks, students can receive valuable feedback, reflect on their progress and steadily build both confidence and proficiency in academic writing.

6.6 Limitations of the study

A significant limitation of the study was its restricted scope, as it only included four out of the ten Technical Universities in Ghana. This limited representation may have affected the generalisability of the findings, as students in the excluded universities might have had different academic environments, learning experiences or institutional policies that could influence the study's outcomes. By not incorporating data from all ten universities, the research potentially missed variations in student demographics, resource availability, and curriculum structures, which could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the issue being studied. Consequently, the findings

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may not fully reflect the broader realities across all Technical Universities in the country.

Another notable limitation of the study was its inability to include all examination scripts and every student enrolled in the Secretaryship and Management programme. This restricted sample size may have affected the comprehensiveness of the findings, as a wider representation of students and their examination performances could have provided deeper insights into academic trends, challenges and overall proficiency. By examining only a portion of the available data, the study might have missed variations in individual student performance, assessment structures and grading consistency, which could have strengthened the reliability and applicability of the results. Consequently, the findings may not fully capture the broader academic landscape of Secretaryship and Management students across all institutions.

A further limitation of the study was its focus on assessing academic writing proficiency using specific rubrics that did not incorporate all critical aspects of writing challenges. While the study aimed to evaluate students' overall academic proficiencies, the assessment rubrics excluded key areas such as the appropriate use of reporting verbs and adherence to referencing styles—both of which are fundamental to academic writing proficiency. The omission of these components may have affected the depth and accuracy of the evaluation, as reporting verbs play a crucial role in effectively integrating sources and shaping scholarly arguments, while proper referencing ensures academic integrity and citation accuracy. By not including these elements in the assessment criteria, the study may have provided an incomplete picture of students' actual writing capabilities, potentially limiting the applicability of the findings in broader discussions on academic writing proficiency in higher education.

6.7 Conclusions

Building on the findings that emerged from this study, the following conclusions were drawn. Firstly, all the final-year students of Secretaryship and Management Studies in the four Technical Universities had grammatical, mechanical, content and structural

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errors in their examination scripts. This suggests that Technical University students are challenged in their academic writing.

Secondly, two Technical Universities partially had a support system to help some students who were weak in the English language but the other two did not have any support system. In the case where students failed the examinations and registered to write again, the Technical Universities did not provide any avenue to help the students revise before they rewriting. Likewise, the lecturers are unable to help the students by way of going through the course with the students before the students write their re-sits.

Students across the four universities thought they should not be studying the English language but rather, courses like secretarial practice which is in their main trade area. However, they forget that writing reports is one of their key responsibilities and that require good writing skills. Generally, in all four Technical Universities, the background of most of the students concerning the English language was not desirable and the large class sizes did not make room for the lecturers to permit more writing of essays as a way of helping the students improve their poor writing skills.

6.8 Recommendations

Several scholars have researched academic writing proficiency locally and internationally and have provided academic support to help students improve their academic writing proficiency (Mireku-Gyimah, 2014; Mwangi, 2017; Amoakohene, 2017; Atatsi & Amoakohene, 2019; Noori, 2020; Mandor, 2021; Owusu, 2021; Mdodana-Zide & Mukuna, 2023; Sulaiman & Razak, 2024).To achieve similar outcomes in Technical Universities in Ghana, the following recommendations are proposed, based on the findings and conclusions of the study:

The lecturers should place much emphasis on constantly reminding the students that the English language and the functions of secretaries are inseparable. First, Students should be made aware that mastering the English language lays a strong foundation

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for their academic and professional excellence, and second, students are equipped with the vital communication skills needed to succeed in their future careers. Secretaries play a vital role as the initial point of contact in offices, often shaping the first impressions of organisations. This responsibility demands exceptional English communication skills essential for engaging with clients and addressing inquiries. Additionally, these skills support the effective handling of correspondence, documentation and other administrative duties essential for smooth office operations. Perhaps, Secretaryship and Management students in the technical and vocational schools are oblivious about the important role that English plays, hence their negative perception. Until this is done, the negative perception that students have of the English language will continue to exist and they will not be motivated to learn and perfect the writing and speaking of the English language.

It is also recommended that the management of Technical Universities provide Language Centres to support the teaching and learning of the English language. Findings from all the Technical Universities depicted that final-year Technical University students had low academic writing proficiency that cuts across grammatical, mechanics, content and structural errors. Having Language Centres will offer personalised resources and activities to help students improve specific areas like grammar, pronunciation or vocabulary, allowing them to focus on their needs and to learn at their own pace. Again, Language centres should use structured learning stations to create a learner-focused environment, where students can participate in interactive activities, practice independently and benefit from personalised guidance from instructors. Finally, these centres should focus on the practical use of English, helping students build strong communication skills vital for academic and professional success. When these centres are established in Technical Universities, they will go a long way to support students in improving their writing skills.

To help students of Technical Universities overcome their writing challenges, the researcher again recommends a rigorous review of the English curricula to include more content development like generating ideas, conducting research, organising

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thoughts and developing coherent arguments to help students to create meaningful and engaging written pieces. This will aid them to understand and better handle essay structure (introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion), paragraph organisation, transitions, and overall flow. Because the Secretaryship and Management Studies department is situated under the Business Faculty in all the Technical Universities, their curricula are skewed towards more business courses rather than grammar and content creation.

Finally, related to the recommendation on curriculum review, the researcher strongly recommend that the Technical Universities consider increasing the credit hours for the English language from two (2) credit hours to three (3) credit hours to give enough time for both lecturers and students for the teaching and learning of the English language. Students at Technical University 3 demonstrate a high rate of errors, particularly in structural and content-related areas. Extending the course duration provides additional time to address these specific weaknesses effectively and to accommodate the updated curriculum. Longer course hours also enable lecturers to offer more individualised attention, providing tailored feedback and guidance to meet students' unique learning needs. With more time dedicated to English instruction, students are better positioned to enhance their writing proficiency, ultimately achieving stronger academic and professional results.

6.9 Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are provided to guide future research on academic writing in Technical Universities in Ghana:

First of all, it would be beneficial to conduct a more comprehensive study that embraces all ten technical universities in Ghana. Increasing the scope in this way would boost the generalisability of the findings and afford a more holistic understanding of the academic experiences, learning environments and institutional policies influencing students' outcomes. Further studies could also explore potential differences in resource allocation, faculty expertise and curriculum structures across these universities to identify best practices and areas for improvement. Next, it would

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also be valuable to conduct a more extensive study that includes a larger sample of examination scripts and covers all students enrolled in the Secretaryship and Management programme. Expanding the dataset would enhance the reliability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive view of academic writing proficiencies across the Technical Universities. Additionally, future studies could employ a comparative analysis between Technical Universities and other types of universities-comprehensive and private universities, to identify disparities in instructional methods, curriculum effectiveness and student performance. Furthermore, future research could consider developing a more comprehensive assessment framework that covers a broader range of academic writing challenges, especially the use of reporting verbs and referencing styles. Expanding the evaluation criteria would provide a clearer picture of students' writing proficiency and highlight specific areas where they struggle.

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Appendix A-Ethical clearance

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Ms GS Mensah

STUDENT NO:
23038815

PROJECT TITLE: **Assessing final year University students' academic writing proficiency.**

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: FHSSE/24/EMS/11/0107

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Prof EK Klu	UNIVEN: English, Media Studies and Linguistics	Supervisor
Dr TE Sikitime	UNIVEN: English, Media Studies and Linguistics	Co-Supervisors
Dr NV Demana	UNIVEN: English, Media Studies and Linguistics	Co-Supervisors
Ms GS Mensah	UNIVEN: English, Media Studies and Linguistics	Investigator – Student

Type: Masters Research
Risk: *Minimal risk to humans, animals or environment (Category 2)*
Approval Period: June 2024 – June 2025

The Research Ethics Social Sciences Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
  - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
  - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
  - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
  - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
  - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
  - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
  - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
  - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions A it necessary

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Date Considered: June 2024

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee: Prof M. Mwale-Manjoro

Signature: Mwale

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Appendix B- Participant information sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET-LECTURERS

I am Gifty Serwah Mensah, a doctoral student in the Department of English, at the University of Venda, South Africa. I am researching the topic, 'Assessing final year university students' academic writing proficiency'.

My study is qualitative and uses four universities. Second-semester examination scripts in the 2023/2024 academic year will be required for analysis for this study. Additionally, you, being the lecturer in charge of setting the English language questions in your university will have to be interviewed. I will humbly request that you permit me to interview you and also to record this interview.

You will have to fill in a consent form if you agree to participate in this study. Kindly note that any information you provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality. You will also not be identified in any of the study reports since the university will be given a pseudonym. You will, as well, remain anonymous in all verbal and written records and reports.

For further information, contact me either in person or through:

Phone number: +233 26 651 2814

E-mail address: sweetgifty@yahoo.com

Thank you!

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET-STUDENTS

I am Gifty Serwah Mensah, a doctoral student of the Department of English, University of Venda, South Africa. I am conducting research on the topic, 'Assessing final year university students' academic writing proficiency'.

My study is qualitative and uses four universities. Second semester examination scripts in the 2023/2024 academic year will be required for analysis for this study. Additionally, to know the challenges students face in their academic writing, you, being the student who wrote the examination will have to be part of a Focus Group Discussion. I humbly request that you permit me to have an interaction with you in Focus Group Discussion and also to record this interaction.

You will have to fill in a consent form if you agree to participate in this study. Kindly note that any information you provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality. You will also not be identified in any of the study reports since the university will be given a pseudonym. You will, as well, remain anonymous in all verbal and written records and reports.

For further information, contact me either in person or through:

Phone number: +233 26 651 2814

E-mail address: sweetgifty@yahoo.com

Thank you!

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Appendix C- Informed Consent Form for lecturers

I have read the participant information sheet and the nature and purpose of the study has been explained to me by Mrs. Gifty Serwah Mensah, a doctoral student at the University of Venda, South Africa.

I understand that as the lecturer who marks the scripts of English students of the Secretaryship and Management Studies Department, I have to be interviewed in order to give a clearer picture of the phenomenon under study.

I also understand that all the information that I will provide will be treated as confidential and will be used for research purposes only. During the study, I shall be available for all activities of the study as well as freely give information to facilitate the study. I understand that while the information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified anywhere in the study through my real name.

I am also aware that the interview will be recorded and that I can withdraw from the study without penalty.

Signature of the participant……
Date……..

For further information, please contact:
Gifty Serwah Mensah
Tel.: +233 266512814
E-mail: sweetgifty@yahoo.com

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM-FOR STUDENTS

I have read the participant information sheet and the nature and purpose of the study has been explained to me by Mrs. Gifty Serwah Mensah, a doctoral student at the University of Venda, South Africa.

I understand that I need to avail myself to participate in a Focus Group Discussion which would be analysed by the researcher to ascertain the challenges students have in their academic writing. I further understand that I have to be interviewed to give a clearer picture of the phenomenon under study.

I also understand that all the information that I will provide will be treated as confidential and will be used for research purposes only. During the study, I shall be available for all activities of the study as well as freely give information to facilitate the study. I understand that while the information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified anywhere in the study through my real name.

I am also aware that the interview will be recorded and that I can withdraw from the study without penalty.

Signature of the participant……
Date……..

For further information, please contact:
Gifty Serwah Mensah
Tel.: +233 266512814
E-mail: sweetgifty@yahoo.com

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Appendix D- Interview Guide- For Students

INTERVIEW GUIDE ON ASSESSING FINAL YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WRITING PROFICIENCY

I am grateful to you for accepting to take part in this study. My name is Gifty Serwah Mensah, a doctoral student at the University of Venda, South Africa, specialising in the English language. The study seeks to understand the nature of academic writing proficiency of final-year university students.

Kindly note that your participation in this study is completely voluntary, so you can withdraw from the study at any point, without any penalty whatsoever. You will remain anonymous throughout the study because your name will not be mentioned at any stage of this study. The information you will provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Further information is contained in the Participant Information and Informed Consent sheets, which you will be required to read and fill in before responding to this interview. This interview may take about 30 minutes. Thank you for your help.

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SECTION ONE

CHALLENGES STUDENTS FACE IN THEIR ACADEMIC WRITINGS

1) Do you enjoy academic writing?

1a) If no, why don't you enjoy academic writing?

1b) If yes, why do you enjoy academic writing?

2) Have you had any academic writing challenges before? Yes or No?

3) If yes, what are the challenges you face in your academic writing?

4) What are some of the reasons for encountering these challenges in your academic writing?

5a) Have you had any form of support from lecturers to help you overcome those challenges?

5b) What are the practices or supports you have had from lecturers to overcome those challenges?

SECTION TWO

5a) Do you commit errors in your academic writing? Yes or No

5b) If yes, what are some of the errors you commit in your academic writing?

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INTERVIEW GUIDE-FOR LECTURERS

INTERVIEW GUIDE ON ASSESSING FINAL YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WRITING PROFICIENCY

I am grateful to you for accepting to take part in this study. My name is Gifty Serwah Mensah, a doctoral student at the University of Venda, South Africa, specialising in the English language. The study seeks to understand the nature of academic writing proficiency of final-year university students.

Kindly note that your participation in this study is completely voluntary, so you can withdraw from the study at any point, without any penalty whatsoever. You will remain anonymous throughout the study because your name will not be mentioned at any stage of this study. The information you will provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Further information is contained in the Participant Information and Informed Consent sheets, which you will be required to read and fill in before responding to this interview. This interview may take about 30 minutes. Thank you for your help.

SECTION ONE

1) What are the perceptions of final-year students of technical universities on academic writing?

2a) Do you see errors in students' examination scripts when you are marking? Yes or No

2b) If yes, what are some of the errors you find in their examination scripts?

SECTION TWO

1a) Do you think final-year students of technical universities have challenges in their academic writing? Yes or No

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1b) If yes, what are some of the challenges students face in their academic writing?

2a) Are there any support systems put in place to help final-year students of technical universities overcome their academic writing challenges?

2b) What are some of the support systems put in place to help final year students of technical universities overcome their academic writing challenges?

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