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AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

Bachelor's thesis

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Nicole Victoria Gillerová

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Nicole Victoria Gillerová

Declaration

I hereby declare, that I have elaborated the final thesis independently and I have listed all the literature used.

Date:

Student's signature

Abstrakt

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Táto bakalárska práca analyzuje najčastejšie chyby v anglickom jazyku, ktorých sa dopúšťajú študenti z 3 rôznych stredných škôl. V empirickej časti práce využívame kvantitatívny prístup v kombinácii s komparatívnou analýzou a analýzou chýb, zameriavam sa na morfológické, lexikálne, syntaktické a ortografické chyby identifikované v písomných zadaniach študentov. Údaje boli zozbierané od 49 študentov a ich chyby boli spracované do grafov a tabuliek, výsledky nám ukazujú, že najčastejšie sa vyskytujúce chyby spomedzi všetkých 3 stredných škôl boli ortografické, presnejšie interpunkčné chyby. Výsledky nám tiež ukázali rozdiel medzi typmi a frekvenciou chýb. Zistenia tejto práce môžu pomôcť učiteľom anglického jazyka sprísniť oblasti, v ktorých majú študenti najväčšie nedostatky.

Kľúčové slová: Anglický jazyk, analýza chýb, interpunkčné chyby, študenti stredných škôl, bežné chyby

Abstract

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The bachelor's thesis analyses the most common errors in the English language made by Slovak students from 3 different secondary schools. The empirical part of the thesis uses a quantitative approach, combined with comparative analysis and error analysis. It is focused on morphological, lexical, syntactic, and orthographic errors identified in the written assignments of students. Data were collected from 49 students, and their errors were processed into graphs and tables. The results show us the most common errors among all 3 schools were orthographic, more specifically, punctuation errors. The results also show us the difference between types and frequency of errors. The findings of this thesis may help English language teachers strengthen areas where students lack the most.

Keywords: English language, error analysis, punctuation errors, secondary school students, common errors

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Introduction

In Slovakia, the English language is a mandatory foreign language in most secondary schools, yet students often experience difficulties that impact their fluency and accuracy. These challenges can be seen as common linguistic errors, many of which are repeated across students, regardless of school type. By analyzing these errors, teachers and researchers can identify problem areas, where students struggle the most and why.

The thesis aims to examine the most frequent English language errors made by Slovak secondary school students aged 17-19. The research is based on 20 written translated sentences from Slovak into English, completed by students from 3 selected schools: Albert Einstein Grammar School, Samuel Jurkovič Vocational School of Commerce and Services, and Private Slavic Grammar School. The collected data are analysed through error analysis and comparative methods, focusing on four main error categories: morphological, lexical, syntactic, and orthographic.

The thesis is divided into two main parts. The theoretical part defines the main concepts in second language acquisition, explains the differences between interlingual and intralingual errors. It introduces different types of linguistic errors based on scholarly classifications and highlights the importance of error analysis in understanding the learning process and in creating more effective teaching methods. The empirical part of the thesis presents findings from the quantitative research conducted with 49 Slovak secondary school students. Their translated sentences were carefully examined, and the errors were categorised and compared across three selected secondary schools.

Theoretical part

1. Second language acquisition (English language)

A systematic exploration of second language acquisition (L2) began in the latter half of the twentieth century. This development was no coincidence, as it coincided with the rise of the World Wide Web, which greatly broadened the global communication beyond local language communities. More than ever, individuals were required to learn an additional language, not as a hobby but more as a necessity to improve their career opportunities or for accessing education.

At the first glance, the term second language acquisition may appear straightforward, but it warrants a more detailed explanation. To begin with, the word second in this context refers to any language learned after the person's native language. This does not necessarily mean a contrast with the term foreign. Whether the second language is picked up naturally through immersion in a country where it is spoken, or formally taught in a classroom, it is common to refer to this process as second language acquisition.

Second language acquisition may be understood as the process by which individuals learn a language that is other than their first. Typically, the focus has been directed towards the grammatical aspects of the second language. Researchers typically select a particular grammatical element, such as relative clauses /plural forms and investigate how a learner's proficiency in producing this structure evolves over time. One objective of second language acquisition (SLA) is to describe L2 learning comprehensively. Another aim is to offer explanations by identifying both external and internal factors that influence why learners acquire an L2 in specific ways.

An instance of an external factor includes the input learners receive and the linguistic samples they encounter. Language acquisition cannot transpire without some form of input. While external influences play a role in explaining L2 acquisition, it is essential also to consider internal factors. Learners possess cognitive mechanisms that allow them to extract information from the L2 input; for example, they may recognise that plurality in English is indicated by adding an -s to nouns. L2 learners come equipped with substantial knowledge relevant to their language-learning endeavours. Since they have already mastered one language (their native tongue), it is reasonable to expect them to utilise this foundation when acquiring a second language. As discussed, the primary method for investigating L2

acquisition involves collecting and analysing samples of learner-generated language. This analysis will concentrate on learners' errors (Ellis, 1997).

1.1 Error definition

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), an error is a mistake in the writing or speaking process of either native or non-native speaker, resulting from inadequate learning. Errors can be categorised into several types, including lexical, phonological, syntactic, interpretative, and pragmatic.

Corder (as cited in Ferris, 2011) posited that what we commonly refer to as "errors" in second language learners represent a typical phase of development, similar to the processes children undergo while acquiring their first language (L1). Since nearly all children progress through these developmental stages toward achieving proficiency in L1 without external assistance, it follows that errors made by L2 learners should likewise not be regarded as problematic. The process of defining errors and categorising them is known as error analysis. This term refers to the assessment of mistakes made by second language learners.

As noted by Richards and Schmidt (2002, p. 184), "Error analysis may be conducted to identify strategies employed by learners in language acquisition, ascertain the causes of learner errors, gather insights on common challenges in language learning, and support teaching or the creation of educational materials".

1.2 Error analysis vs contrastive analysis

In recent years, research on second language acquisition (SLA) has increasingly concentrated on the errors made by learners, as these errors provide insights into the challenges faced when learning a new language. This focus enables educators to pinpoint specific and difficult areas that their students may encounter, allowing them to target additional attention and support toward those aspects. Error analysis is a method of linguistic evaluation that investigates errors learners commit. It involves comparing these errors with the standards of the target language (Khamisr, 2012).

It is widely acknowledged that the field of applied linguistics, known as error analysis, serves two primary functions: theoretical and practical. The theoretical dimension involves

understanding the language acquisition process, necessitating a method to describe a learner's grasp of the target language at specific stages in their educational journey. This allows for an analysis of how this knowledge correlates with the instruction they have received. On the other hand, the practical aspect of error analysis focuses on its role in informing corrective measures required to address any deficiencies experienced by either learners or teachers (Corder, 1981).

On the other hand, contrastive analysis (CA) posited that a learner's native language significantly interferes with the process of acquiring a second language, presenting it as a primary barrier to achieving proficiency in the new language. According to the CA hypothesis, when there are discrepancies between the structures of the first language (L1) and the second language (L2), learners produce errors that mirror their L1 structure. These errors are believed to stem from deeply ingrained L1 habits influencing the L2 usage (Dulay et al., 1982).

1.3 Error identification

The initial phase of examining student's errors involves identifying them. However, this task is often more challenging than it appears. To recognise these errors, one must differentiate the sentences created by learners from what is considered the standard or "correct" sentences in the target language that align with them. In some cases, this process can be relatively simple (Ellis, 1997).

For example, one of the correspondents has written:

I like music and I am going often to concerts when I have free time. – They used present continuous, which is primarily used when action is taking place right now.

The correct form should be:

I like music and often go to concerts when I have free time.

1.4 Error typology

Investigators in applied linguistics commonly differentiate between two types of errors: performance errors and competence errors. Performance errors occur when learners are tired or hurried. These mistakes are generally minor and can be easily corrected by the learner. In

contrast, competence errors are more serious, reflecting a lack of understanding or knowledge (Touchie, 1986).

According to Burt and Kiparsky (as cited in Touchie, 1986), a distinction was made between local and global errors. Local errors do not obstruct communication or impede comprehension of an utterance's meaning. In contrast, global errors are more significant as they disrupt communication and alter the intended meaning of statements. Local errors typically involve inflexions of nouns and verbs and the application of articles, prepositions, and auxiliary verbs. Global errors, however, are more impactful. Lastly, language learning errors encompass all aspects of a language, including phonology, morphology, lexical, and syntax.

Table no.1 – types of errors

Phonological error	Incorrect pronunciation	Eg. tree instead of three
Morphological error	Incorrect form of a word	Eg. men, not mens
Lexical error	Incorrect choice of a word	Eg. learned / taught
Syntactic error	Incorrect word order	Eg. he lives there, not he there lives

1.5 Error cause

In the process of acquiring a second language, errors generally stem from two primary factors. The first factor being interference from the learner's native language, while the second factor is mainly associated with intralingual influences and developmental aspects of the target language.

The influence of a learner's first language is crucial when acquiring a second language. Errors that arise due to this influence are referred to as interlingual errors, which may also be known as transfer or interference errors (Touchie, 1986). These developmental and intralingual errors are the result of difficulty in second language acquisition, and their factors include:

Simplification: Learners often simplify their language use by avoiding forms and structures that are more complex and challenging. They tend to use forms and structures that are easier to remember.

Overgeneralisation: Learners may mistakenly apply a familiar language rule, for instance from their native language to new contexts where it is inappropriate to use.

Hypercorrection: Occasionally, the teacher's enthusiastic attempts to correct students' mistakes lead to them incorrectly modifying otherwise accurate language forms.

Faulty teaching: At times, errors made by learners stem from teacher-induced factors, which can arise from teachers themselves, teaching methods or materials used during instruction or how information is presented sequentially.

Fossilisation: Certain errors, particularly those related to pronunciation, tend to persist for extended durations, making them very challenging to eliminate.

Avoidance: Certain syntactic structures pose challenges for some learners, leading them to avoid these complexities in favour of simpler alternatives.

Inadequate learning: This issue primarily arises from a lack of awareness regarding rule limitations and incomplete comprehension.

Misguided concepts: Numerous errors made by learners of a second language can be linked to the incorrect hypotheses they develop about language. For instance, some believe that " is" functions as the marker of the present tense, resulting in sentences like: She is walk with her instead of: She is walking with her (Touchie, 1986).

1.6 Common English errors

Common linguistic errors often differ significantly based on the learner's native language. When instructing Slovak students in English as a second language, it is frequently observed that learners exhibit specific errors in their grammar and vocabulary (Cambridge University Press, n.d.).

1.7 Error treatment in SLA

Many educators and students of second languages recognise that second language acquisition is time-consuming and unfolds in different phases. Acquiring a second language (L2) requires considerable time, mainly when the learner aims to use it in an academic context. The extent of experience achieved can vary based on individual characteristics, especially the age at which exposure to the L2 begins. Some learners may never reach a level of fluency that resembles a native speaker. Second language acquisition (SLA) unfolds in distinct phases.

Language components, including vocabulary, morphology, phonology and syntax, can be viewed as individual stages within this acquisition process. As learners navigate through these various elements of SLA, they tend to produce errors that mirror their SLA experiences. Such mistakes may arise from the inappropriate transfer of first language (L1) structures or from a lack of comprehensive understanding of the second language. Consequently, written errors that adult L2 learners make frequently differ significantly from those typically made by native speakers (Ferris, 2011).

2. Division of Errors

When we talk about dividing errors, in the process of learning a second language, learners make errors in ways, which can be categorised under various approaches. We divided types of errors into five major categories according to Farrús et al.,(2010): morphological errors, lexical errors, semantic errors, syntactic errors and orthographic errors.

2.1 Grammar

A solid understanding of grammar is a fundamental component of written language. It consists of the rules that dictate how words are transformed and organised into sentences. These grammatical guidelines play a crucial role in shaping the writing process and ensuring clarity for readers. If learners struggle with grasping the grammar of a language, it may lead to mistakes or inaccuracies in their writing or speaking (Rismadewi, 2021). According to Richards (as cited in Rismadewi, 2021), students' grammatical mistakes stem from two primary factors: interlingual and intralingual errors. The interlingual factor arises from the

influence of the learner's native language, while intralingual errors occur due to insufficient understanding of grammar in the target language.

Grammar can be approached from various perspectives. A fundamental distinction exists between theoretical and descriptive objectives. Theoretical studies aim to uncover abstract principles related to a model of linguistic competence, often delving deeply into a limited number of grammatical constructions. In contrast, descriptive analyses strive for a broader portrayal of grammatical phenomena within specific languages like English.

Within the realm of grammars that adopt a descriptive approach, further variations emerge. One such difference pertains to the extent and detail covered; very few grammars endeavour to provide an all-encompassing account of English grammar. Additionally, there is variation in how grammar is defined – while some studies focus solely on syntactic structures, others encompass morphology as well as the interactions between grammar and other levels of language including phonology lexicon, and semantics (Biber et al., 2021)

2.2 Morphological errors

Morphology is the examination of the internal composition of words. Interestingly, it holds a unique position as one of the earliest but also more contemporary branches of grammar. It is regarded as ancient since early linguists predominantly focused on morphological aspects in their studies (Haspelmath and Sims, 2010).

Morphological errors encompass a variety of issues, including inconsistencies in gender and number agreement, apocopes, inaccuracies in verbal morphology (inflexion), as well as deficiencies in lexical morphology (derivation and compounding). Additionally, these errors may stem from morphosyntactic alternations resulting in modifications in syntactic structures (Farrús et al., 2010).

2.2.1 Number errors (singular vs. plural)

Student's version: During the weekend (Cez víkendy často chodím von s kamarátmi...)

Incorrect form: During the weekend

Correct form: During the weekends

2.2.2 Incorrect noun form

Student's version: My aims and decides

Incorrect form: My aims and decides

Correct form: My aims and decisions

2.2.3 Future tense misuse

Student's version: When I will finish high school...

Incorrect form: When I will finish high school...

Correct form: When I finish high school...

2.3 Lexical errors

Nazarova (2022) explains that lexicology represents a division of linguistics dedicated to the study of a language's lexicon. A word, defined as the smallest autonomous meaningful unit within a language, consists of fundamental components referred to as morphemes, which can be further broken down into even smaller units known as phonemes, distinctive sounds that contribute to meaning. This discipline investigates all aspects of a word, encompassing their spelling, formation, etymology, usage, and definitions.

Lexical errors exclude any correspondence between the original and translated terms, avoid untranslated source words, ensure that no target words are omitted, and translate proper nouns only when essential (Farrús et al., 2010).

2.3.1 Preposition errors

In English, prepositions function as adjuncts, indicating the arguments associated with predicates, and interact with other parts of speech to convey additional meanings (Chodorow, Tetreault, & Han, 2007).

Student's version: We are going to a school trip...

Incorrect form: We are going to a school trip...

Correct form: We are going **on** a school trip...

2.3.2 Word choice

Student's interpretation: I want to go university to university, but I don't know which part...

Incorrect form: I want to go university to university, but I don't know which part...

Correct form: I want to go to university, but I don't know which **field**...

2.3.3 Verb choice

Student's version: School learned me...

Incorrect form: School learned me...

Correct form: School has taught me...

2.4 Semantic errors

Kearns (2011) describes that semantics concerns itself with the explicit meanings of words as well as how their combinations contribute to meaning, collectively establishing the fundamental essence of comprehension. This foundation serves as the basis from which the overall significance of a specific statement is developed.

Semantic errors encompass polysemy, homonymy, and phrases that are utilized differently in the source language compared to the target language (Farrús et al., 2010). Polysemy and homonymy are linguistic phenomena encountered in daily communication. Words that exhibit polysemy have multiple meanings that are related, whereas homonyms have distinct meanings that are not connected to one another (Hassan & Bashir, 2022).

2.4.1 Incorrect word choice

Student's version: We can rest after a long week...(po náročnom týždni)

Incorrect form: We can rest after a long week...

Correct form: We can rest after a **tough** week...

2.4.2 Adverb misuse

Student's version: ...but I think I did it good.

Incorrect form: ...but I think I did it good

Correct form: ...but I did it **well**

2.5 Syntactic errors

Syntax plays a fundamental role in human language. It is frequently described as an organised relationship between specific gestures and their corresponding meanings. Traditionally, this term pertains to the segment of grammar that focuses on how words are organised, whether they include suitable inflexions or not, to convey relationships of meaning within a sentence.

The syntax is concerned with the construction of sentences, showcasing the remarkable diversity in how elements can be arranged within them across various human languages. A key distinction among these languages lies in the sequence of their fundamental components within a sentence. In English, for instance, the typical structure places the subject before the verb, with the object appearing subsequent to the verb (Van Valin, 2001).

According to Farrús (2010), syntactic errors encompass issues with prepositions, inaccuracies in relative clauses, verbal paraphrasing, clitic usage, the absence or insufficient use of articles preceding proper nouns, and the rearrangement of syntactic components.

2.5.1 Omission of articles

Student's version: Today, we had test...

Incorrect form: Today, we had test...

Correct form: Today, we had **a** test...

2.5.2 Incorrect word order

Student's version: I go often out with my friends...

Incorrect form: I go often out with my friends...

Correct form: I **often go** out with my friends...

2.6 Orthographic errors

Orthography's primary function is to symbolise spoken language, facilitating communication among both time and space. Consequently, the processes of writing and reading align with speaking and listening. Currently, there are three fundamental categories of writing systems: syllabic, alphabetic, and ideographic. The majority of the writing systems we encounter today, such as English, fall under the alphabetic category. An alphabetic system

is defined by its use of symbols that correspond directly to individual sounds rather than to words or meanings (Sohn & Tawerilmang, 1975).

Orthographic errors include issues such as punctuation errors, incorrect accentuation, concatenated words, improper capitalisation of letters, unnecessary spaces resulting from inaccurate word segmentation, misuse of apostrophes and conjunctions, as well as errors involving foreign terms (Farrús, 2010).

2.6.1 Misuse of capitalisation

Capitalisation is a crucial aspect of English writing conventions. Correctly applying capitalisation not only indicates the start of a sentence or emphasises specific word types but also contributes to clarity and enhances the overall effectiveness of the text (Pathan, 2021)

Student's version: english language

Incorrect form: english language

Correct form: **E**nglish language

2.6.2 Punctuation

According to Cronnell (1980), punctuation plays a crucial role in modern English writing by enhancing the readability of text.

Student's version: After high school I want to...

Incorrect form: After high school I want to...

Correct form: After high school, I want to...

2.6.3 Incorrect spelling

Student's version: wich

Incorrect form: wich

Correct form: which

A few examples from each category were presented and examined in greater detail in the empirical part of the research, where all the errors made by the participants were collected, analysed and compared across the 3 selected secondary school.

Empirical part: Comparison of errors between students from 3 different secondary schools

This thesis' theoretical part delineates the fundamental ideas of error analysis and second language acquisition (SLA). The definition of SLA and the internal and external elements influencing the process are covered first. Additionally, this part also examines the definition and classification of errors according to established scholars, such as Corder and Ellis. Finally, it presents a typology of errors divided into morphological, lexical, syntactic, semantic and orthographic kinds. Each category is supported by examples and scholarly references, which serve as the framework for the empirical part that follows.

The main purpose of this chapter was to analyse the most common English errors, and the frequency of morphological, syntactic, orthographic, semantic and lexical errors made by Slovak secondary school students. The study also explored whether students from the 3 selected schools made different types of errors and whether the type of school had an impact on English language learning. We investigated the causes of these errors - whether they were interlingual (influenced by Slovak language) or intralingual (misapplying English language rules). We covered methodology including how we collected and analysed the data.

Lastly, we offer recommendations on how students could improve their language skills while also providing different possible learning techniques for teachers to make English classes more engaging and effective for their students.

3. Methodology and Aims

The methodology in this bachelor's thesis implements a quantitative research design integrating error analysis with comparative analysis. It analyses and compares common English errors made among Slovak secondary schools' students.

The aim was to identify error patterns and divide these errors into four major categories. The data were collected from written assignments produced by Slovak students during their English lessons.

We have opted for quantitative research with error and comparative analysis. Quantitative research was used because it provides frequency, number and type of error. Error analysis was used to divide errors into the groups we mentioned in the theoretical part. Lastly, comparative analysis was suitable for the research because we compared 3 secondary schools and their students.

This research tries to find answers to these questions:

1. Which types of errors are the most common at each school?
2. Is there a difference between these types of schools and the errors they make?
3. What are the possible causes behind the most common English language errors?

3.1 Data collection

Data were collected based on the age and English level of the students, we created 20 sentences in the Slovak language, which the students translated into the English language. The sentences were constructed to match the student's level of language ability and were age-appropriate. Firstly, we approached the English teachers at the 3 selected secondary schools, these schools were chosen by my prior attendance at one of them, as well as by the presence of acquaintances at the remaining 2. We explained to the teachers what we intend to do, and asked if they would be willing to help. Once they agreed, we sent these 20 sentences to them via email for translation. These 3 selected secondary schools were Samuel Jurkovič Vocational School, Albert Einstein Grammar School and Private Slavic Grammar School.

The students had one week to complete the sentences and submitted them on prepared sheets. To ensure anonymity, students did not sign the papers, they only provided information about their age and gender. All the students are preparing for their graduation exam in English language for the B2 level. The sample consists of 49 students. This relatively small number of participants was chosen mainly due to limitations of the scope of the bachelor's thesis, as the chosen topic is very broad, and it is not possible to include all aspects of English language errors or a larger number of participants. The data was only gathered from written assignments that the teachers gave to the students during their English lessons to complete and translate.

The sentences were collected in person as we have sent the sentences via email to the teachers and they printed it out to their students for translation. We created a table with a basic information about the students for the thesis to be clearer. This table shows us the number of participants, age of the participants, nationality, gender and data source.

Table 2 – basic information about the participants

Category	Detail
Number of participants	50
Age	17-19
Nationality	Slovak
Gender	Male (20), Female (29)
Data source	Translated sentences

3.2 Data Analysis Procedure

This section presents the analysis of the collected data. Once we gathered all the assignments across all three secondary schools, we precisely examined all the sentences to help identify what errors students made and into which category the errors fall by also comparing the most common errors in the translated sentences among students from these three schools.

The results are graphically illustrated with the aim of finding the differences and finding out the most frequent errors made.

In the following tables, we divided types of errors only into four categories them being morphological, syntactic, lexical and orthographic. Although we mentioned semantic errors in the theoretical part of the research, we have decided to not include them in the empirical part of the research . The reasoning for this decision is mainly that semantic errors are the hardest ones to identify accurately since they are very subjective and dependent on interpretation. According to Wyatt (1973), there is no specific classification of errors, because each person will interpret and classify errors in a different manner.

Table 3 – Albert Einstein Grammar School

Type of error	Number of errors
Morphological	41
Syntactic	21
Lexical	44
Orthographic	125

Table number 3 shows us which errors were the most common among 18 students from Albert Einstein Grammar School. The total number of errors was 231. The most prominent ones were the orthographic ones, and the least common ones were the syntactic ones.

Table 4 – Samuel Jurkovič Vocational School

Type of error	Number of errors
Morphological	63
Syntactic	42
Lexical	82
Orthographic	147

Table number 4 shows us that 17 students from Samuel Jurkovič Vocational School made together 334 errors in total. The highest ones are orthographic errors, and the lowest ones are syntactic errors.

Table 5 – Private Slavic Grammar School

Type of error	Number of errors
Morphological	52
Syntactic	16
Lexical	31
Orthographic	60

Table number 5 shows us the most frequent and common errors among 14 students from Private Slavic Grammar School. We can see that the total number of errors was 159. Orthographic errors were the most frequent ones. On the other hand, syntactic errors were the least frequent ones.

3.3 Methodology Summary

We decided to choose quantitative research for the thesis in combination with comparative analysis and error analysis. This has helped evaluate errors, students from 3 differently focused secondary schools made in learning a second language.

For the data analysis we have made a Word document with 20 sentences in Slovak language and provided them to the students from the 3 selected schools for translation. We used error analysis for identifying language errors, which enabled categorizing errors into morphological, syntactic, lexical and orthographic groups.

This has created a clear structure for detecting patterns, tracking how often each error has taken place and helping to understand the common language challenges students face every day. The comparative analysis helped to spot similarities and differences in the types and frequency of errors students made. This approach turned out to be an efficient way to assess language proficiency and notice areas that may need more teaching support.

4. Results

The results part of the research will be presented in tables and graphs with all types of errors and their percentage among all participants. Finding out which 5 errors from each category were the most common for every student across all 3 secondary schools.

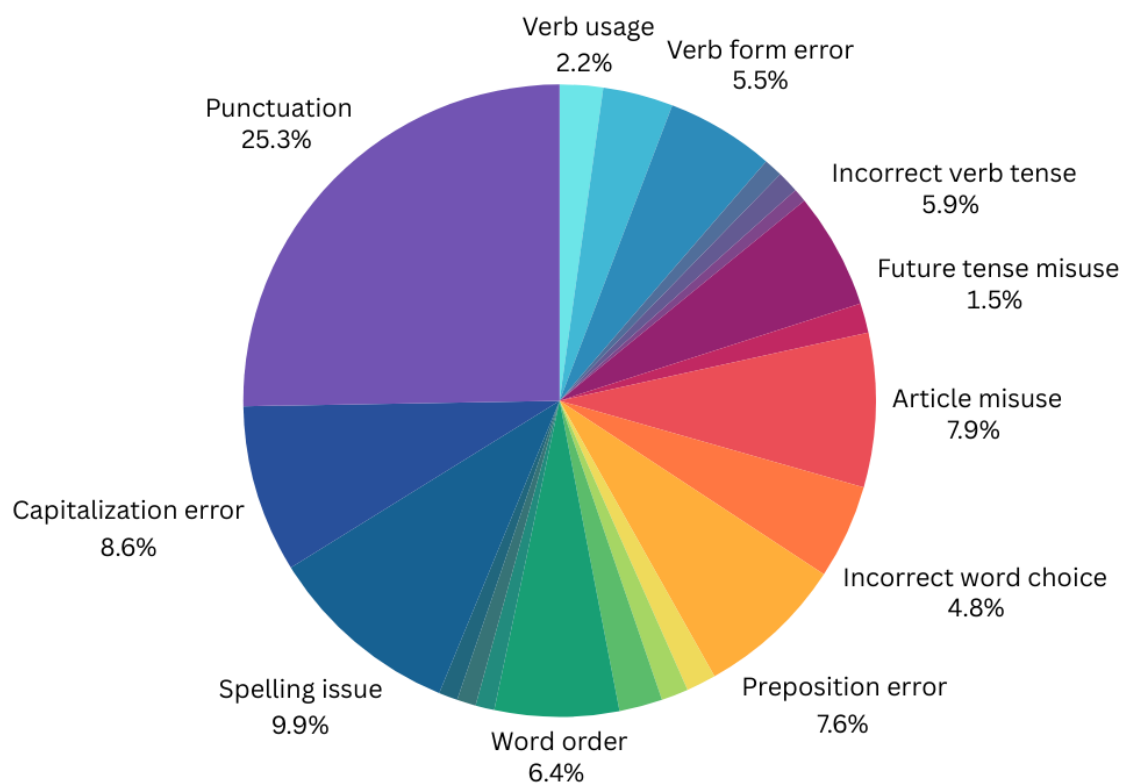
Table 6 – Errors made by all participants and their frequency

Type	Category	Number
Verb usage	Morphological	16
Number	Morphological	26
Verb form error	Morphological	40
Incorrect noun form	Morphological	8
Adverb misuse	Morphological	7
Incorrect verb conjunction	Morphological	5
Incorrect verb tense	Morphological	43
Future tense misuse	Morphological	11
Article misuse	Lexical	57
Word choice	Lexical	35
Preposition	Lexical	55
Verb choice	Lexical	11
Omission of articles	Syntactic	10
Sentence structure	Syntactic	16
Word order	Syntactic	46
Particle	Syntactic	7
Hyphen	Orthographic	7
Apostrophe misuse	Orthographic	7
Spelling	Orthographic	72
Capitalisation	Orthographic	62
Punctuation (commas, dots)	Orthographic	183
		724

We can see the distribution of errors in this table, in the morphological category the most common error among all students was using the incorrect verb tense, while in the lexical category the most frequent error was article misuse. In the syntactic category, the predominant errors were word order and in the orthographic which is also the biggest category punctuation errors were the hardest to master for students. In total, 724 errors were identified across all students.

4.1 Percentage distribution

Pie chart 1 - illustrating percentage share of errors



The largest percentage share belongs to punctuation mistakes, such as commas and periods. We can observe the highest distribution of errors, while some errors, such as hyphens and apostrophe misuse, are not illustrated as they cover only 1% or less of the entire pie chart.

Orthographic errors, which account for the largest percentage distribution are represented mainly by punctuation errors which account for 25,3%, followed by spelling issues, which account for 9,8% and capitalisation errors at 8,6%.

Lexical errors took second place, article errors account for 7,9%, preposition errors account for 7,6% and incorrect word choices with 4,8%.

Syntactic errors were the least common category with representation only in word order errors, which account for 6,4%.

Lastly, morphological errors are represented by verb form errors with a percentile distribution of 5,5% and errors in verb tenses of 5,9%.

4.3 Results of the Data Analysis

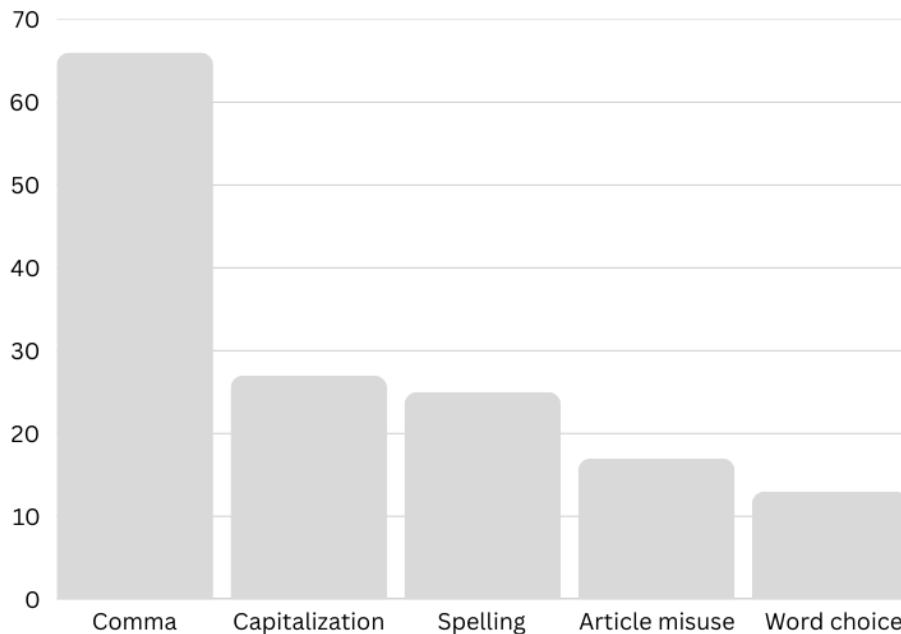
In this subchapter, we can see 3 different bar charts representing the 3 secondary schools, specific errors students made and their frequency. Providing also students' translated sentences as real examples of each error.

We chose students randomly from each group to capture a broader spectrum of errors, including more participants allows a fuller picture of the challenges they face. Including different participants enriches the analysis and ensures that the results are fair and applicable to a larger population.

4.3.1 Albert Einstein Grammar School

This subchapter shows us real examples and results students from Albert Einstein Grammar School made.

Bar chart 1 – Albert Einstein Grammar School



Bar chart number 1 represents the 5 most common errors made among 18 students from Albert Einstein Grammar School. The most frequent error was punctuation error and more specifically misuse or omission of commas in the translated sentences, this error occurred 66 times. Followed by capitalisation errors which were the second most common with an occurrence of 27, spelling errors happened 25 times, article misuse occurred 17 times and lastly, incorrect word choices were made 13 times.

Punctuation errors (commas)

Slovak version of the sentence: Po strednej škole chcem ísť na vysokú školu, ale ešte si nie som istý, ktorý odbor si vyberiem.

Correct translated sentence: After high school, I want to go to university, but I am not sure, which field of study I will choose.

A version of participant number 6: “After high school I want to go to university,

but I am not sure which union I will choose”.

Participant number 6 lacks a comma after the introductory time phrase “After high school”. In English language, it is standard to use comma after introductory phrase to make the sentence structure clear.

Slovak version of the sentence: Budúci týždeň ideme na školský výlet a veľmi sa teším na to, že strávim čas so svojimi spolužiakmi.

Correct translated sentence: Next week, we are going on a school trip, and I am really excited to spend time with my classmates.

A version of participant number 17: *“Next week we are going on school trip and I am so happy to spend time with my classmates”.*

Participant number 17 lacks both of the commas needed. The first comma is missing after “Next week”, an introductory time phrase. The second comma is missing before “and”, which is used to connect 2 independent clauses, it is used to separate full sentences.

Capitalisation errors

Slovak version of the sentence: Na hodine angličtiny často diskutujeme o aktuálnych udalostiach vo svete, pretože je dôležité byť informovaný o to, čo sa deje okolo nás.

Correct translated sentence: In English class, we often discuss current events in the world because it is important to be informed about what is happening around us.

A version of participant number 15: *“In english class we often have discussions about current events in the world, because it’s important to know what is happening around us”.*

Participant number 15 wrote the word “english” with the lowercase “e”, even though should be capitalised, because it is the name of a language. This error could be due

to the interference of the Slovak language, because in Slovak we write the names of the languages with a lowercase letter.

Slovak version of the sentence: Uvažujem nad tým, že by som po vysokej škole strávil rok v Španielsku, aby som sa lepšie naučil španielsky jazyk.

Correct translated sentence: I am considering spending a year in Spain after university to improve my Spanish.

A version of participant number 3: *“I am thinking about spending a year in Spain after university in order to learn spanish better”.*

Participant number 3 wrote the word “spanish” also with the lowercase letter “s”, even though it should be capitalised, since it refers to a language, which requires a capital letter in English language.

Spelling errors

Slovak version of the sentence: Chcel by som cestovať a spoznávať nové krajiny a ich kultúry, keď dokončím strednú školu.

Correct translated sentence: I would like to travel and explore new countries and their cultures after finishing high school.

A version of participant number 1: *“I want to travel and explore new countries and their coultures when I finish high school”.*

Participant number 1 misspelled the word “cultures” and wrote “coultures”. This error is most likely influenced by the pronunciation based on student’s native language.

Slovak version of the sentence: Moji rodičia ma vždy podporujú v mojich cieľoch a rozhodnutiach.

Correct translated sentence: My parents always support me in my goals and

decisions.

A version of participant number 6: *“My parents always supports me in my goals and decidions”.*

Participant number 6 misspelled the word “decisions” and wrote “decidions” instead. They also made an error in verb form, they wrote “supports” and the correct verb form should be “support” because the subject is plural.

Article misuse

Slovak version of the sentence: Budúci týždeň ideme na školský výlet a veľmi sa teším na to, že strávim čas so svojimi spolužiakmi.

Correct translated sentence: Next week, we are going on a school trip, and I am looking forward to spending time with my classmates.

A version of participant number 14: *“Next week we are going on school trip and I am really excited to spent time with my classmates”.*

Participant number 14 missed the indefinite article “a” before “school trip”. In English language, singular countable nouns require an article.

Word choice errors

Slovak version of the sentence: Cez víkendy často chodím von s kamarátmi, aby sme si oddýchli po náročnom týždni.

Correct translated sentence: On weekends, I often go out with friends to relax after a tough week.

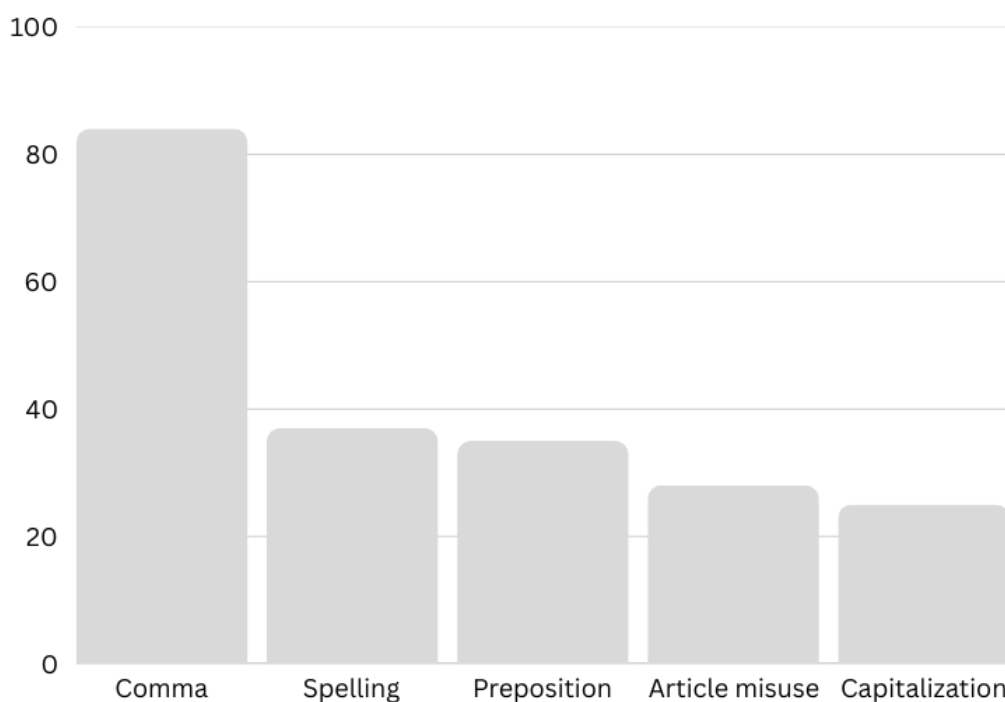
A version of participant number 3: *“During weekends I usually go out with friends, so we can relax after long week”.*

The participant number 3 wrote “after long week”, even though it should be “after a tough week”. This is because the word “long” is not grammatically incorrect but it has an inaccurate meaning. The word “long” refers to duration rather than difficulty.

4.3.2 Samuel Jurkovič Vocational School

This subchapter shows us results and real examples students from Samuel Jurkovič Vocational School made.

Bar chart 2 – Samuel Jurkovič Vocational School of Commerce and Services



Bar chart number 2 represents the 5 most common errors among students from Samuel Jurkovič Vocational School of Commerce and Services. Punctuation errors, mostly commas were made 84 times, spelling issues happened 37 times, preposition errors 35 times, article misuse errors 28 times and lastly capitalisation errors which occurred 25 times.

Punctuation errors (commas)

Slovak version of the sentence: Dnes sme mali skúšku z matematiky, ktorá bola dost' náročná, ale dúfam, že som ju zvládol.

Correct translated sentence: Today, we had a math exam that was quite difficult, but

I hope I did well.

A version of participant number 2: *“Today we had math test, it was difficult but I hope I will pass”.*

The participant number 2 is missing a comma after the word “today” which is an introductory time phrase. The participant also joined 2 full sentences incorrectly with a comma.

Slovak version of the sentence: Vo voľnom čase sa venujem športu, najradšej hrám futbal a plávam.

Correct translated sentence: In my free time, I do sports; I like playing football and swimming the most.

A version of participant number 5: *“In my free time I do sports, my favourite is playing football and swimming”.*

Participant number 5 lacks a comma after “In my free time”. The sentence combines 2 independent clauses using only a comma.

Spelling errors

Slovak version of the sentence: Škola ma naučila, že úspech prichádza len s tvrdou prácou a vytrvalosťou.

Correct translated sentence: School has taught me that success comes only with hard work and perseverance/endurance.

A version of participant number 10: *“School teach me, that succes comes only with hard work and persistence”.*

The participant number 10 misspelled the word “success” incorrectly as “succes”.

Slovak version of the sentence: Po strednej škole chcem ísť na vysokú školu,

ale ešte si nie som istý, ktorý odbor si vyberiem.

Correct translated sentence: After high school, I want to go to university, but I am not sure, which field of study I will choose.

A version of participant number 11: *“After highschool I want to go to collage but I am not sure which major I am going to pick”.*

The participant number 11 made 2 spelling errors in one sentence. The first one being the word “highschool” it should be 2 word, and the word “collage” is misspelled for the word “college”.

Preposition errors

Slovak version of the sentence: Mám rád hudbu a často chodím na koncerty, keď mám voľný čas.

Correct translated sentence: I like music and often go to concerts when I have free time.

A version of participant 12: *“I like music and I am often going on concerts, when I have a free time”.*

Participant number 12 used incorrect preposition “going on concerts” instead of “going to concerts”. Certain verbs like “go” require specific prepositions.

Slovak version of the sentence: Na hodine angličtiny často diskutujeme o aktuálnych udalostiach vo svete, pretože je dôležité byť informovaný o tom, čo sa deje okolo nás.

Correct translated sentence: In English class, we often discuss current events in the world because it is important to be informed about what is happening around us.

A version of participant number 4: *“On English lesson we often discuss about current things in the world, because it is important to be informed”.*

Participant number 4 wrote the wrong preposition “On English lesson”, but it should be “In English lesson”. The wrong preposition makes the sentence sound unnatural.

Article misuse

Slovak version of the sentence: So spolužiakmi máme veľa zážitkov a viem, že na tieto školské roky budeme vždy spomínať s úsmevom.

Correct translated sentence: My classmates and I have many great memories, and I know we will always look back on these school years with a smile.

A version of participant number 9: *“We have lot of memories with clasmates and I know, that we will always remember these school years with smile”.*

Participant number 9 is missing 2 articles one being “a lot of memories” and the other one being “with a smile”. They didn’t use any articles in this sentence and they are essential in English.

Capitalization errors

Slovak version of the sentence: Na strednej škole som sa naučil veľa nových vecí, ktoré mi pomôžu v budúcnosti.

Correct translated sentence: In high school, I learned a lot of new things that will help me in the future.

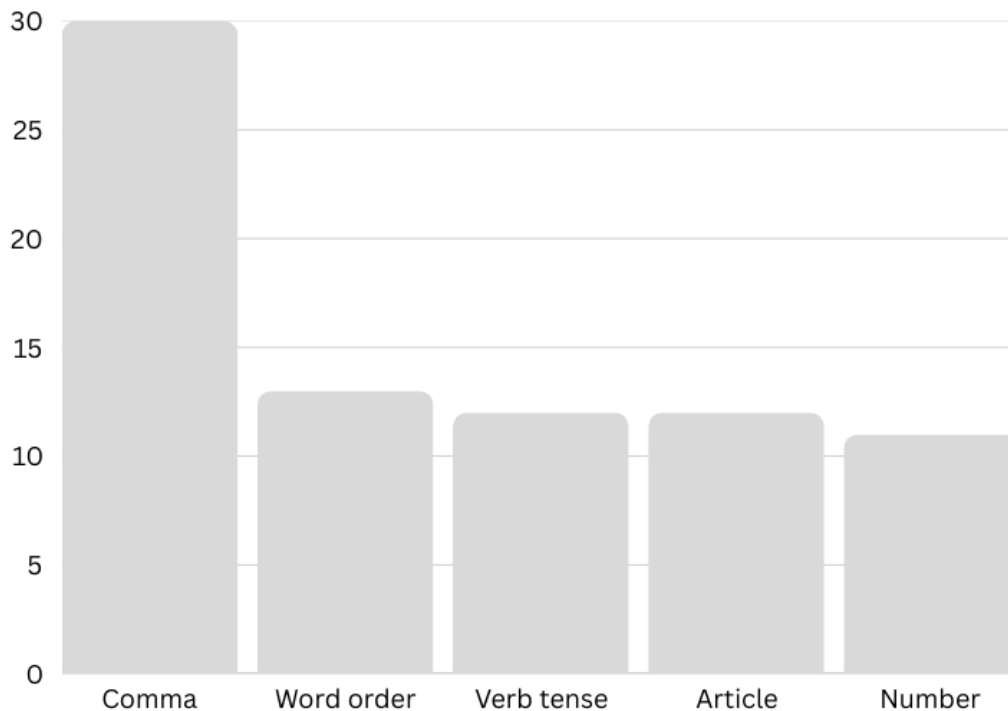
A version of participant number 17: *“In high school i learned many new things, which will help me in the future”.*

The participant number 17 wrote “i learned” instead of “I learner”. The pronoun “I” is always capitalised, no matter the context.

4.3.3 Private Slavic Grammar School

This subchapter shows us results and real examples students from Private Slavic Grammar School made.

Bar chart 3 – Private Slavic Grammar School



Bar chart number 3 represents the 5 most common errors among students from Private Slavic Grammar School. We can see the largest share is in punctuation errors, more specifically commas with 30 errors, followed by word order errors which occurred 13 times, incorrect verb tense, article misuse happened 12 times and lastly, errors in number occurred 11 times.

Punctuation errors (commas)

Slovak version of the sentence: Tento rok sa snažím nájsť rovnováhu medzi učením a voľným časom, aby som sa necítil príliš vystresovaný.

Correct translated sentence: This year, I am trying to find a balance between studying and free time so that I don't feel too stressed.

A version of participant number 7: *“This year I am trying to find balance between studying and free time I don't feel stressed”.*

The participant number 7 is missing a comma after the introductory phrase “This year”. Introductory time phrases must be separated with commas to clarify the sentence.

Slovak version of the sentence: Po škole si niekedy chodím privyrábať, aby som mal vlastné peniaze.

Correct translated sentence: After school, I sometimes work part-time to have my own money.

A version of participant number 4: *“After school I sometimes work part time to have my own money”*.

The participant number 4 is missing a comma after “After school” which is also introductory time phrase.

Word order errors

Slovak version of the sentence: Cez víkendy často chodím von s kamarátmi, aby sme si oddýchli po náročnom týždni.

Correct translated sentence: During weekends, I often go out with friends to relax after tough week.

A Version of participant number 11: *“During the weekends, I go often out with my friends to relax after hard week”*.

The participant number 11 put the adverb “often” in the wrong position. It should go before the verb “I often go out”. Incorrect word order makes the sentences sound unnatural.

Slovak version of the sentence: Vo voľnom čase sa venujem športu, najradšej hrám futbal a plávam.

Correct translated sentence: In my free time, I do sports; I like playing football and swimming the most.

A version of participant number 2: *“In my free time I do sports. I like the most playing football and swimming”.*

Participant number 2 placed the phrase “the most” incorrectly, it should be placed at the very end of the sentence. Incorrect placement affects sentence flow and clarity.

Incorrect verb tense

Slovak version of the sentence: Škola ma naučila, že úspech prichádza len s tvrdou prácou a vytrvalosťou.

Correct translated sentence: School has taught me that success comes only with hard work and perseverance/endurance.

A version of participant number 8: *“School teach me that success comes with a hard work and endurance”.*

Participant number 8 used incorrect verb tense for the verb “teach” it should be in the present perfect form “has taught”. The present perfect is used for actions that happened in the past, but still have relevance in the present.

Slovak version of the sentence: Budúci týždeň ideme na školský výlet a veľmi sa teším na to, že strávim čas so svojimi spolužiakmi.

Correct translated sentence: Next week, we are going on a school trip, and I am looking forward to spending time with my classmates”.

A version of participant number 6: *“Next week we go on school trip and I am looking forward to be spending time with my classmates”.*

Participant number 6 wrote the verb “go” instead of “are going” to match the

future time reference. The plan that is happening in the future requires present continuous.

Article misuse

Slovak version of the sentence: Dnes sme mali skúšku z matematiky, ktorá bola dosť náročná, ale dúfam, že som ju zvládol.

Correct translated sentence: Today, we had a math exam that was quite difficult, but I hope I did well.

A version of participant 13: *“Today we had a exam from maths, which was quite but I hope I passed”.*

Participant number 13 wrote “a exam”, even though it should be “an exam” because the word “exam” starts with a vowel sound, therefore it should be “an exam”. Using different article could affect fluency of the language.

Number errors

Slovak version of the sentence: Chcel by som cestovať a spoznávať nové krajiny a ich kultúry, keď dokončím strednú školu.

Correct translated sentence: I would like to travel and explore new countries and their cultures after finishing high school.

A version of participant 12: *“I want to travel and explore new country and their cultures after finishing high school”.*

Participant number 12 wrote “country” in singular, but the following “cultures” refers to something in plural. There is a mismatch in number, therefore it should be “countries”.

4.4 Summary of findings and Discussion

This subchapter presents and discusses the main findings of the empirical part. The aim was to discuss the most important findings in relation to the 3 research questions we mention in Chapter 3.

The results of this thesis demonstrated that orthographic errors, particularly punctuation errors were the most common among all 49 participants from the 3 selected Slovak secondary schools. Lexical errors were the second most common category among all. Article misuse and incorrect preposition usage were the most frequent errors from this category. This indicates that many students struggle with using articles like *a*, *an* or *the* correctly or at all. Morphological errors, particularly incorrect verb tense, and verb form were also notable. These results suggest that even though students from all 3 selected schools have a basic understanding of English tenses, they often fail to apply them in the right form. Syntactic errors were the least common ones, with word order errors being the most outstanding within this category. This supports the fact that Slovak sentence structure sometimes interferes with English sentence structure.

The number and types of errors vary across selected schools. For example, students from Samuel Jurkovič Vocational School made the highest number of total errors, while students from Private Slavic Grammar School made the fewest. These differences may reflect variations in language instructions, school focus and mostly student motivation to learn English language also outside of their secondary school. These results suggest that the most common errors across all 3 selected secondary schools are a result of both interlingual interference and intralingual errors. These findings align with existing research in SLA, which confirms that both developmental stages and first language influence affect learner output.

The following section addresses the research questions based on the findings. The first research question focused on what types of errors were the most common at each school. The answer is that across all 3 secondary school, the most common error category was orthographic errors, specifically punctuation errors (misuse or omission of commas). This result was the same at all 3 selected school, although the total number of errors varied.

The second research question focused on whether students from different secondary schools made different kinds of errors. The findings suggest that there are clear differences between the schools and types of errors students made. These differences can be attributed to the focus and nature of each school. For example, the Private Slavic Grammar School is a private institution, which usually implies smaller class sizes, fewer students in each class, and more personalised approach to education. This might explain why students from this secondary school made the fewest errors.

In contrast, the Samuel Jurkovič Vocational School of Commerce and Services is a secondary school focused on business-related subjects. The English language classes may not be prioritised as highly in their curriculum, which could explain the highest number of errors among its students.

The Albert Einstein Grammar School is more general with a traditional academic curriculum. The students from this school were somewhere in the middle. They didn't make as many errors as students from the vocational school, but also not as few as students from the private grammar school.

The third research question explored the possible causes of these errors. The analysis suggests that the errors result from interlingual and intralingual factors. Many punctuation errors (commas) and article errors appear to be influenced by the students' native language, Slovak, which has different rules and structures, these errors are interlingual. Other errors, such as incorrect verb tenses, misused prepositions, or word order errors, are caused by the incorrect application of English grammar rules or overgeneralisation, known as intralingual errors.

Overall, the findings from this research can offer useful insights for English language teachers. Based on the errors observed, teachers may want to place more emphasis on teaching how to correctly use punctuation, articles, and verb tense accuracy. Understanding why students make these errors is the first step to helping them improve their English.

Conclusion

The bachelor's thesis has analysed the most common English language errors made by Slovak secondary school students from 3 different schools. Applying a quantitative research method accompanied by error analysis and comparative analysis. This research endeavored to establish and categorise errors under 4 categories – morphological, lexical, syntactic and orthographic. The results, derived from the collected data from 49 students and their translated sentences, revealed that orthographic errors more specifically, punctuation errors were the most common in all 3 secondary schools. Following this, lexical and morphological errors followed while syntactic errors occurred the least.

The research also shows that while there were some similar problems for all the students, the error type and frequency vary among these schools. This reveals that teaching practises, pedagogy, and perhaps learner motivation could influence language production. Secondly, the findings reveal most of the errors are mainly brought about by interlingual interference (influence of mother language – the Slovak language) and intralingual difficulties (wrong usage of English language grammar rules).

These findings indicate the necessity of particular instructional measures to correct specific areas of need, such as punctuation, the use of articles and verb tense errors. English language teachers can take a cue from this report by adjusting their lessons to the needs of their students and spending more time on practical application within context rather than isolated grammar exercises. Teachers can implement more communicative and contextualized practises to make their lessons more interesting for students.

Lastly, the thesis contributes to the broader understanding of second language acquisition and learner issues. It provides the basis for further research in applied linguistics and pedagogy in terms of improving competence in English language among Slovak secondary school students.

Resumé

Bakalárska práca s názvom *Analýza bežných chýb v anglickom jazyku* sa venuje najčastejším chybám, ktorých sa dopúšťajú študenti z troch vybraných stredných škôl. Cieľom tejto bakalárskej práce bolo zistiť, aké typy chýb sa najčastejšie vyskytujú, aká je ich frekvencia a či existujú rozdiely v chybách medzi jednotlivými školami.

Teoretická časť práce sa sústreďuje najmä na problematiku osvojovania si druhého jazyka (SLA), ako aj na definovanie a klasifikáciu chýb a základných pojmov v oblasti analýzy chýb. Práca zohľadňuje medzijazykové chyby, chyby spôsobené vplyvom materinského jazyka (Interlingual errors), ako aj vnútrojazykové chyby, chyby spôsobené nesprávnym používaním cieľového jazyka (Intralingual errors). Chyby boli rozdelené do štyroch hlavných skupín: morfologické, lexikálne, syntaktické a ortografické. V rámci teórie sa tiež venujeme otázkam ako je jazykový transfer, fosilizácia chýb, a ďalšie faktory, ktoré ovplyvňujú kvalitu výstupu študentov v cudzom jazyku. Rovnako posudzuje na vplyv vyučovacích metód, učebných materiálov a jazykového prostredia na výskyt jazykových chýb.

Výber metódy kvantitatívneho výskumu v kombinácii s analýzou chýb a porovnávaciou metódou sa ukázal ako efektívny nástroj na systematické zachytenie jazykových nedostatkov. Prínosom práce je aj vytvorenie štruktúrovaného výskumného postupu, ktorý by mohol byť opakovane aplikovaný aj v ďalších výskumoch zameraných na rôzne vekové skupiny alebo jazykové úrovne študentov. Rozdiely v počte chýb sa ukázali aj medzi jednotlivými školami. Najviac chýb spravili študenti z odbornej školy, zatiaľ čo najmenej chýb sa vyskytlo u študentov zo súkromného gymnázia. Toto naznačuje, že úroveň výučby, zameranie, či je všeobecné alebo špecifikované napríklad na obchod a služby, spôsob výučby učiteľov, ako aj motivácia študentov sa zlepšovať aj mimo školy, ovplyvňujú jazykové výkony študentov. Celkovo bolo v práci zaznamenaných 724 chýb, pričom ortografické predstavovali najväčší podiel.

Empirická časť práce využíva kvantitatívny výskum v kombinácii s analýzou chýb a porovnávaciou metódou. Výskum sa zameriava na 49 študentov vo veku 17 až 19, ktorí navštevujú tri rôzne školy – Gymnázium Alberta Einsteina, Strednú odbornú školu obchodu a služieb Samuela Jurkoviča a Súkromné slovenské gymnázium. Študenti mali na úlohu preložiť 20 viet zo slovenského do anglického jazyka. Tieto preklady boli analyzované a

chyby boli rozdelené do kategórií, ktoré sú spomenuté vyššie. Výsledky boli následne kvantitatívne spracované do tabuliek a grafov, aby boli prehľadnejšie a ľahšie pochopiteľné.

Zistenia potvrdzujú, že najčastejšie jazykové chyby vznikajú kombináciou vplyvom materinského jazyka a nesprávne aplikovaných pravidiel anglického jazyka. Výsledky nášho výskumu môžu poslúžiť ako nástroj pre učiteľov anglického jazyka na stredných školách, pretože poukazujú na najproblémovjšie oblasti pre študentov, ako sú interpunkčné znamienka, používanie členov, a správne tvary slovesných časov.

V súčasnosti, keď je znalosť anglického jazyka považovaná za jednu zo základných kompetencií moderného človeka, má táto práca praktický význam najmä pre učiteľov anglického jazyka na stredných školách. Zistenia môžu poslúžiť ako podklad pre zefektívnenie vyučovania, napríklad dôraznejším precvičovaním interpunkčných znamienok, členov, slovosledu či správneho používania predložiek. Zároveň otvárajú priestor pre ďalší výskum, napríklad zameraný na rozvoj jazykových kompetencií na bilingválnych alebo jazykovo orientovaných školách.

Záver práce obsahuje odporúčania pre výučbu anglického jazyka na stredných školách. Navrhuje zamerať sa viac na praktické a kontextové precvičovanie jazyka, nie len na gramatické cvičenia. Učítelia by taktiež mali podporovať študentov v aktívnom používaní jazyka a vytvárať podmienky, kde sa študenti neboja vyjadriť svoj názor. S podporou učiteľa si študenti prirodzene osvoja pravidlá anglickej gramatiky a slovnej zásoby. Práca prispieva k lepšiemu porozumeniu bežných problémov, ktorým sa dopúšťajú študenti slovenských stredných škôl pri učení sa anglického jazyka a môže slúžiť ako základ pre ďalší výskum v oblasti výučby cudzích jazykov.

Z vedeckého hľadiska práca prispieva k prehĺbeniu porozumenia procesov osvojovania si cudzieho jazyka, identifikácii bežných prekážok v jazykovom vzdelávaní a poskytuje východisko pre ďalší výskum v oblasti anglického jazyka. Jej výsledky môžu byť užitočné pre učiteľov, tvorcov učebných plánov a výskumníkov v oblasti aplikovaných jazykov.

V budúcnosti by bolo vhodné rozšíriť výskum o väčší počet respondentov a zapojiť ďalšie typy škôl, vrátane bilingválnych gymnázií či jazykových škôl. Zároveň by bolo možné

doplniť aj kvalitatívny výskum, napríklad formou rozhovorov so študentmi a učiteľmi, ktorý by hlbšie odhalil dôvody výskytu niektorých chýb a postoj žiakov k učeniu sa cudzích jazykov. Okrem pedagogických odporúčaní práca zdôrazňuje potrebu väčšej jazykovej expozície mimo formálnej výučby. Výsledky ukazujú, že jazykové chyby nie sú iba dôsledkom nedostatočných vedomostí, ale aj obmedzeným prirodzeným kontaktom s cudzím jazykom v reálnom svete, mimo školskej triedy.

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