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A case study on the most common mechanical errors affecting
EFL writing skills in high school students

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Dedication

This thesis is first dedicated to God for giving me the knowledge and strength to overcome all the obstacles found in the path throughout all phases of the development of this project. I also dedicate it to my family, who have always encouraged me to achieve my goals. In addition, this work is also dedicated to all my teachers, who have encouraged me to continue working hard, and friends whose unconditional company has driven me to be more courageous during this process.

Katherine Q. Arteaga

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Katherine Q. Arteaga

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Abstract

This study titled “A case study on the most common mechanical errors affecting EFL writing skills in high school students” aimed to determine and analyze the most common mechanical mistakes in high school students’ writing performance and provide suggestions for learners to avoid making mechanical mistakes.

For this study, a mixed-method approach was used. The participants were intermediate students of a public high school in Loja, Ecuador. The students were males and females around the age of 16 to 18 years old, whose native language was Spanish. The data was collected by asking the participants to write various paragraphs about specific topics to identify students’ writing errors, express errors in numbers, and analyze them.

The findings showed that the incorrect use of comma was the most common mistake when producing written texts in the target language, which is English in this study case.

Keywords: Mechanical mistakes, Writing Skills

Resumen

Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo determinar y analizar los errores ortográficos y de puntuación más comunes que estudiantes de colegio tienen en su escritura y dar sugerencias para evitarlos.

Para este proyecto de investigación, se utilizó un método mixto. Los participantes del estudio fueron estudiantes de un nivel intermedio que asistían a un colegio público de Loja, Ecuador. Los estudiantes eran hombres y mujeres de edad entre los 16 y 18 años, y cuyo idioma nativo era español. Los datos fueron recolectados al pedirles a los participantes que escribieran varios párrafos sobre temas específicos y analizados para identificar los errores en la escritura, expresar los errores en números y analizarlos.

Los resultados mostraron que el uso incorrecto de la coma es el error más común de puntuación al producir escritos en el lenguaje estudiado, inglés en este caso.

Palabras clave: Errores de ortografía y puntuación, habilidad de escritura.

Introduction

Writing is an important skill to develop when learning English as a foreign language. When students develop strong writing and grammar skills, they can convey messages clearly and understandably. For this reason, it is significant that EFL students who struggle with English writing learn important rules to avoid mechanical mistakes and improve their language skills so they communicate efficiently through written texts (Quibol-Catabay, 2016).

It is necessary that students master their writing skills since they are always asked to write essays, articles and summaries, and other types of texts in their academic environment. Therefore, this skill must be developed in every single class as a means for the students to practice and enhance their writing performance.

This study aims to diagnose and analyze the most common mechanical mistakes in high school students. In order to achieve this aim, three research questions were proposed a) Which are the most common mechanical mistakes on high school students? b) What are the types of mechanical mistakes found in high school students? c) What are some possible suggestions to help students to avoid those types of mechanical mistakes?

Many studies evidence the importance of mechanical aspects when writing essays. Puspitasari (2019) underlined that the importance lies in the role that mechanics play which can be compared to the general rules of the English language. Using appropriate spelling, punctuation, and capitalization is important because it makes texts easy to read and keep the reader engaged. The researcher finds out the types of mechanical errors students have in English academic writing at 3rd Semester of English Language Education Department. The findings of the study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically about the using of punctuation marks, capitalization, and spelling in English.

Kartawijaya (2018) investigated some factors that affect writing, mainly the factors regarding mechanical errors. This research was a classroom action research, conducted by a teacher in order to find out solutions of any problems found during teaching and learning process. The participants of the research were the students at 5 year of senior high school of Kota Sungai Penuh. In this research, it was done to investigate some factors that influenced

the students in writing descriptive paragraph. According to his study, writers need to be able to express their ideas clearly and understandably, but mechanical errors preclude this purpose. Kartawijaya (2018) emphasized the importance of teaching the mechanical aspects of writing since they are considered as rules and structures that students must follow to write appropriately.

Similarly, Napitopulu (2017) states that mechanics of writing are important since they take into consideration the correct use of many features such as spelling, punctuation, citation, and the appearance of texts. This study evaluates types of errors on students' writing. In gathering the data needed, students were asked to write a letter with a maximum of 90 words. Since mechanical errors consider the study of a lot of features, the researcher suggests that to improve the students writing skills, teachers have to classify the mistakes of students into the different mechanic categories, so students are aware of each one of their errors.

Pimpisa and Normah (2015) also investigated the different types of errors that EFL students face when writing. Forty narrative essays composed by Thai university students were collected and analyzed. evidencing that the most frequent types of errors were the translation of words as well as problems when selecting a word, verb tense, incorrect use of preposition, and punctuation errors. The results evidence that students tend to make errors in writing: confusion of sense relations; collocation; question mark; comma; full stop; capitalization; and spelling. In assisting the learners to successfully acquire writing skill, the analysis of errors and the understanding of their sources are necessary important for educators and learners.

This study comprises three chapters. The first chapter, which is the Literature Review, includes different topics related to the research topic. The second chapter includes the research method, the participants, the instruments, and the procedure adopted for the investigation. The third and last chapter includes the analysis, discussions, and interpretation of results.

Chapter one

Literature review

This section presents the theoretical support considered for the present study. It encloses information related to mechanical errors such as: punctuation, the use of the different punctuation marks, the definition and features of spelling and capitalization, grammatical rules of capitalization and proofread mechanical errors. In addition, this section presents some previous studies that evidence the impact of mechanics when writing.

1.1 The mechanics of writing

Writing mechanics are conventions that rule the technical aspects of writing that writers should follow when writing sentences, paragraphs and essays. They go hand in hand with grammar and they are considered as the standards to follow when writing (Faraj & Ahmed, 2019). Writing mechanics are also considered as a technical aspect of writing which takes into consideration several elements or conventions such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and abbreviations that students need to memorize in order to be able to write correctly helping the readers to get the message in a clear and understandable way (Neill, 2017). In this way, it can be said that the mechanics of writing specify the established conventions for words that writers need to consider when they are documenting their ideas (Crossley et al., 2014).

1.2 Mechanical errors affecting EFL writing skills

Writing is the skill in which people express their ideas, thoughts and feelings through the use of written symbols but it does not only implies putting some ideas on a piece of paper if not, it also involves taking into consideration the writing mechanics which include several features such as a clear statement of topic and thesis, transparent structure, thorough research, precise terminology, and appropriate form (Li & Graesser, 2020).

According to Crossley et al. (2014) the mechanics of writing apart from being one of the most important aspects to consider when writing, they are one of the most critical components to learn since it takes into consideration the analysis and the memorization of a

vast majority of features such as punctuation, capitalization and grammatical rules, this idea is in line with Yuliah et al. (2020) who states that one of the major problems that EFL learners face when writing is the presence of mechanical errors. Each person who writes in English makes such mistakes that the most part of time are committed as a consequence of quick writing where the main focus is on the content rather than the form in which it is written. On the other hand, Tetreault et al. (2010) state that any mechanical errors are caused not by the author's lack of knowledge about the correct usage of the written language if not by the lack of concern for correctness.

The mechanical errors affect the writing skills since they are the main responsible of causing confusion and making it difficult for the readers to understand the written message. They go hand in hand with grammar rules, and they are considered as the standards to follow when writing; so, if students are not able to use the written mechanics correctly, they are not going to be able to communicate their ideas effectively, having as a consequence a bad writing skill (Singh et al., 2017).

1.3 Punctuation

Punctuation is the set of signs necessary to indicate pauses and other nuances of meaning and intonation that must be considered to interpret a text properly. Punctuation marks are those that allow to mark the end of a sentence and to establish pauses. In this way, it is possible to rank the different propositions, organize the contents and give a structure to a discourse (Shweba & Mujiyanto, 2017)

Similarly, Houmami & Seligmann (2017) define punctuation as a combination of different signs that are used in a written speech to identify different types of pauses or intonations. It is important in order to make a discourse understandable, an understanding that is expressed in the fact that there is a certain order and a certain structure. Thus, a correct use of punctuation can certainly help the reader to carry out a satisfactory reading.

Punctuation marks delimit sentences and paragraphs and establish the syntactic hierarchy of propositions, and consequently give structure to a text. With these signs it is possible to order the ideas and rank them according to their importance (Yun Ginting, 2018).

There is a great variety of punctuation marks among which we have: the period, the comma, the semicolon, ellipsis, colon, question marks, exclamation marks, parenthesis, quotation marks and more (Stamatatos et al., 1999).

The period (.) indicates the pause that occurs at the end of a sentence. After the period, the following word will always be capitalized, except when it appears in an abbreviation. There are three kinds of periods: The period that is used to separate the different sentences that make a paragraph. It is characterized for continue writing in the same line; for example,

"...family is a group of people who are united by consanguinity. This union is legally and socially constituted." The full stop, which is used to separate different paragraphs. After the full stop, the writing must continue on the next line, capitalized, for example,

"They can be created by marriage or adoption." Many people agree that the family is important to the development of the individual." Finally, final stop is the one used at the end of a text and it represents the closing of a text (Dosen, 1989).

The comma (,) marks a brief pause within a sentence. It is used to separate the components of a sentence or phrase. For example, *"Andrea came home from school, did her homework, took a bath and fell asleep."* The comma is also used to enclose paragraphs or clarifications and to indicate omissions. For example, *"If you come, we will wait for you; if not, we leave".* Finally, conjunctive or adverbial phrases are preceded and followed by a comma. For example, *"However, I am arriving late."* (Dale, 1991).

The semicolon (;) represents a greater pause than the comma, but less than the period and followed. It is used to separate the elements of an enumeration when it comes to complex expressions that include commas. For example, *"His hair is brown; her eyes green; the nose, upturned"*. Furthermore, the semicolon is used before conjunctions (but, although and more), when a long phrase is introduced. For example, *"Many years ago I wanted to visit that place; but until the sun today I had not had a chance"* (Stamatatos et al., 1999).

The ellipsis (...) is used to give an unexpected interruption to the sentence or to give an inaccurate ending. The three dots should be used in the same way together with the word or sign that anticipates them. They are a synonym for etc. and they are also used to omit

phrases in a verbatim quote. For example: *"My generosity is as limitless as the sea ... the more I give you, the more I have, for both are infinite."* *"I was thinking about what happened yesterday... It was something very peculiar."* (Dosen, 1989).

The colon (:) has various uses and its pause is greater than that of the comma and less than that of the period. It is used to give way to an enumeration, after courtesy greetings in letters, before verbatim quotes and in dialogues. For example: *"The house had: a window, doors, a roof and some rooms."* *"Dear friend, I am writing you this letter..."* *"Then, the prince asked: - Where is that castle?"* (Dale, 1991).

The question mark (?) is used to make interrogative statements. This sign is used at the end of questions; thus, it is used when asking a question or for expressions of uncertainty. For example: *"What color is this?"* (Stamatatos et al., 1999).

The exclamation mark (!) is used to show imperative expressions or surprise. For example: *"My head hurts!"* (Dosen, 1989).

The quotation marks (") are used in text with an investigative nature, when writers want to quote something or when writers want to highlight some words or some ironic sense. Finally, they are used to indicate that another word belongs to another language. For example: *"The students used the connector "also" three times"* (Dale, 1991).

The parentheses (()) are double signs, one for opening and one for closing, and they are mostly used to limit sentences within others that are related. The parentheses are used in paragraphs to explain a specific part of the sentence and to accentuate specific data such as dates. The sentences that go between the parentheses are not separated and are attached to the same sentence. For example: *"Marcela Valencia (the most beautiful girl in the class) did not qualify on the exam."* *"Julio Garmendia (1898) is a well-known Venezuelan writer."* (Stamatatos et al., 1999).

1.4 Spelling

Spelling is the ability of correctly assembling words from their letters, it is one of the essential components of successful writing. In the sense, spelling is one of the elements of orthography and a prescriptive element of alphabetic languages (Mustadi & Amalia, 2020).

According to Barnett et al. (2020) being confident at spelling leads to confidence in all aspects of literacy. The ability to recognize the links between word of the same origin and understanding word relationships has been proven to aid comprehension skills.

Spelling is the knowledge and application of the conventional written representation of words in the process of writing, but this definition has been extended in a way that means the understanding of how the written form of words corresponds to their spoken counterparts and underlies the ability to decode words during the process of reading and to encode words during the process of writing (Weerdenburg et al., 2019).

According to Quick and Erickson (2018) spelling is more than rote memory. It represents the integration of phonology, orthography and morphology to represent and form a word and its meaning. In order to learn spelling, students need to follow five stages: precommunicative, semi phonetic, phonetic, transitional, and correct.

In the precommunicative stage students learn some symbols such as the alphabet but they do not show knowledge about each letter-sound correspondence. In this stage, students may also present lack of knowledge of the entire alphabet, but they are able to identify the main features of writing like the distinction between upper- and lower-case letters, and the left-to-right direction of English orthography (Seligmann et al., 2017)

In the semiphonetic stage students are able to understand the letters-sound correspondence, which refers to the sounds that are assigned to the different letters. At this stage, students are thought how to pronounce words, but students often employ logical relations using single letter sounds to be able to pronounce a combination of words; for example, “you - /u/” (Nam and Van Hiep, 2020).

In the phonetic stage students use a letter or group of letters to describe every speech sound that they hear in a word. Although, in this stage some of the students do not follow the conventional English spelling; for example, students pronounce the word “come” as “/kom/” showing in this way that they relate sounds and letters just as the same as they heard (Nam & Van Hiep, 2020).

In the transitional stage the students start to assimilate the conventions used for representing sounds, moving from sounds to the visual representation of those sounds being able to understand the structure of words. For example, students are able to understand the sound “/egul/” is written as “eagle” (Weerdenburg et al., 2019).

In the correct stage the students know the English orthographic system and the orthographic basic rules. Thus, students are able to understand how to deal with prefixes and suffixes, alternative spellings, silent consonants, and irregular spellings. Furthermore, they know a large number of words and students are able to recognize incorrect forms and patterns (Quick & Erickson, 2018).

1.5 Capitalization

The capitalization is the correct use of capital letters. Capital letters are letters that are used at the beginning of a sentence or in the proper names of people, animals, places, cities, etc. and are characterized by being larger than the rest of the letters (Anwar Siddiqui, 2018).

Capital letters are used to distinguish and rank words, they also clarify and facilitate the understanding of what is read. The difference between uppercase and lowercase is that in general lowercase is used in common names, with which we can refer to all individuals of a species, for example: man, dog, cat, city. On the other hand, capital letters are used to identify proper names, those that refer to a particular person or thing, for example: Juan, Luisa, Toluca, Firulais (Napitupulu, 2017).

According to AlTameemy and Daradkeh (2019), it is necessary for students to take into consideration the use of spelling rules when trying to capitalize a word. According to this author, in the case that students maintain a sustained use of capital letters, it can be understood as yelling or as a dissipated intention to call the attention.

1.5.1 Grammatical rules of capitalization

Hamed (2018) states that capitalization is one of the most controversial issues in spelling. The use of capital letters has to take into account various factors such as, for example, the type of text that is being written, its context or the intentionality of the writer. At

the request of the writing or the composition of texts, the use of capital letters must be mandatory in the following situations:

1.5.2 Capitalization according to punctuation of the text.

The punctuation of a text requires, on certain occasions, the use of capital letters, generally in the word that follows the corresponding punctuation mark.

The first word that begins a text; for example: "Once upon a time"

The word after a period; for example: "There is football tonight. My brother will watch the game at home."

After ellipsis when they conclude the statement; that is, when they act as an end point; for example: "For the barbecue we need meat, bread, potatoes, beer ... I'll take care of making the list." However, when the ellipsis does not end the sentence, the word that follows them must be written in lowercase; for example: "I don't know if I'll go to the movies ... because I have a lot of homework."

After the colon, the word that follows must begin with a capital letter when it is a quote or a verbatim word; for example: As Socrates said: "I only know that I know nothing." Similarly, if we are writing a letter, after the initial greeting, the word that follows the colon must be capitalized; for example: "Dear Ana: Thank you very much for your congratulations."

In the case of interrogative (¿?) And exclamatory (¡!) Phrases, the word that begins the next sentence will be capitalized; for example: "How nice to see you! I haven't heard from you for a long time." (Hamed, 2018).

1.5.3 Capitalization considering initial letter.

Regardless of the punctuation marks in the text, there are a series of words that, according to the spelling rules, must always be written with an initial capital letter as is shown below (Hamed, 2018).

Proper names of people, animals, cities and countries: Claudia, Diego, Pancho, Seville, Barcelona, Spain, Sweden.

The surnames: Hernández, Rodríguez, García, Díaz, as well as the nicknames or pseudonyms: Alfonso known as the Wise.

The common names used par excellence to refer to God, Jesus Christ or the Virgin: The Creator, the Savior, the Immaculate.

Common names used in personifications of abstract ideas such as Death, Evil, Greed.

The nouns and adjectives that designate entities, administrative bodies, buildings, monuments or political parties, among others: the National Library, the University of Salamanca, the Democratic Party, the Ministry of Defense, the Royal Theater.

The names and adjectives that are part of the name of magazines or periodicals: El País, Revista de Lingüística Teórica, Diario la hora.

The acronyms of entities, organizations, countries, etc. They are also capitalized: NGO (Non-Governmental Organization), USA (United States), WHO (World Health Organization), U.E. (European Union).

The names of festivities: Christmas, Constitution Day, New Year, April Fair, Easter.

Nouns that indicate historical, social, political and cultural times or events: Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the First World War, Prehistory, the Renaissance, the Baroque, the Golden Age (Hamed, 2018).

1.6 Proofreading mechanical errors

Written communication is one of the most important skills that students should develop. Whether they are writing an essay for school, writing a message or email online, or writing a formal report for the job, it's important to reread the text to ensure it's written accurately and clearly, and here is where proofreading comes in (Harwood, 2018).

Proofreading is the final stage of the writing process. It involves evaluating the piece of text for mechanical correctness. When students proofread their texts, they place emphasis in analyzing the correct use of grammar, omitted words, spelling, punctuation, spacing, repeated words, format, and typographical errors. This stage should be applied once students have finished all the other revisions and editing (Amiri et al., 2021).

Similarly, Guendouze, (2019), states that by the time a document is ready to be proofread, it should have been edited already. This means its content should already be well organized, well written, and easy to understand. Editing also involves removing errors, but it focuses more on making sure the document makes sense as a whole.

Proofreading, on the other hand, is about finding errors both small and large that were either missed or introduced during editing. Proofreaders ensure that the document's final draft is completely free of grammatical errors; for example, subject–verb agreement problems, incorrect word choices, improper punctuation usage, and incorrect spelling. As well as proofreaders ensure that the final text follows the correct format without any typographical errors. They also make sure the document adheres to the chosen style guide. (Kongkaew & Cedar, 2018).

1.7 Proofreading strategies

Since proofreading is such an important step in the writing process, Harwood (2019) proposed some strategies that can be helpful or proofreading well taking into consideration specific errors which are described below.

1.7.1 Spelling

For spelling proofreading, writers should examine each word in the paper individually. They must move from the end of each line back to the beginning, this should be done with the help of a pencil which will help writers to see each word more distinctly. This author recommends always check a dictionary to see that each word is correctly spelt. (Harwood, 2019).

1.7.2 Compound Sentence Commas

In this case, students must skim for the conjunctions and, but, for, or, nor, so, and yet in order to see whether there is a complete sentence on each side of the conjunction. In the case that the conjunctions are not forming as a part of the main sentence and is used to add information, students have to place a comma before the conjunction (Gubala et al., 2020).

1.7.3 Introductory Commas

Writers have to skim their papers, looking only at the first two or three words of each sentence. They have to stop if one of these words is a subordinate conjunction, a transition word, a participial phrase, or a prepositional phrase. If they realize that they can break or pause after the phrase when reading aloud, they should place a comma at the end of the introductory phrase or clause (Johnson et al., 2017).

1.7.4 Fragments

Writers have to look at each sentence to see whether it contains an independent clause. They have to pay special attention to sentences that begin with subordinate conjunctions or phrases such as for example or such as and they have to see if the fragment might be just a piece of the previous sentence that mistakenly got separated by a period (Harwood, 2019).

1.7.4 Run-On Sentences

In this aspect, writers have to review each sentence to see whether it contains more than one independent clause. They should start with the last sentence of their paper and go back to the beginning, sentence by sentence, stopping at every comma. Run-on sentences can be revised four ways. Students may make the clauses into separate sentences, join the clauses with a comma followed by a coordinating conjunction, join the clauses with a semicolon if the sentences are closely related, or restructure the sentence (Gubala et al., 2020).

All the topics above mentioned highlight the importance of the writing mechanics when writing any type of text. This importance lies in the use of the writing mechanics to create a coherent and cohesive piece of text since writing mechanics are considered as the rules that writers should follow when writing sentences, paragraphs and essays. Writing mechanics go hand in hand with grammar and they are considered as the standards to follow when writing. Thus, writing mechanics are important since they help writers to communicate their ideas effectively. Furthermore, to place more emphasis in the importance of the topic discussed, some studies have been analyzed to support the present investigation. Bellow, are three of them.

Pimpisa and Normah (2015) conducted a study aimed to investigate the different types of errors that EFL students face when writing. The sample included 40 second- and third-year undergraduate students whose age ranged from 18 and 22 years. In the study, the researcher collected 40 essays written by the participants. The essays had a length of 300 words and the researcher provide to the participants three topics, so they were asked to select one. The findings evidencing that the mostly frequent types of errors were the mechanical errors related to the translation of words as well as problems when selecting a word, verb tense, incorrect use of preposition, and mispunctuation problems. According to these authors, the errors derived from the interference of the L1 into the L2.

Another study conducted by Khatter (2019) aimed to discover and analyze the most common essay writing errors among Saudi female learners at the departments of English. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher considered to use a sample of 129 English essays written by 40 female university students. To carry out the study the participants were assigned to write three essays: one narrative essay, one descriptive essay and one comparison-contrast essay of 2-4 page each one. The researcher further surveyed the proposed writing difficulties encountered by the participants using a questionnaire comprising ten questions. The findings evidenced that the most frequent types of errors made by the participants were the punctuation errors, spelling errors, preposition errors, article errors, wrong verb tense, and wrong word form respectively. Evidencing in this way a lack of knowledge of the writing mechanics and their correct use.

Finally, Nair and Hui (2018) conducted a study aimed to identify the types of errors made by students in their ESL writing placing emphasis in the correct use of spelling, mechanics, grammar, coherence, sentence structure and lexical. The sample of this study comprised 102 senior students disclosed in 47 males and 55 females from a private school.

To carry out the study, the researcher considered two types of instruments. The first was the descriptive writing test for students and second was semi-structured interview questions for the ESL teacher. The students were given a descriptive writing test of 350 words to be completed within 90 minutes.

The findings revealed that female students made significantly less errors than male students in their overall writing, but both of them present problems in terms of grammar and sentence structures.

Chapter two

Method

2.1 Setting and participants

The participants for this research were students from a public high school in Loja, Ecuador. The sample comprised both female (8) and male students (2) around the age of 16 to 18 years old, who were selected by using simple random sampling. According to Creswell (2012), simple random sampling is choosing participants randomly so any participant from the population can be selected equally in terms of probability. The students were learning English as a foreign language while attending the third year of senior high school. They were learning content aligned to the Ecuadorian policy of education for teaching English as a foreign language. Hence, the topics selected to be written about were related to the contents that they were studying in their lessons.

2.2 Procedure

The first step for carrying out this study was to research for information that helps to dive into the topic and set the rationale of the project. This research project used a mixed-method design so qualitative and quantitative data would provide a better understanding of the phenomenon to be studied. The purpose of this research was to determine and analyze the most common mechanical mistakes in high school students' writing performance and provide suggestions for learners to avoid making mechanical mistakes.

After obtaining and examining the data (written paragraphs), it was possible to determine which mistakes were the most common ones and analyze them in terms of occurrence within the context they were found. After that, some suggestions were provided for the students to avoid making the same mistakes when writing assignments. These suggestions help them improve their language skills and become more proficient in the target language as well.

The field research of this project was carried for two weeks (4 Zoom meetings). The students had enough time to develop the writing paragraphs and sent them through Google Forms. The data was the paragraphs in which the participants were asked to write about

unforgettable experiences, favorite hobbies, and their first day of school, which were contents that they were reviewing in their English lessons. It was easy to analyze their writing skills and the most common mistakes they made when developing a writing task.

After collecting the data in the field research, the process to tabulate the data and analyze the results started. First, the data from the instruments was analyzed by assessing the student's paragraphs. Then, the type of mechanical errors that the students made were determined and quantified.

Then, the tabulated data was presented in tables to make it easier to analyze and interpret the results. To do so, the aspects that were considered to analyze and interpret the results were the students' writing mistakes in terms of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Finally, conclusions and recommendations based on the findings were included.

Chapter three

Results and discussion

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

This section shows the analysis of the data obtained throughout the results gotten from the deep analysis of the paragraphs written by the participants of this study. The data analysis is presented in three sections. The first one describes the most common mechanical mistakes found in the sample. The second one analyzes the mechanical mistakes committed by the participants of this study. The last section provides some suggestions for teachers and students in order to avoid those mechanical mistakes. The information is presented in tables and graphs which will be described, analyzed and discussed.

3.1 Which are the most common mechanical mistakes on high school students?

This section presents the most common mechanical mistakes committed by the participants of this study when writing paragraphs. The information is distributed considering the category, their different types of mistakes, and the general percentage

Table 1

The Most Common Mechanical Mistakes

Category	Types of mistakes	Individual %	Per Category %
Punctuation	Period	26%	69%
	Comma	38%	
	Semi colon	5%	
Capitalization	First word	11%	24%
	Wrong capitalization	12%	
	Proper names	1%	
Spelling	Vowels omission	1%	7%
	Consonant omission	3%	
	Vowels confusion	2%	
	Consonant confusion	1%	

Note: This table displays the mechanical mistakes found in the 50 paragraphs written by the participants of this study.

Table 1 presents the most common mechanical mistakes done by the EFL participants of this study in 50 paragraphs. The findings show that the participants presented mechanical mistakes regarding punctuation, capitalization and spelling. Furthermore, the participants evidenced a total of 10 types of mistakes disclosed in punctuation (3), capitalization (3), and spelling (4).

Within the category of punctuation, the participants have made a 69% of mistakes evidencing deficiency in the use Period, Comma, and Semi colon. The punctuation problems could be caused due to the participants' lack of knowledge about the proper use of punctuation marks and their purpose; so, the students are not conscious of the importance of using punctuation marks in their texts.

Regarding to the punctuation deficiencies, it has been found that the wrong use of comma is the mistake with the highest percentage of mistakes in this study. As the table shows, participants have made a 38% of mistakes, evidencing in this way that students do not know how to use properly the comma and they just use it without considering its proper use.

Another mistake within this category is the use of period, results show that students have made a 26% of mistakes. These results evidence that they are the second highest percentage of mistakes in this study, evidencing in this way that students are not familiarized with the rules for employing correctly this punctuation mark. This deficiency could be because students do not have clear that the period is used to separate the different sentences that make a paragraph. They are used at the end of a sentence in order to tell the reader that an idea has been concluded and the next sentence is going to describe something new. According to Dosen (1989), the main objective of the period is to indicate the pause that occurs at the end of a sentence.

Regarding the third mistake within this category, is the use of semi colon, the results from the Table 1 shows that students have made a 5% of mistakes, being the type of mistake less committed by the participants in terms of punctuation. The analysis of the paragraphs written by the participants showed that students do not use the semi colon properly since they are not familiarized with the rules for using it.

Within the category of capitalization, the participants have made a 24% of mistakes evidencing deficiency in the capitalization of the first words of the sentences, the capitalization of proper names, and wrong capitalization considering general aspects. The capitalization problems could be caused due to the participants' lack of knowledge about the proper use of capitalization and its purpose. This aspect causes that the students do not realize the importance of using capitalization in their texts.

According to Anwar Siddiqui (2018) the capitalization is the correct use of capital letters and capital letters are important because they help readers to distinguish and rank words, they also clarify and facilitate the understanding of what is read. The difference between uppercase and lowercase is that in general lowercase is used in common names, with which we can refer to all individuals of a species, for example: man, dog, cat, city. On the other hand, capital letters are used to identify proper names, those that refer to a particular person or thing, for example: Juan, Luisa, Toluca.

Regarding to the capitalization deficiencies, it has been found that the wrong capitalization is the mistake with the highest percentage of mistakes in this category. As the table shows, participants have made a 12% of mistakes, evidencing in this way that students are not familiarized with the correct capitalization of the words, having as a consequence texts with overuse or underuse of capital letters.

This problem can be because the lack of instruction about capitalization rules. According to Altameemy and Daradkeh (2019), it is necessary for students to take into consideration the capitalization rules due that students need to be familiarized with some factors that have to be considered when capitalizing such as capitalization according to the punctuation marks, the initial letters of a sentence and the proper names. In this way, students will know that capital letters must be mandatory in determined situations.

Another mistake within this category is the capitalization of the first words. The results show that students have made a 11% of mistakes. These results evidence that they are the second highest percentage of mistakes committed in this category, evidencing in this way that students are not familiarize with the mechanical rules for employing correctly the capitalization.

This deficiency could be because students do not have clear that they have to capitalize some first word that goes after some punctuation mark such as the period, ellipsis, interrogative and exclamatory marks, and colon. In addition, there are some words that have to be capitalized considering the writing mechanical rules such as the proper names, the surnames, the nouns and adjectives that designate entities, administrative bodies, buildings or monuments, among others (Hamed, 2018).

Regarding the third mistake within this category, is the capitalization of proper names, the results from the Table 1 shows that students have made a 1% of mistakes, being the type of mistake less committed by the participants. The analysis of the paragraphs showed that students do not capitalize the proper nouns.

From the results gathered about the students' capitalization deficiencies, researchers could notice that the participants of this study are not conscious about the importance of capitalizing when writing. Furthermore, students are not familiarized with the main the objective of capitalization, so, students need to be conscious that capitalization serve to distinguish and rank words, they also clarify and facilitate the understanding of what is read.

To conclude with this category, these results are in concordance with a study conducted by Khatter (2019) who evidenced problems in terms of the incorrect use of capital letters. According to this author, students present a lack of use of capital letters since the participants did not capitalized some words when they were referring to proper nouns and also when they were writing the abbreviations of some organizations, having as a result a boring text.

Within the category of spelling, the participants have made a 7% of mistakes evidencing deficiency in terms of consonant omission, vowel confusion, vowel omission and consonant confusion. The spelling problems could be caused due to participants are not familiarized with spelling rules, as aspect that causes that students do not know about the importance of spelling when writing.

According to Mustadi and Amalia (2020), spelling is the ability of correctly assembling words from their letters, it is one of the essential components of successful writing. In the

sense of a standard, spelling is one of the elements of orthography and a prescriptive element of alphabetic languages. Thus, it is important for the students to learn about spelling, so they can create strong knowledge foundations of how to assemble the words correctly and avoid misunderstandings.

Regarding to the spelling deficiencies, it has been found that the consonant omission is the mistake with the highest percentage of mistakes in this category. As the table shows, participants have made a 3% of mistakes, evidencing in this way that students are not familiarized with the correct form of writing individual words, for instance, they get confused and omit consonants when writing.

This problem can be because the lack of instruction about spelling since the participants evidenced that they do not know how the written language work presenting problems in terms of the lack of knowledge of how to write correctly the individual words of the English language. According to Quick and Erickson (2018), if students do not learn the correct form of assembling letters to form words, they can omit letters when writing, as well as they can add extra letters to their texts.

Another mistake within this category is the vowel confusion. The results show that students have made a 2% of mistakes. These results evidence that this type of mistakes are the second highest percentage of errors committed, evidencing in this way that students are not able to choose the correct vowel when writing.

This deficiency could be because students do not have clear how to construct words. Students tend to memorize how words are written and for instance they can confound some vowel when writing. Furthermore, it was evidenced that students write the words as the same way as they are pronounced, so they change the vowels from the written words for the ones that they hear.

Another mistake found this category is the consonant confusion. The results illustrate that the students have made a 1% of this type of mistakes, evidencing in this way that they are the less types of mistakes committed in this study. The written paragraphs of the participants showed that students present problems when choosing correctly the consonants

for writing the words since they change the letters that seems to be similar in their pronunciation.

This problem can be caused due to the language transference from the native language, the language that the participants are learning. As it is well known, in Spanish the words are written exactly as they are pronounced, so students transfer his knowledge and write English words as the same as they are pronounced, evidencing in this way problems when selecting the correct letter for writing words.

Regarding the last mistake within this category, is the vowel omission, the results from the Table 1 shows that students have made a 1% of mistakes, being the type of mistake less committed by the participants. The analysis of the paragraphs written by the participants showed that students omit some vowels due to phonological aspects, as well as they are not familiar with the schwa sound, so, students tended to omit the words that are pronounced too quickly since think that those vowels are inexistent.

In this way, it can be evidenced that the vowel omission problems are caused by two main aspects. The first one is that students mix the written form of the words with the pronunciation of words, having as a consequence the deletion of vowels that are not pronounced.

From the results gathered about the students' spelling deficiencies, the researcher could notice that the participants of this study are not conscious about the importance of the spelling when writing. Furthermore, students are not familiarized with the main the objective of spelling, so, students need to be conscious that spelling helps reader to interpret correctly the text.

When students present spelling problems, the readers lose the attention to the text since spelling allows the brain to evaluate the data it receives, and helps to organize the information better, which in turn aids to better cement ideas and concepts in the mind. A misspelled word can change the meaning of what the writer wants to express, and it takes more time for the reader to interpret the text.

To conclude with this category, these results are aligned with a study conducted by Khatter (2019) who demonstrated that the most common spelling errors that students commit when writing are aligned with problems of the insertion, the absence, or the substitution of letters or vowels in particular words.

3.2 What are the types of mechanical mistakes found in high school students?

This section presents the description and analysis of the most common mechanical mistakes committed by the participants of this study when writing paragraphs. The information is distributed considering the category, their different types of mistakes and their individual number of repetitions.

Table 2

Analysis of the Most Common Mechanical Mistakes

Category	Types	
Punctuation	Comma	Overuse
		Omission
		Wrong location
	Period	Misuse
		Overuse
	Semicolon	
Capitalization	First word	
	Wrong capitalization	
	Proper names	
Spelling	Vowel	Vowel omission
	Consonant	Consonants omission
		Silent consonants
		Double consonant
		Misunderstood word
	Vowel change	

Note: This table displays the types of mistakes committed by the students.

3.2.1 Punctuation mistakes

Table 2 showed that the participants use the comma incorrectly. As it is illustrated in the following example: *“By telling this, I mean that both, animals and human beings, are the same, and not in the fact, that they are animals and we are people but...”* The overuse of

commas distracts the readers since the excessive use of them do not allow the readers to form a general idea of what they are reading. Having as a result a group of isolated words without, an aspect that complicates the interpretation of a text.

As can be seen in this example: *“Furthermore this is the type of business that I would like to create I think that having a grocery store is important because I can help people to acquire their basic necessities in the same way I love to serve customers...”* The omission of commas creates confusion when trying to interpret the text. When the text does not have commas, the readers do not know when they have to make pauses or when another supporting idea is going to start, having as a consequence a very difficult text to interpret.

The third problem was the miss placement of the comma as displays the following example: *“The microscope is broke; however I know, who did it.”* In this case, the comma is not located correctly since it has to be written immediately after the connector *“however”* and not after *“who did it.”* This aspect evidenced that students do not know much about the mechanics of writing and they use the commas without any logical rule.

Regarding the incorrect use of period, students evidenced two types of problems. The first one was the overuse of periods as it is illustrated in the following example: *“In my experience. the most memorable day I have in this life is when my grandparents and my mom finally forgave each other because they hurt themselves a lot.”* In this example, it is evidenced that students do not know the use of periods and even they use them instead of commas. Having as a result a broken interpretation of the text since the periods are used to indicate that the writer concluded an idea and is going to start describing a new one.

The second mistake was the misuse of periods *“My favorite hobby is playing cards with my family (.) This activity helps us to increase our unity and know better the personalities of each one of the family members (.)”* In this example, it could be evidenced that the student did not used any period in that part of the text, having as a result a very big idea without any punctuation mark, an aspect that difficulty the easy interpretation of the text.

Regarding the incorrect use of the semi colon, students used it instead of comma, forgetting by completely the correct use of it. For example: *“I like to eat French fries;*

hamburgers; pizzas; and just a few vegetables” In this example, students misuse the semicolon since they were wrongly selected, instead of them they had to use commas. Thus, students have to remember that semi colon is used to separate independent sentences that are part of the same statement and not just short words.

3.2.2 Capitalization mistakes

On the other hand, analyzing the mechanical mistakes committed by the participants of this study when capitalizing, Table 2 displays three different problems, ranking in first place the capitalization mistakes with 27 repetitions, followed by problems with the capitalization of the first words with 24 incidences, and the omission of capitalization in proper nouns with a total of 2 occurrences.

Regarding wrong capitalization mistakes, students evidenced mistakes where they added extra capitalization to some words that should not be capitalized; for example, *“I like this Genre because I like to dance and I Do it very well”* In this example we can evidence that the students capitalize the wrong words demonstrating that they do not know the capitalization rules. In this case the word “genre” and the verb “do” are not proper names; so, they do not have to be capitalized.

Regarding wrong capitalization of the first word, students evidenced problems when capitalizing words that go after a period as it is illustrated in the following example: *“This genre of music according to research helps us fight insomnia, stress, helps us improve blood pressure. listening to classical music, as well as learning to play an instrument...”* In this example, it is possible to observe that the student used a period after the word “pressure” so, it means that the writer concluded an idea and is going to write another one. In this way, the student is omitting the rule that established that writers have to capitalize the words that go immediately after a period.

Regarding mechanical mistakes related to capitalization of proper names, it is evidenced that students forget to capitalize the words that refer to proper names of games, music bands and genres and also proper names of pets and places as it is illustrated in the following example: *“I have two types of musical genres that I like reggaeton and k-pop. these*

two types of music differ because k-pop is south korean music instead reggaeton is more latin music. my favorite k-pop group is called bts and my group reggaeton favorite is 'cnco'.

On the other hand, analyzing the mechanical mistakes committed by the participants related to spelling, Table 2 displays four different types of problems. In first place is ranked the consonant omission, vowel confusion, vowel omission, consonant confusion or wrong choice of the consonants with a total of 2 occurrences and a percentage of 1% per each one.

In regard to consonant omission, students had problems when writing words that include the letters "ch" for example, "technology", in that type of words, the students tended to omit the letter "h" for example, "tecnology". Another example of consonant omission includes the combination of the letters "ft" as for example "gift" and "craft", in this case the students omitted the "t" having as a result the words "gif" and "craf". Evidencing in this way language transfer problems. As it is well known, the Spanish language that does not have that combination of consonants. For instance, the students get confused and write in the same way as they write in Spanish language.

Another type of consonant omission that was found in the paragraphs written by the participants of this study were the consonant deletion caused by the phonological forms of the words. For example, at the moment of writing the word "Listening", the students tended to omit writing the "t" since that letter is silent in these words, evidencing that the students write the words according to their sounds, as it is done in Spanish language.

An additional mistake related to consonant omission was the one caused by the repetition of two consonants. For example, when writing the words "letters", "running", and "different", students omitted writing silent consonants, having as a result the words "leters", "runing", and "diferent".

Regarding vowel omission, students evidenced two types of mistakes. The first one involves mistakes caused by the pronunciation of words. For example, when writing the word "damage" and "money" students tended to write them as the same way as they are pronounced. In the case of the word "damage" students omitted the last "e" having as a result the word "damag". In the same way, when writing the word "money" they omitted the vowel

“e” obtaining the word “mony”. This mechanical mistakes made by the students is similar to consonant omission in which students omit silent consonant when they write the word.

Another mistake related to the vowel omission was the one caused by the pronunciation of those words but specially caused by the schwa sound. In this case, students tended to omit weak vowels, which are imperceptible for Spanish speakers, because the students think that those vowels are inexistent. For example, when writing the words “enjoy”, “escape”, and “enemy” they omitted the vowels that includes the schwa sound, having as a result the words “njoy”, “scape”, and “enmy”.

Other vowel mistakes are vowel change, which consists in the participants replacing the vowel “a” by “i”, for example, they wrote “*Disappeir instead of “disappear”*”. Furthermore, they changed the vowels “a” by “o” as in the case of the word “also”, in this case, students wrote “*olso*” evidencing again, that they write as the same as they pronounce. Finally, it was observed that the participants of this study interchanged the vowels “ea” by “e” or “i”. For example, students wrote the words “*iting*”, “*erth*”, “*isy*” and “*ern*” rather than “*eating*”, “*earth*”, “*easy*”, and “*earn*”

In regards to consonant misplacement, students evidenced problems when choosing correctly the consonants for writing the words. As it can be seen in the following example: “*I woult like to be a business man*”, students change the words that seems to be similar in their pronunciation. In this case, students changed the “d” for “t”, thus they wrote “*woult*” instead of “*would*”. Another example that evidenced this type of problem, was the word “about”, in this case students replaced the “t” for “d” having as a result the word “*aboud*”.

Another mistake related to consonant confusion was the one caused by the pronunciation of the words. In this case students evidenced problems when writing the words that ended in “tion”. For example, when students wrote the words “*pronunciation*”, “*action*”, “*direction*”, and “*vacation*”, they replaced the “t” by the letters “s” or “c”, having as a result the words “*pronunciation*”, “*accion*”, “*direcsion*”, and “*vacasion*”.

3.3 What are some possible suggestions to help students to avoid those types of mechanical mistakes?

This section is going to provide some suggestions to reduce mechanical mistakes committed by the students when writing. The information is presented in terms of four aspects. The first one provides general suggestions to reduce capitalization, spelling, and punctuation mistakes. The second one presents suggestions to reduce punctuation mistakes. The third one contains suggestions to reduce capitalization mistakes, and the last one provides suggestions to reduce spelling mistakes.

3.3.1 General suggestions to reduce mechanical mistakes

Writing is an important skill to develop when teaching and learning English as a foreign language; especially, for communicating properly. When students develop strong writing skills, they are able to convey their messages in a clear and understandable way. But writing is not just about putting words together to create sentences and convey a message; it is a very demanding intellectual activity that has to follow writing mechanics in order to be able to write correctly. Within this context, this section is going to present some suggestions to help learners to avoid mechanical mistakes mainly focusing on the ones related to punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

The first suggestion to avoid mechanical mistakes is to try to clarify, organize and consolidate the ideas to be written. According to (Vandermeulen et al. (2020) the students can avoid doing mechanical errors since they are going to evaluate their writing all the time.

According to the researcher Bailey (2017), being aware of the writing process helps learners to improve their writing since they have the chance to evaluate their writing and correct their mechanical mistakes that they have done. According to this author, the students must place more importance on the stages of revising and editing since in these parts the students have the chance to analyze their text by mainly focusing in the mechanical mistakes that they have done. This researcher advises the students to pay attention to all the aspects that are considered for having good writing since students evidenced that they just pay

attention to grammatical features, setting apart the importance of checking the mechanical aspects such as punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. This author reminds students that correct writing does not only implies to describe a certain topic, but it also involves being aware of the grammatical rules and the writing mechanics.

Another suggestion to avoid mechanical mistakes is to read a lot. Reading a lot allows students to develop a great familiarity with the language. When reading, students do not only develop reading skills, but they also learn the correct way of writing since the brain keeps a record of a large number of details that are presented throughout the reading, such as capitalization and spelling.

Likewise, reading a lot allows students to observe how the correct use of punctuation marks is carried out, and despite the use of punctuation is going to vary depending on the style of the writer and the message he or she is going to transmit, there are rules that must always be followed in order to use the punctuation marks correctly and reading implicitly shows those rules.

This idea is supported by Neill (2017) who states that reading and writing go hand in hand since a good command of reading will allow students to write better since when reading students have the opportunity to observe the way in which words are written, thus reducing problems in terms of spelling and capitalization. Likewise, in terms of punctuation, students can observe the type of punctuation mark used and when, so they learn indirectly or in context the correct use of punctuation marks on the side.

3.3.2 Suggestions to reduce punctuation mistakes

Punctuation is a factor on which much of the understanding of written messages depends. In other words, the use of punctuation marks inevitably affects reading comprehension. From a textual point of view, such a repertoire of signs constitutes an elementary resource when it comes to clearly organizing the ideas that we express in texts. Despite the subjective component that appears linked to the punctuation, in Spanish, there are very specific normative criteria that should not go unnoticed by the competent user in the language.

For instance, a worked text and, therefore, a well-punctuated text, facilitates and even makes the reader's task pleasant; on the contrary, carelessness tends to cause darkness and even misunderstanding. And this should be borne in mind when writing, to pay due attention to punctuation marks.

To make correct use of punctuation marks, it is recommended to study the purpose of each of the punctuation marks as well as the rules for using them. Likewise, it is recommended to use punctuation marks in a moderate way since using punctuation in excess is annoying for the reader due to having to take too many unnecessary pauses. On the other hand, if the use of punctuation marks is limited, the reading becomes monotonous and even difficult to understand.

Regarding the use of the different punctuation marks, students need to consider the following:

- Learn rules through activities of completing. Teacher encourage students to look a text or constructed sentences and find out what punctuation is missing, it can be applied in small groups or class activity.
- Using visual and auditory material, such as music videos that reinforce the rules for punctuation will provide simple, fun and easy to use tools in the classroom. As well, these videos can be accessed by students at home as a supplementary activity, or as part of homework.
- Taking advantage of student's interest in video games, language learning websites and Apps are a good way to engage students in the learning process. Websites such as kidsworldfun.com and FluentU.com provide interactive lessons for students which can be used in the classroom or at home. Students benefit from self-learning activities while maintaining a high level of interest in the subject.

3.3.3 Suggestions to reduce capitalization mistakes

Capital letters are usually used in the first letter of the words that start a text; however, its use is varied, and its appearance is subject to different criteria. For some people, these

criteria, which determine the use of the capital letter, are unknown or generate certain difficulties, which tend to frustrate them.

Mostly, capitalization depends on the punctuation, so students need to capitalize when:

- Using common classroom materials, teachers can create simple, but effective, tools for students such as flash card, puzzles and posters that students can use individually or in small groups. Helping students recognize words that need Capitalization through immediate feedback, visual cues and social interaction also support the student's learning. One example of this is flashcards with words and pictures to practice and reinforce learning concepts and rules.
- The word after a period; for example: "There is football tonight. My brother will watch the game at home." Identifying and coloring all types of punctuation marks.
- After the colon, the word that follows must begin with a capital letter when it is a quote or a verbatim word; for example: As Socrates said: "I only know that I know nothing." Similarly, if we are writing a letter, after the initial greeting, the word that follows the colon must be capitalized; for example: "Dear Ana: Thank you very much for your congratulations."

Regardless of the punctuation marks in the text, there are a series of words that, according to the spelling rules, must always be written with an initial capital letter as is shown below.

- The proper names of people, animals, cities, and countries: Claudia, Diego, Pancho, Seville, Barcelona, Spain, Sweden.
- The surnames: Hernández, Rodríguez, García, Díaz, as well as the nicknames, or pseudonyms: Alfonso known as the Wise.
- The common names used par excellence to refer to God, Jesus Christ or the Virgin: The Creator, the Savior, the Immaculate.
- Common names used in personifications of abstract ideas such as Death, Evil, Greed.

- The nouns and adjectives that designate entities, administrative bodies, buildings, monuments, or political parties, among others: the National Library, the University of Salamanca, the Democratic Party, the Ministry of Defense, the Royal Theater.
- The names and adjectives that are part of the name of magazines or periodicals: El País, Revista de Lingüística Teórica, Diario la hora.
- The acronyms of entities, organizations, countries, etc. They are also capitalized: NGO (Non-Governmental Organization), USA (United States), WHO (World Health Organization), U.E. (European Union).
- The names of festivities: Christmas, Constitution Day, New Year, April Fair, Easter.

3.3.4 Suggestions to avoid spelling mistakes

For reducing spelling mistakes, writers should examine each word in the paper individually. They must move from the end of each line back to the beginning, this should be done with the help of a pencil which will help writers to see each word more distinctly (Harwood, 2019). Other suggestions to reduce the spelling mistakes are:

- Use dictionaries. They help you to see the correct form of the written words.
- Keep a list of the correct spelling of words that are difficult to write. This list has to be adapted according to the students' perception of the most problematic words.
- Use Collage. Students cut out letters from newspapers and magazines and then glue them to form a complete word or sentence.
- Use mnemonics. Making relations will help learners to remember the correct form or writing words.
- Use activities as words within words. Teacher writes a word that students will learn and then students think of new words for the letters. It helps them to remember better how to spell correctly.

- Motivate students to read by reading with them. Teacher can make students to make a habit of reading articles in magazines, newspapers or on the websites inside the class.
- Use spelling corrector programs. This will help learners to recheck if they have committed spelling mistakes that they are not able to recognize by themselves.

Conclusions

After carrying out this research study, it can be concluded that the most common mechanical mistakes that high school students make are related to punctuation. The students made many mistakes such as overusing, omitting, and misplacing punctuation marks which demonstrates that they did not master how to apply punctuation rules correctly.

Regarding punctuation, high school students used the comma instead of the period to end sentences, demonstrating that they are not familiar with the rules to use commas. They need to learn to differentiate when to use the comma and period in order to improve their writing skills and avoid making punctuation mistakes in writing assignments.

It is also concluded that mistakes are made mainly because the students' lack of knowledge about the correct use of writing mechanics when writing texts. Students did not know capitalization rules, punctuation rules, and spelling rules which resulted in them making mistakes and affecting negatively their writing performance.

Regarding the second element in mechanics of writing (capitalization), the most common error is related to omitting capitalization, which means that the students did not capitalize words that needed to be capitalized. Since students did not apply the rules to capitalize proper nouns, and the first word at the beginning of a sentence, their writing performance was not good as it could have been if they knew how to capitalize words correctly.

In regards to spelling, it can be concluded that consonant and vowel omission were the most common error since the participants omit writing weak vowels and silent consonant in words. Students tend to write words as they are pronounced which results in them not writing weak and silent vowel and consonants since they do not hear these phonemes.

It can be concluded that students confuse some vowel sounds as they are pronounced differently from their written form. Students confuse some vowel sounds and they write these phonemes exactly as they hear how they are pronounced, which cause many spelling mistakes in writing texts.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study; first, teachers should design tasks that allow students to practice punctuation rules since punctuation marks are used incorrectly the most by the students of this research project. By practicing punctuation rules, the students will eventually reduce their punctuation mistakes and improve their writing performance.

It is recommended that teachers should focus on teaching writing mechanics. Hence, students will become familiar with the range of rules that they must follow to improve their writings and avoid making mistakes that affect the comprehension of their writing performance.

Teachers should encourage the students to write short paragraphs as home assignments, so they keep practicing even outside the classroom and eventually get familiar with the use of periods and commas, which are the most common mistakes students make when writing short paragraphs.

Teachers should encourage students to look for resources that allow them to practice capitalization rules since this is the second most common mechanical mistake that students made. These resources can be online websites, e-books, YouTube videos, etc., or even worksheets that help them remember that they have to capitalize words at the beginning of a sentence or capitalize proper nouns.

Teachers should teach all the phonemes that are used in English to form words since many of these sounds such as weak vowels or silent consonants do not exist in Spanish. The non-existence of some English phonemes can confuse the students who will omit these sounds because they cannot hear them, which leads in them making spelling mistakes in their writing productions.

Students should keep a list of words that they find difficult to spell or words that contain weak vowels and weak consonants. So, if they have doubts they can check the list and avoid spelling mistakes such as vowel and consonant omission.

Students should use dictionaries that allow to hear the pronunciation of the words. In this way, students realize that some words are written different from how they are pronounced and avoid getting confused because of that and making spelling mistakes.

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WORKSHEET 3**Nombre:**

White a paragraph in English of 150 words/ escribe un párrafo de 150 palabras en inglés del al tema.

3. Tema/Topic: Your first day of school / Tu primer dia de escuela.

WORKSHEET 4**Nombre:**

White a paragraph in English of 150 words / escribe un párrafo de 150 palabras en inglés del al tema.

4. Tema/Topic: Favorite habbies / Actividades o hobbies Favoritas que te gusta realizar.

WORKSHEET 5**Nombre:**

White a paragraph in English of 150 words/ Escribe un párrafo de 150 palabras en inglés del al tema.

5. Tema/Topic: The worst day of your life / El peor dia de tu vida.