

Essay Writing Challenges among First-Year Early Grade Education Students: A Case Study at Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development

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Abstract

Essay writing is a key component of language learning and development. Over time, writing has enhanced students' linguistic proficiency and communication skills. However, students often encounter difficulties that hinder their ability to produce effective essays. This study aims to identify and assess the essay-writing challenges faced by first-year Bachelor of Early Grade Education students at the Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development. A closed-ended questionnaire comprising 37 items was administered to 21 participants. The study examined five major challenges: plagiarism, grammatical errors, lexical difficulties, inadequate planning, and a lack of confidence. Findings revealed that lexical challenges were the most prevalent ($M = 2.92$), whereas grammatical errors were the least common ($M = 2.3$ on a 4-point Likert scale). The study concludes that the major obstacle to students' writing performance is their limited vocabulary and difficulty using contextually appropriate diction. Recommendations are provided to improve students' writing competence through targeted pedagogical interventions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing, one of skills of language, has been a key component of the subject of language acquisition. As a consequence of writing throughout time, students have improved their internal and external language proficiency. To support the aforementioned assertion, numerous scholars have attempted to explain the purposes of writing as an appropriate learning tool. Writing fosters communication and allows children to express their uniqueness, claims Gibson and Ewing (2020). This is supported by the possibility that it could facilitate the language transfer from students to their surroundings, allowing for the successful presentation of the concept and message. Before getting feedback, they first practise structuring and effectively communicating their ideas through their work.

Furthermore, writing skills are beneficial since they are developed by combining what has been read, heard, discussed, and then expressed in writing, according to Ruini and Mortara(2022). Writing can assist students develop their speaking and listening skills, which enhances their understanding of language learning. They also become more productive since they are using all of their language skills. One of the main tools for language learning is an essay, which is a written composition. Students' proficiency with language components is noticeably increasing. A few tidbits of evidence that emphasise the importance of this subject provide credence to this assertion. According to earlier studies, writing effectively reinforces what children have already learnt (Nasution & Afrianti, 2022). It suggests that students' ability to absorb, evaluate, and apply information would be enhanced by the writing process. Furthermore, writing enhances language development across the board, encompassing discourse, phonology, grammar, and vocabulary (Khudaverdiyeva, 2025). The fact that pupils are allowed to use a broad range of words and phrases to communicate their ideas supports this assertion. As children get more comfortable writing, it gets easier for them to recognise and understand specific writing rules. Throughout the process, students could run across issues and errors that keep them from finishing written assignments. Both language structure and other external factors are important.

As previously explained, writing—and especially writing essays—has become an essential part of language learning. Regretfully, comprehensive analysis that focuses on the challenges students face when writing essays appears limited. Additionally, a number of factors should be taken into consideration given the first year university students. As a result, the goal of this article is to critically evaluate the problems that first year university students, especially those at pursuing Bachelor of Early Grade Education, have with essay writing. The unique methodology of the current study is demonstrated by the questionnaires it uses to identify these issues. The study's enquiries will centre on the factors that impair their essay-writing abilities. After all, students are supposed to assess their work and gradually improve their proficiency by understanding the challenges associated with essay writing. Additionally, the writing class will use an efficient learning technique.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing is widely recognised as both a linguistic and cognitive process that integrates multiple aspects of language learning, including grammar, vocabulary, organisation, and critical thinking (Bachman, 2024; Nystrand, 2023). Scholars such as Khudaverdiyeva (2025) and Ruini and Mortara (2022) describe writing as an active learning tool that enables students to construct and negotiate meaning through language. It develops not only linguistic competence but also the ability to reflect, analyse, and communicate effectively. Within educational contexts, especially in language acquisition, writing serves as both a medium of assessment and a means for deeper learning (Nasution & Afrianti, 2022).

2.1.The Nature and Purpose of Essay Writing

Essay writing is a central component of academic writing and is often used to evaluate students' mastery of content and their capacity for logical organisation (Leli, 2020; Ho, 2024). An effective essay requires the integration of coherence, cohesion, grammatical accuracy, and appropriate vocabulary (Li, 2024; Sidabutar, 2021). According to Kashiha (2022), a well-written essay is characterised by structural unity and thematic consistency, which reflect the writer's ability to link ideas meaningfully across paragraphs. However, these skills are not

innate; they must be taught, practised, and scaffolded, particularly for students learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL).

2.2. Common Challenges in Students' Essay Writing

When writing an essay, students face a number of difficulties, claims Elkhayma (2020). The first is plagiarism. Copying an idea or piece of writing from another author and using it in our own essay is prohibited. That being said, there are numerous reasons why plagiarism can happen. The reasons include difficulties coming up with and refining ideas, difficulty correctly putting quotes into sentences, failing to credit the author when quoting, and difficulties paraphrasing concepts from the article (Yoon, Miszoglad & Pierce, 2023). It suggests that students' understanding of a certain subject must still be qualified, therefore their only choice is to copy other authors' work carelessly. in order to fix this problem.

The next group consists of grammatical errors. Muftah (2023) define an error as a poor or insufficient acquisition of language item usage in relation to native speaker proficiency. Additionally, a mistake is a systematic deviation brought on by a pupil who has never studied before or who consistently makes mistakes. In the same study, they suggested that proofreading could help avoid grammatical errors. Among the grammatical elements that students should be aware of are the following:

- a. Verb Form and Tense: Amoah and Yeboah (2021) state that when there are no equivalencies between the usage of the simple present tense and the simple past tense, grammatical errors in verb tense construction occur. It indicates that many times, the verbs used are not suitable for the tense.
- b. The verb and subject are in agreement. Sentences in this instance are out of balance due to improper subject and verb arrangement. It is common for students to unintentionally put the plural verb before the singular verb and the singular verb after the plural subject.
- c. The word sequence. The usage of the erroneous word order occurs when the subject, predicate, and complement of a phrase are not in the correct sequence or when one of the elements is missing.
- d. Prepositions and adverbs . An unsuitable connection between two words might lead to prepositional errors. It could be challenging to use the appropriate preposition when students are not familiar with the guidelines.
- e. Articles. Amoah and Yeboah (2021) state that improper article selection for nouns is a sign of article defects. The research Auxiliaries found that students were often uncomfortable when they were trying to connect the articles "a," "an," and "the" with certain nouns. According to Fang (2022), students frequently use auxiliaries incorrectly, placing them after relative pronouns, selecting the incorrect auxiliary option, omitting unnecessary information, and adding auxiliary.
- f. Spelling. Unconsciously occurring typographical errors are the most frequent cause of spelling problems. Apart from that, learners frequently do not know how to write the words. They write it in their mother tongue as a result (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021).
- g. Pronoun When a pronoun does not correctly correspond to the main topic, it is called a pronoun error. This may have occurred as a result of inadequate writing.

- h. The passive voice. After switching to the passive voice, students frequently utilise the incorrect verb form. When it should be modified based on the tense, the verb is still on verb one.
- i. Run-on sentence. According to (Hastuti, 2022), a run-on sentence addresses the incorrect relationship between two or more separate sentences. Regarding this, learners frequently connect phrases without employing conjunctions or punctuation (such as a period or semicolon). It could cause readers to become confused.

After grammatical errors, lexical problems are common in essay writing. According to Amiri, Alami, Matlabi and Shomoossi (2021), lexical problems are related to the writer's difficulty choosing appropriate words or diction; the words chosen are often less precise, which may affect the sentence structure; additionally, it does not rule out the possibility that the writer has trouble coordinating sentences, which will result in a violation of the coherency between paragraphs; consequently, the writer should read more sources to increase their vocabulary.

The next problem is a lack of planning; disorganised thoughts arise from a lack of forethought, so the writer must support their claim by determining their writing philosophy, the purpose of the text, and the relationship between the information in the first paragraph. As said earlier, prewriting is one of the most crucial stages in the essay preparation process.

However, several students typically overlook this stage, even though coming up with concepts and making an outline are essential. Writer's block could arise if this happens frequently. Additionally, they would rather not use writing to translate ideas into speech. Their thoughts become jumbled as a result, creating disorganised paragraphs.

Finally, but just as importantly, is a lack of confidence. Zheng et. al. (2024) assert that students usually lack the self-assurance to display their work and act as peer editors for the writings of their friends. It is evident from the fact that they either believe their ideas are inferior to those of their peers or are hesitant to listen to criticism and make changes.

2.3. Psychological and Cognitive Dimensions of Writing

Beyond linguistic challenges, psychological factors significantly influence writing performance. Febriani (2022) found that low confidence and writing anxiety contribute to students' reluctance to draft or revise their work. These emotional barriers limit students' willingness to engage in peer review and revision, both of which are essential stages of the writing process (Bem, 2021). Zheng et. al. (2024) similarly noted that students who fear evaluation or comparison with peers often avoid risk-taking in writing, leading to minimal improvement over time. This highlights the importance of fostering supportive classroom environments that encourage feedback and self-efficacy in writing.

2.4. Writing as a Process

The procedures that certainly help students with their writing process have been the subject of numerous studies. The phase model is a great way to imagine a good writing process, claim Blank (2020). Prewriting is the first of eight processes that make up the model. The prewriting process must be finished before the writer starts writing the paper's first draft. For the creation of concepts, plans, and data, this phase is essential. According to Rumelhart (2022), the writer should adhere to the prewriting procedures, which include talking, outlining, freewriting, journaling, and talk-write in the conclusion. . After taking notes on some of the

topic's queries throughout the chat, the writer drafts an outline to help move the ideas from general to specific. After that, authors are expected to use freewriting to determine their issues, including audience, objectives, and topic-related structure or organisation (Bean & Melzer, 2021). Journals assist writers to keep track of their writing progress by acting as their diaries throughout the process. The opinions and assessments of every evaluation source will be recorded and utilised to connect the ideas. The writer is able to formulate a conceptual writing strategy and orally express their ideas after finishing the earlier stages.

First, create a plan. In order to support their argument in this phase, the author must explain their writing philosophy, the purpose of the article, and the relationship between the content. "Who is the audience?" is one of the basic questions that can generally help with practical preparation. Are insiders or outsiders the author's target audience? What is this paper's purpose? Which business is best suited? Which rules of writing will the text follow? Collins (2025). Each of these questions helps us determine the goals and directions of our writing.

The next step is drafting. The first stage of word creation that comes after the development of previous concepts is called "drafting." Many times, people focus too much on sentence structure and punctuation instead of the ideas because they think their draft should be flawless. Currently in outline form, draughting could be more organised.

Next, pause. Collins (2025) state that the best way for writers to increase their cognitive capacity when writing is to stop. He found in his studies that a skilled writer often takes a moment to think about the complexities of their problem.

Reading comes next. Excellent reading is essential to becoming a good writer because the two skills are intertwined, claim Magolda & King (2023). As a continuation of pausing, reading enables the writer to consider their work and how well it aligns with their objective. Stated differently, this stage acts as a prompt for the writer to stay on course. Editing comes next. The author may decide to revise their work after finishing the first draft in order to eliminate any unclear lines or paragraphs. Rearranging phrases or paragraphs is one way that revision aims to improve reading convenience.

Editing comes next. To make the work look professional, the editing process mostly addresses sentence-level errors. The integration or relationship between clauses determines the sentence level (Keine, 2020). Included are punctuation, grammar, and content. The writer thus focuses on subjects, predicates of agreement, spelling, sentence length, punctuation placement, and style. The final step is publication, which describes the procedure of making the finished document publicly accessible. The intended audience is supposed to read the written content.

Writing is a complicated process since it requires writers to adhere to a number of requirements. According to Bachman (2024), excellent writing should possess a number of qualities, such as 1) Unity, Bachman (2024) asserts that sentence relevance inside a paragraph is referred to as text unity. It implies that when discussing the core subject, every sentence must relate to every other statement. The topic sentence must be supported by the supporting sentences. There is a loss of textual cohesiveness when a sentence conflicts with the topic sentence (Jassim, 2023). To put it simply, cohesion refers to the specific words and phrases that link the writing and

guide readers, such as pronouns, transitions, and repetitions of key words and phrases. To attain coherence, it is crucial to employ a variety of lexical and grammatical links between words. In the meantime, he claimed that the fundamental type of organizational structure that ties words and sentences together is coherence.

According to the above assertion, if a paragraph flows logically and smoothly from one sentence to the next, it can achieve a high degree of coherence. Bachman stated that the organizational structure, regularity, and appropriateness of the material at the start of the paragraph are all related to paragraphing. 4) Grammar, one of the fundamental language abilities for writing, is grammar, which emphasizes active-passive voice, subject-predicate agreement, and tenses. To prevent reading difficulties, the author must use proper grammar.

5) Spelling, regarding spelling, it was said that this has to do with how accurately the word appears in the text. The author must use proper spelling for all words according to Standard English to make the work understandable and readable for readers. 6) Punctuation, according to Sanosi (2024), helps readers grasp the meaning of a sentence in written material and prevents them from being confused. He emphasized that punctuation serves to make texts more understandable. Furthermore, punctuation emphasizes rhythm, intonation, pauses, and stress, all of which help to make the content clear.

According to Leli (2021), an essay is a brief formal composition that addresses a single subject. Writing essays aids students in their language learning process and increases their comprehension of a given subject (Sidabutar, 2021). This task encourages students to explain, organize concepts and data, evaluate sources, and use critical judgment, all of which lend credence to it. The essay also helps them improve their ability to write logically, coherently, and persuasively, as well as their capacity to structure arguments effectively. In contrast to Sidabutar (2021), Ho (2024) stated that an essay is composed of basic paragraphs that develop one main topic that must still be connected to the previous one. Additionally, Li (2024) defines essays as works on a given topic that comprise a combination of information and opinion based on logical sequences and acceptable expression tactics. The writer can develop their idea based on how deeply they comprehend the Essay Structure.

According to Kashiha (2022), an essay consists of three primary components: 1) an introduction paragraph, which informs the audience of the topic of the essay. It serves as a hook to capture the reader's interest by offering a basic explanation of the problem. The main concepts of the essay, which will be expanded upon point by point throughout the body paragraphs, must be stated in a concise thesis statement. 2) The primary passage. Each of the multiple paragraphs that make up the body paragraph has a single, main idea and a substantial sentence. To elucidate the thesis statement, specific facts, observations, figures, and quotations must be used as supporting claims. 3) Compose a paragraph that concludes. The concluding paragraph follows the essay's conclusion. It restates or summarises the key points previously made. For readers to fully comprehend the authors' beliefs, the conclusion should be concise.

2.5.Relevance to Early Grade Education Students

While numerous studies (e.g., Ho, 2024; Yuliawati, 2022) have explored essay writing among EFL students globally, few have focused on early grade education majors in Ghanaian

universities. These students are future teachers who must master writing to effectively model good language use and teach literacy. Yet, they often face compounded challenges related to vocabulary limitations, grammatical interference from local languages, and a lack of exposure to formal academic writing conventions. This study, therefore, fills a contextual gap by analyzing the specific essay-writing difficulties of first-year Bachelor of Early Grade Education students at the Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development. The findings aim to inform targeted pedagogical interventions in writing instruction for teacher trainees.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive quantitative research design aimed at identifying and analyzing the specific challenges students encounter in essay writing. This design was deemed appropriate because it allows the researcher to describe trends, frequencies, and relationships among observed variables without manipulating them (Taherdoost, 2021). A quantitative descriptive approach also facilitates the presentation of students' writing challenges in measurable terms through statistical summaries such as mean scores and standard deviations.

3.2. Population and Sample

The target population comprised all first-year students enrolled in the Bachelor of Early Grade Education programme at the Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development (AAMUSTED). From this group, a sample of 21 students was purposively selected. The inclusion criteria were: (a) being in the first year of study, (b) having completed at least one academic writing or communication skills course, and (c) willingness to participate voluntarily. The small sample size allowed for manageable data collection and detailed interpretation, though it is recognized as a limitation for generalization.

3.3. Instrument Development

Data were collected using a structured closed-ended questionnaire consisting of 37 items divided into six sections:

1. Personal information,
2. Essay-writing issue 1: Plagiarism,
3. Essay-writing issue 2: Grammatical errors,
4. Essay-writing issue 3: Lexical difficulties,
5. Essay-writing issue 4: Lack of planning, and
6. Essay-writing issue 5: Lack of confidence.

The items were designed after an extensive review of existing literature and previously validated instruments used in similar studies (Amiri et al., 2021; Febriani, 2022; Muftah, 2023). Each statement represented a potential writing challenge, framed to measure the frequency or perceived severity of the issue.

3.4. Instrument Validation and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, AAMUSTED. Their feedback addressed item clarity, content relevance, and construct alignment with the research objectives. Revisions were made to simplify ambiguous wording and remove overlapping items.

A pilot test was conducted with five students from a similar cohort who were not part of the main study. Their responses were analysed using Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency. The reliability coefficient obtained was $\alpha = 0.83$, indicating high reliability and consistency among questionnaire items (Becker, 2023). Minor wording modifications were made following the pilot to improve comprehension.

3.5.Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over two weeks using Google Forms, distributed via class WhatsApp groups to ensure accessibility and convenience. The online format allowed students to complete the questionnaire anonymously, reducing potential bias and encouraging honest responses. Participation was voluntary, and students were informed of the study's purpose and assurances of confidentiality before proceeding. The researcher verified that all 21 questionnaires were fully completed before analysis.

3.6.Measurement Scale

Responses were rated using a four-point Likert scale to measure the degree of agreement with each statement:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree.

The scale was intentionally designed without a neutral midpoint to prompt respondents to take a definite stance, as recommended by Rokeman (2024). Higher mean values indicated greater severity or frequency of a particular writing challenge.

3.7.Data Analysis

After data collection, responses were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics. Specifically, means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions were computed for each variable to determine which challenges were most prevalent and which were least prevalent. The mean scores helped identify the relative ranking of the five categories (plagiarism, grammatical errors, lexical difficulties, lack of planning, and lack of confidence). Standard deviation values indicated the level of variability in students' responses. Graphical representations were used to illustrate patterns across the five categories of challenges.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1.Results

The researcher gave the questionnaire to respondents in order to gather information for the study question. The content concentrated on the five categories of problems—plagiarism, grammatical faults, lexical difficulties, lack of preparation, and lack of confidence—that hinder students' ability to write successful essays. Each of the four Likert scale options available to respondents has a score range of 3–4 points for strongly agreeing, 2–3 points for agreeing, 1–2 points for disagreeing, and 0–1 points for strongly disagreeing. The line graph below provide a clear illustration of the results of the aforementioned research question.

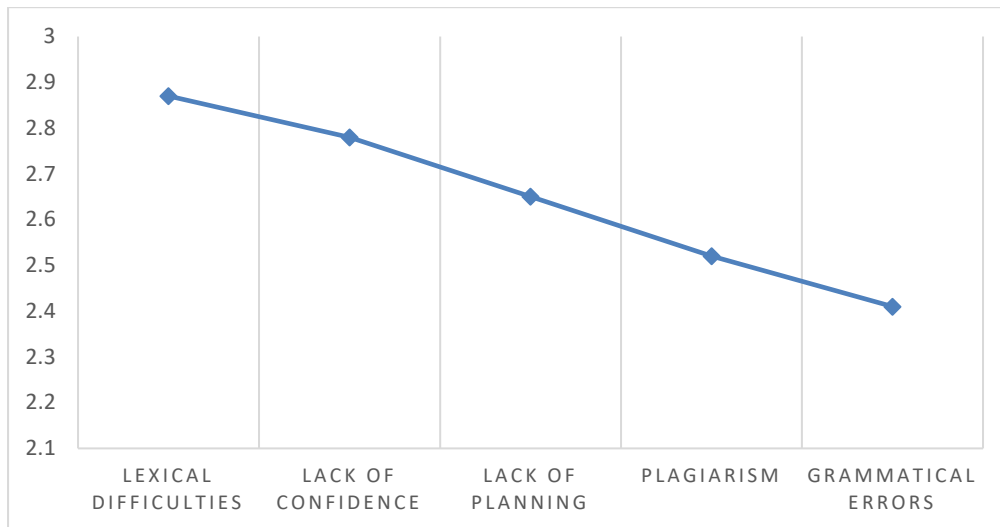


Figure 1: Students' Challenge in Writing an Essay

All respondents agreed that they commonly run into the five barriers when writing essays, as seen in Figure 1. It is supported by the average score of two to three for these categories. The results indicate that lexical problems are the most common barrier to essay writing, with an average score of 2.92. Plagiarism, a lack of confidence, and a lack of planning follow next. Interestingly, with an average score of 2.3, grammatical errors are the least frequent challenge faced by students.

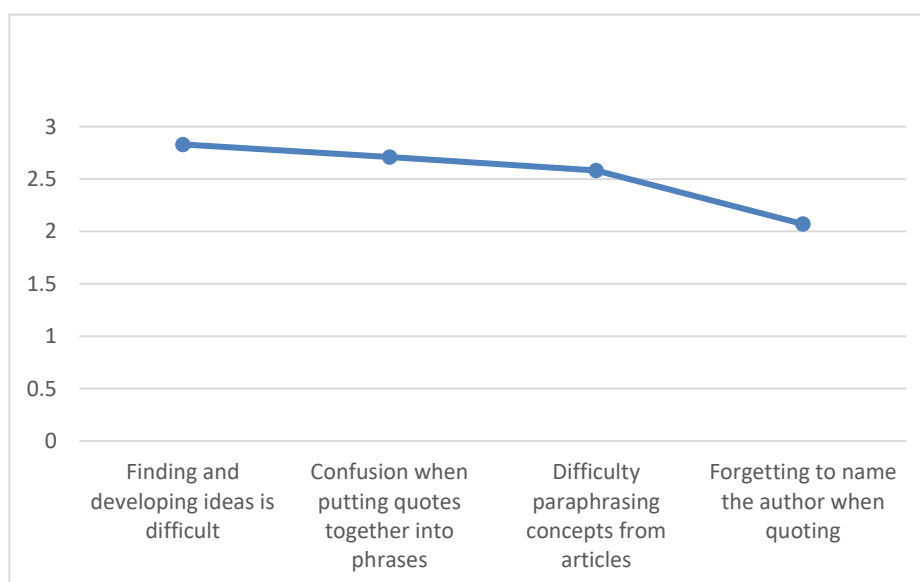


Figure 2: Students' Challenge with Plagiarism

Respondents acknowledged that they had encountered a variety of plagiarism issues, as shown in Figure 2. With an average score of 2.9%, the majority of students concurred that coming up with and creating ideas is challenging. With an average score of 2.8, some respondents also struggle to combine quotes into words. They decided to address this matter.

Additionally, the other students, who scored an average of 2.6, concurred that it can be challenging to paraphrase ideas from publications. Conversely, respondents with an average score of 1.09 dispute that they frequently omit the author's name while quoting.

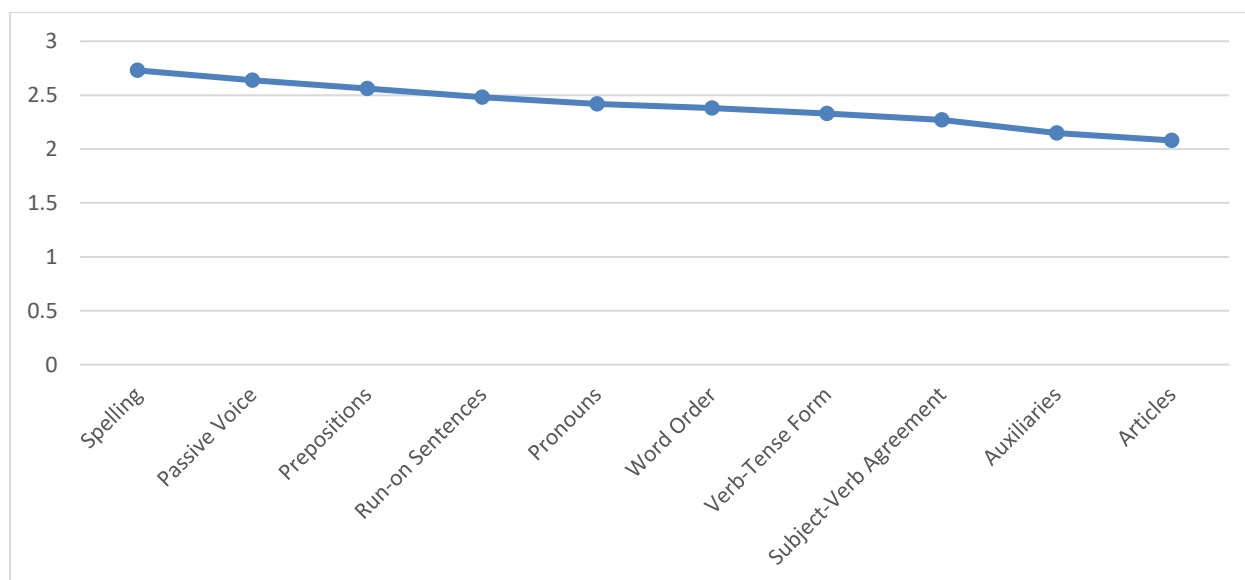


Figure 3: Students' Challenge in Grammatical Errors

Spelling is the most frequent grammatical issue that respondents encountered, as seen in Figure 3. Students believed that this problem usually hinders their ability to write an essay, with an average score of 2.61. With an average score of 2.57, the majority of students concurred that the second most frequent challenge they face is passive voice. The following are the verb-tense form, subject-verb agreement, run-on phrase, pronoun, and word order. Articles and auxiliary materials make the fewest errors, with an average of 1.9 and 1.97, respectively. Every student acknowledged that they had difficulties in each of these areas.

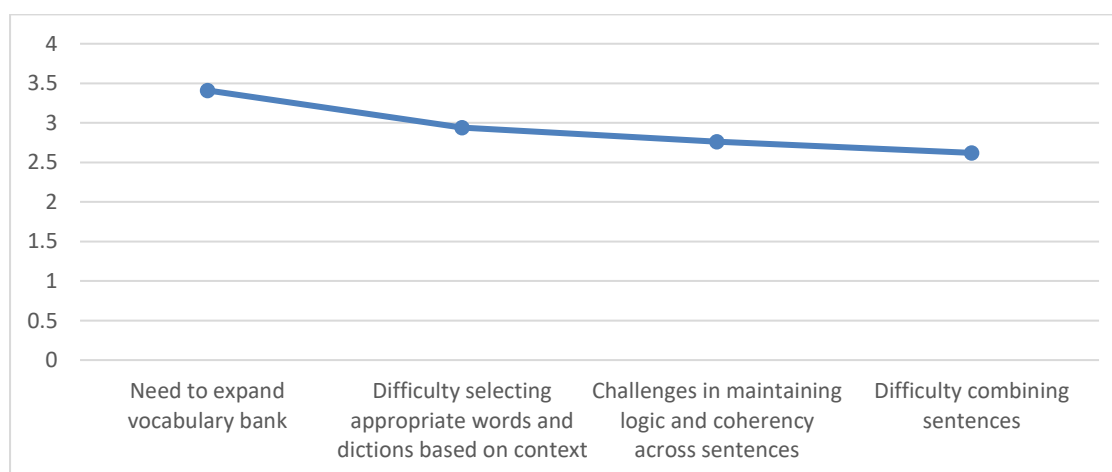


Figure 4: Students' Challenge in Lexical Difficulties

The results of the problems in terms of lexical difficulty are shown in Figure 4. Nearly all respondents strongly agreed that increasing their vocabulary bank is still required, with an average score of 3.47. With an average score of 2.9%, the majority of students concur that they have struggled to choose appropriate words and dictionaries depending on the circumstances. Additionally, students often thought it was difficult to maintain coherence and logic throughout sentences. Subsequently, a number of pupils with an average score of 2.6% concurred that they struggle with sentence construction.

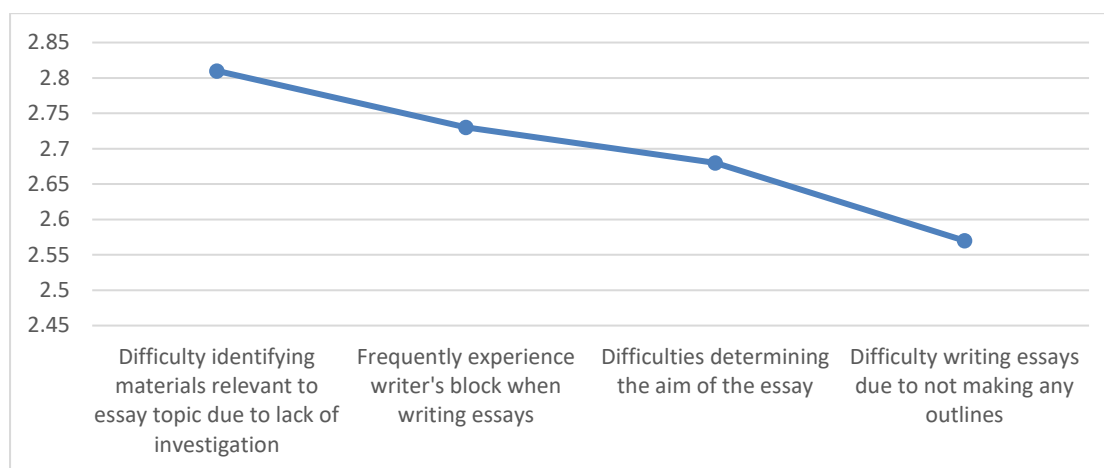


Figure 5: Students' Challenge regarding Lack of Planning

According to Figure 5, students with an average score of 2.85 concurred that their inability to conduct adequate research hindered their ability to find resources pertinent to the essay topic and generate ideas. Additionally, a number of students, with an average score of 2.8, concurred that they commonly encounter writer's block when composing essays. Next, with an average score of 2.7%, students are unable to identify the essay's purpose. Additionally, a number of students with an average score of 2.6% reported that they struggle to write essays since they don't have any outline.

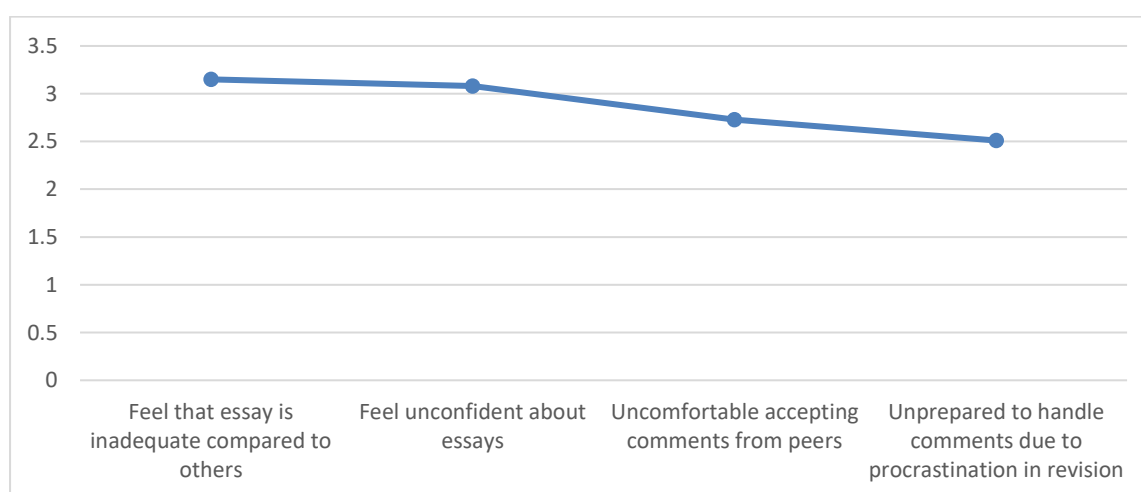


Figure 6: Students' Challenge regarding Lack of Confidence

With an average score of 3.2, the majority of students firmly believed that their essay was not up to level with the others, as shown in Figure 6. The findings showed that a small percentage of students (average of 3.1) strongly agreed that they felt hesitant about their essays. With an average score of 2.7%, several students acknowledged that they find it difficult to take criticism from their classmates. Additionally, with an average score of 2.4, students admitted that their delay in rewriting has left them ill-prepared to manage comments.

5. DISCUSSION

Following data analysis, a discussion of the research's outcome is required. Thus, there will be six major sections covered in this section. These include students' issues with essay writing, plagiarism, lexical difficulty, grammar errors, lack of preparation, and insecurity. According to the data presented and the hypotheses from earlier similar studies, each section would explain the issues that students face when writing essays.

5.1. Students' Challenge in Writing an Essay

Compared to the other categories, the majority of respondents reported having greater lexical problems. It proves that they fall short of one of the requirements for excellent writing, which is coherence and cohesiveness. By selecting the right words, the author of an essay must preserve the coherence and flow from one phrase to the next. Additionally, this finding contradicts earlier research, which suggested that essays should help students develop their writing skills, enabling them to produce logical and cohesive writing (Kashiha, 2022). As mentioned earlier, students' ability to choose suitable words and maintain a strong sentence structure needs to be strengthened. The least frequent issue that students face is grammatical errors. It implies that almost every respondent is familiar with the appropriate terminology. This finding aligns with previous studies that have found readability and content clarity to depend heavily on grammatical quality (Bachman, 2024).

5.2. Students' Challenge with Plagiarism

Regarding plagiarism, most respondents acknowledged having trouble coming up with and refining ideas. This finding was in line with Anindita's (2024) assertion that around 25 out of 32 students were in agreement that they regularly encounter this difficulty. Having trouble summarising ideas from articles and being lost when putting quotations into sentences are two further challenges when writing an essay. These problems stem from the fact that students' knowledge of a certain subject is still lacking, making it their only choice to replicate the work of other authors (Anindita, 2024). On the contrary, students usually claim that they fail to cite the author. This conclusion actually supports Kullolli's (2024) assertion that it is against the law to plagiarise ideas from other authors and use them in an article without giving credit.

5.3. Students' Challenge in Grammatical Errors

Out of the ten grammatical errors listed, respondents felt that spelling was the most troublesome. When writing an essay, they usually make accidental errors. This result runs counter to the earlier study's finding that clear, readable writing that maintains high word accuracy is essential for success (Bachman, 2024). Students believed that passive voice was the next major challenge in essay writing, after spelling. It is supported by the fact that they

commonly use a verb in its erroneous form. This finding aligns with the previous research conducted by Yuliawati (2022). They found that when the verb should be changed according to the tense, it stays on the verb one.

The third-place finish is prepositions. Students frequently become confused when employing the prepositions of place and time because they are not familiar with the norms. Errors could be discovered because of a word's incompatibility with another. The fourth problem is a run-on sentence that comes after prepositions. Some students struggle to put sentences together with the right punctuation and conjunctions. This finding is in line with SIbrahim Alsalami's (2022) finding that a run-on phrase can happen when two or more independent clauses have an improper relationship because of conjunction invalidity and punctuation. Fifth on the list of common essay writing mistakes are pronouns. The results showed that half of the respondents found it challenging to use the pronoun correctly. It indicates that the pronoun is not appropriately matched to the primary subject. Meron (2024) discovered that pronoun errors occur when the linked pronoun and the primary topic are not consistent. Word order is the sixth error, when children find it difficult to arrange words according to terms. The sixth error is using the wrong verb tenses. The responses indicate that respondents are having trouble mentioning verbs depending on tenses. The fact that the verbs used are usually not appropriate for the tense utilised is supported by the statistics. Additionally, only a small percentage of respondents mentioned having trouble with subject-verb agreement. They have trouble agreeing on verbs and subjects in both singular and plural forms. The results of Meron (2024), who found that students commonly unconsciously misinterpret single verbs following plural subjects and vice versa, are in line with this.

Since almost all respondents denied that they faced this difficulty when writing an essay, auxiliary writers had the lowest error rate. The results of the study actually run counter to earlier research by Selasie (2025), who discovered that almost all respondents routinely choose the wrong auxiliary option, conducting needless omission and addition auxiliary. Lastly, respondents said that articles had the fewest errors. It shows that the great majority of students know how to connect particular nouns with articles (like "a," "an," and "the"). This result is in line with Yuliawati (2022) findings, which showed that articles have the fewest grammatical errors.

5.4. Students' Challenge in Lexical Difficulties

Majority of respondents thought that they still needed to work on improving their vocabulary bank in terms of lexical problems. According to earlier research, having a large vocabulary improves the coherence of an essay (Bachman, 2024). The idea is that it will be easier for the writer to find the right words or phrases related to the problem. As mentioned before, they are keen to increase their vocabulary because they are struggling to choose appropriate words and dictionaries based on the situation. A previous study by Ullman (2020) found that the terms used are often less correct, which could affect the sentence structure. Maintaining consistency and logic when combining phrases was another problem.

5.5. Students' Challenge regarding Lack of Planning

The results showed that the respondents concurred that a lack of research causes them to struggle to generate ideas and locate sources. This finding suggests that students do not adhere to prewriting, one of the phase models of an efficient writing process. As a result, it runs counter to the findings of Bem (2021), who discovered that writers can produce ideas by brainstorming and outlining. According to him, learners must first write down a few questions about the subject before creating an outline that will help them refine their ideas from broad to more focused. Given that they are not creating any outlines, it is understandable why they are having writer's block due to the lack of pertinent information. Additionally, some students struggle to determine the goal of their writings. Like those previously noted, this result contradicts Bem (2021), who claimed that one of the most important processes in elucidating the text's purpose and objectives is planning. It implies that some students still struggle with the qualities of good writing, especially coherence. This conclusion therefore deviates from Bachman's (2024) conclusion that every sentence must relate to every other sentence while delivering the main idea.

5.6. Students' Challenge regarding Lack of Confidence

The majority of students strongly agreed that they lacked confidence in their work and frequently compared it to that of their peers. This discovery was also reported by Febriani (2022). He found that students usually fear their work and are reluctant to revise their peers' essays as peer editors. Feedback from friends will therefore be uncomfortable. It thus runs counter to the assertion made by Bem (2021) that input is essential to the editing process. Furthermore, after receiving feedback, very few people are hesitant to change their work. Since revision aims to improve reader convenience by making paragraphs more organised than before, this problem runs counter to Bem (2021). Apart from that, the results contradict Febriani (2022), who claimed that this stage should be carefully considered since it would give the work a polished appearance if the author is prepared to make necessary corrections.

6. CONCLUSION

Essay writing helps students improve their linguistic skills. However, when writing an essay, students usually run across a number of problems that hinder their efficiency. Students generally agreed that lexical problems were the most common challenge, followed by lack of confidence, lack of preparation, and plagiarism, according to the results of data collection and analysis. Grammatical errors are surprisingly the least of their issues. According to the researcher, pupils usually have trouble choosing the right words or diction depending on the context when it comes to lexical difficulties. Additionally, because they doubt their work and evaluate it against that of their peers, pupils lack confidence. Lack of preparation can also make it more difficult to come up with and develop ideas, which is why most students experience writer's block. The final category consists of grammatical errors, of which spelling is the most common since people frequently make mistakes while typing. A preposition, a run-on phrase, a pronoun, word order, verb-tense form, subject-verb agreement, auxiliaries, and articles come

after the passive voice. In this context, the study aims to determine and evaluate the challenges faced by Bachelor of Early Grade Education first year students of Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development when writing essays. The most important finding is that students still need to expand their vocabulary in order to find the right words and diction more easily.

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