
**AN ANALYSIS OF INTERLINGUAL WRITING STYLE ERRORS IN OPINION
ESSAYS COMMITTED BY VIETNAMESE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH MAJOR AT
A UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM**

 **Oanh Kieu Thi Ho**

Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Email: ho.oanh@ntt.edu.vn

Corresponding author: Oanh Kieu Thi Ho

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ABSTRACT

It is different from most previously related studies where Intralingual writing errors from various writing genres, topics, made by learners at diverse levels of education from different foreign language centers, classes, universities and unlevelled sample population have been analyzed. This paper analyzes Interlingual writing style errors in 44 IELTS-formatted opinion essays of the same genre, on the same topic of environment pollution, committed by one Vietnamese class of 44 second year English major students (of the two equal number groups of students: 22 students in each group) at Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The qualitative approach has been deployed to ensure the validity and reliability. The findings show the two groups of subjects under investigation have made different kinds of Interlingual writing style errors among which the prevailing errors were Gender-/Opinion-biased, Overemphasis/Exaggeration, Repetition of Words or/and Phrases, and Spoken /Letter writing style. Noticeably, all these students have committed Compound or Integrated errors of two or more of the above single errors due to the deep interference of Vietnamese as their native language and Asian language as the regional language, resulted from the lack of essay writing style knowledge in English mainly because of the learners' humble motivation and the teaching and learning environment as well.

From these findings, some implementations related to the students' motivation in learning Writing have been put forward, followed by the University's sources of Writing materials and English seminar, the teachers' essay writing teaching method and their attitudes of writing style error correction. These solutions could help students of English and those Vietnamese students of English major at Nguyen Tat Thanh University improve their English writing style, write their English opinion essays better, avoid Interlingual writing style errors and do the IELTS-formatted argumentative essays successfully, which hardly any research has done.

Keywords: Analysis, Interlingual Writing Style Errors, Opinion Essays, Vietnamese Students, English Major, Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

IELTS opinion essay is the challenging type of writing that has concerned many Vietnamese learners of English in Vietnam. In this essay, they have to give their opinions in at least 250 words within 40 minutes on various topics. To solve the problem, this kind of IELTS - oriented writing has been included in the Intermediate Writing curriculum for second-year English major students at Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to help them do

their writing well. However, learners of English in Vietnam in general and those majoring in English at this university in particular have to face difficulties and commit various kinds of Interlingual writing style errors in their opinion/argumentative essays due to the negative transference of the Vietnamese as their mother tongue and the Asian language as the regional language.

In fact, there is hardly research into deeply analyzing these Interlingual writing style errors in an IELTS-oriented opinion essay, committed by Vietnamese students of English major in Vietnam. As a result, the author of the paper has deployed this study with those at Nguyen Tat Thanh University to find out the error types, their causes and put forwards some implications to help Vietnamese students of English major in general and those at this university in particular minimize the number of errors of this kind, write essays better and be successful when doing this type of writing tasks. In doing so, the following research questions have been put forward:

1. What kinds of Interlingual writing style errors were committed in their opinion essays by the second-year English major students at Nguyen Tat Thanh University?
2. What were the causes of these errors?
3. What could be the solutions for these problems?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Literature Review

In Vietnam, there have been many related studies on writing errors made by Vietnamese learners of English as a foreign language. Dinh (2006) studied the cultural transference errors in IELTS writing task 2 (opinion essays) of the non-English major learners in the foundation courses at Hanoi Open University. This researcher examined the students' errors which she thought due to the difference between Vietnamese and Western culture. However, this study has only focused on non-English major students' Interlingual errors and some kinds of Interlingual writing errors such as Direct and Indirect information expressing, Run-on Sentences, Rhetorical Questions, Repetition of Ideas, Repetition of Words/Phrases. Moreover, the sample population was not given in this study.

Le (2015) explored the Intralingual collocational errors at the sentence level in 200 writings of 200 words to 250 words written in class, about various topics, which had been selected from the textbooks of Solution Intermediate and FCE (First Certificate in English). These writings were of varied genres like film review, comments on a favorite music webpage, funny stories, a letter or an essay giving viewpoints on a topic by the second-year English major students at the University of Foreign Languages, the University of Danang, Vietnam. As a result, the writings were too divided in terms of genres and the study mainly examined the Intralingual writing errors due to the lack of learners' knowledge of grammar in English.

Studying the common errors in 100 English writings of the first-year and the second-year students specializing in Commercial English, the University of Commerce, Hanoi, Vietnam; Pham (2017) pointed out that these students made errors related to verb form, noun number, tense, writing structure. Nonetheless, the research sample population was not big enough and the subjects were too varied. Also, like Le (2015)'s research, this research only analyzed the Intralingual writing errors of grammar.

Phi (2020), who studied on the cohesion and coherence of 25 English paragraphs in 60-minute test done by the first-year non-English major elementary students, showed that the cohesion of many paragraphs was not ensured due to the students' wrong use of references and conjunctions. The problem was that the sample population was still limited and such grammatical cohesion errors like ellipsis, substitution, and lexical cohesion errors were not analyzed though they had occurred with low frequency. Moreover, like Le (2015) and Pham

(2017), the researcher only examined the Intralingual writing errors. Furthermore, only students' cohesion and coherence errors in paragraphs rather than in the whole essays were analyzed.

In their study on the writing difficulties of 90 English major second-year students at Tay Do University in Hanoi, Vietnam; Dang, Chau, Tra (2020) found that these students often met with the problems of vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, structure of the essay as well as critical thinking in writing their essays. Nonetheless, some questionnaires and interviewed questions were completed reluctantly, which could not ensure the qualitative and quantitative of the research.

Hoang, Nguyen (2022), in their research into common errors in using English coordinating conjunctions in 100 essays on diverse topics, committed by 50 non-English -major students at different levels at a university in Hanoi, showed that many of these students made Intralingual errors related to grammatical structure, vocabulary, conjunction and especially the coordinators. Yet, the students' English level was not levelled, which could have affected the validity of the research.

In their study on Thu Dau Mot University's 3rd year English major students' cohesion errors, made in 20 midterm-test essays on a certain topic (with at least 250 words, within 40 minutes), Ho and Huynh (2023) indicated that most of the subjects committed Intralingual writing errors rooted from their lack of knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in English. Although the qualitative and quantitative approach had been utilized, the reliability of the study was not assured because of the limited sample population.

Ho (2023) analyzed the writing style errors in 160 argumentative essays (with 250 words within 40 minutes) on such 8 diversified topics as transport problems and solutions, health problems and solutions, education equity, creative freedom, international language, volunteer work, health and education, economy and education. The subjects were 20 Vietnamese learners of intermediate IELTS with the output band score of 5 - 6.5 at a foreign language center in Danang City, Vietnam. The findings revealed that these learners made several types of Intralingual writing style errors like Understatement, Confusion, Waffle, Formulaic and Thoughtless Writing, Immature Writing due to their shortage of knowledge of vocabulary, grammar to express ideas in English and/or Interlingual writing style errors namely Overgeneralization, Overemphasis, Spoken language, Exclamation, Listing, Giving Definitions, Rhetorical Questions, ... due to the negative transference of the language and culture features from their native Vietnamese language. Nonetheless, the topics were so varied that the error analysis and assessment could not have been deep enough. In addition, the subjects were not consensus who were not the English major students of the same batch at a university, which did not ensure the quality of the research.

Trinh (2024), in her analysis of the common errors in 300 English paragraphs written by the second-year English major students at Thu Dau Mot University in Vietnam, indicated that these students frequently committed 4 types of Intralingual writing style errors: morphological, lexical, syntactic and writing technique. Besides, they were lacking the critical thinking skill leading to the subjective writing errors in their argument. Despite the large sample population, the research was restricted to analyzing errors in a paragraph rather than in the whole essay with many paragraphs.

Apart from the above in Vietnam, there have been a lot of related studies in other countries. Khatter (2019) carried out an analysis of the most common errors in 120 English writings, each of which was written within one hour per day in class by 40 third-year English major female Arabic students of the same age, Majmaah University, Majmaah City, Arab. These writings, which were limited to 2 to 4 pages, were of such genres as telling stories, describing and

comparing. The results showed that grammar errors were the most common, followed by spelling and lexical ones. The main reason was students' lack of knowledge of English and had imposed the Arabic knowledge on their English writings. Another reason was that teachers put too much attention to the grammatical structure and disregarded other linguistic elements like vocabulary, spelling, cohesion and coherence in deploying idea in the writing. Still, the analysis was not deep enough as the study investigated three various genres of writing.

Isma, Rasmin and Samsudin (2023) studied writing errors of 100 students including 42 males and 58 females who came from 3 universities in Indonesia. These writings of 250 to 300 words were the writing tests within 60 minutes on a certain topic. Students in this research often made Intralingual errors like lexical, grammatical and spelling errors. Despite the variety of subjects and data, this lack of homogeneity made the error analysis and writing skill assessment for these students less reliable.

Halim A. and Halim, N. M. (2024) analyzed the errors in the 60-minute writing (of 2 to 3 paragraphs) under different genres namely narrating, describing, arguing, explaining of 196 students from 4 English Literature classes from Negeri Makassar and Islam Makassar Universities, Indonesia. Similar to Khatler (2019)'s, Isma, Rasmin and Samsudin (2023)'s, this research revealed that almost all the subjects made errors of grammar, vocabulary resulted from the interference with the learners' mother tongue. Nonetheless, because of the lack of consensus in the writing genres, it was difficult to evaluate the real writing ability of the learners through the error analysis.

From that reality, it could be seen that there have been gaps in the study of Interlingual writing style errors, in 44 IELTS-formatted opinion essays of at least 250 words on the same topic of environment pollution, within the same time allowance of 40 minutes, committed by 44 second-year Vietnamese students of the same class of Intermediate Writing, majoring in English at Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Accordingly, in this paper, various kinds of Interlingual writing style errors made in this genre of essays are described to find out the causes, from which some solutions are put forward to help learners of English in general and the Vietnamese ones including those students at Nguyen Tat Thanh University in particular improve their English writing style to write their essays better, avoid committing Interlingual errors and do their IELTS-formatted argumentative writing task more successfully.

Novelty of the research

The novelty of the research lies in the fact that it studied the Vietnamese learners' Interlingual writing style errors committed in their English opinion essays due to the negative transference of the Asian language in general and the Vietnamese as their mother tongue in particular into the writing style in their English essays. This is different from the Intralingual errors resulting from the learners' limited knowledge of English on vocabulary, grammar as most of the former studies have investigated. Besides, the homogeneity of the sample population (22 students in each studied group), the students under investigation (in one class of the second-year English major students learning at the same University in Vietnam), the topic of the essay (air pollution), the time allowance of 40 minutes, and the writing teacher could all ensure the validity, reliability of the study, which hardly any research has done before.

Theoretical Background

Writing Style

Writing style is the way writers express their ideas, viewpoints in their own way involving their nuance (formal, informal, ironical, satirical), grammatical structure (simple sentence, complex

sentence, compound sentence, compound complex sentence), language use (written, spoken), rhetorical device (exclamation, metaphor, metonymy, simile). Each type and genre of writing (fiction, non-fiction, academic, journalist ...) has its own rules the writer has to follow. (ChatGPT)

Writing Style Features in an Opinion Essay

The language in an opinion essay is academic without rhetorical questions, exclamations, extreme opinions, waffles, but with tentative words/phrases to avoid imposition of the writer's opinion on the reader ...

Besides, the vocabulary is formal and polite without abbreviation, slang, spoken style... (Gabi, 2002)

Writing Style Errors in an English Opinion Essay

Error reveals the blank in the knowledge of learners and their impeach in certain rules (Ellis, 1997). Writing style errors in an opinion essay occurs when the writing does not fit the features of an opinion essay writing style, which in this paper is based on Gabi theoretical framework as presented in detail as follows.

Types of Interlingual Writing Style Errors

Interlingual Writing Style Errors

This type of errors is related to the use of the learners' mother tongue or regional language in a foreign language (Richard, 1992). According to Gabi (2002), Interlingual errors includes:

- Overgeneralization: Learners may overgeneralize their statements with some common modifiers like *several, always, all ...*, which could be modified by reducing the scope of the statement, limiting quantity, frequency or the area involved.

Several people have died of starvation because of the severe drought.

- Overemphasis/Exaggeration: The writing problem is related to the exaggeration of a statement's intensity with words or phrases expressing the degree of intensity namely *significant, dramatic, considerable, perfect ...*, the degree of certainty like *definitely, it is clear that ..., undoubtedly ...*, and extreme attitude such as *must, ought to ...*

Computers are *the perfect* tool for education.

- Spoken /Letter Writing Style: Students may not realize that an essay is not like a letter, or a debate or a political speech. Therefore, they are likely to use the spoken style instead of written style or the letter writing style for an opinion essay.

Dear lecturer, I want to tell you my views on the problems with the environment.

- Exclamation: learners of English may prefer to use exclamations in their argumentative essays, which is not suitable for the academic writing style of an English opinion essay.

You might think there's no problem in having your kids watch TV for a few hours a day but *look out! They could be watching rubbish!*

- Listing/ Giving Definitions: Some students may choose this, which is not good for the topic sentence of an English paragraph.

The air we depend on *consists of oxygen, nitrogen, carbon dioxide and other gases.*

- Rhetorical Questions: Apart from exclamations, learners of English may tend to use rhetorical questions to indirectly emphasize their viewpoints on certain aspects in an essay, which is not accepted in English style of writing.

Is TV a curse or a blessing? Should we value it or banish it from our homes?

- And/ But, So-clause Initial: Learners of English often use *and*, *but* or *so* at the beginning of a clause or sentence, which sounds more spoken-oriented written English.

In conclusion, innovations related to developing clean energy sources, reducing waste and plastic pollution, electric transportation help produce less air pollution. *As a result*, *(So that is why)* I agree that innovations can help reduce pollution. (My data)

- Long Complex Subjects: The use of long complex subjects in the essay's sentences makes it harder to understand them than the shorter ones.

Encouraging and providing suitable conditions for public transport by the use of public vehicles instead of private vehicles is another way of solving the problem.

- Information-overloaded Sentences: Another trend for learners of English is using compound or compound complex sentences with too much information.

Without a doubt the transfer of an individual from one environment to another must be accompanied by a certain degree of difficulty, no matter who that individual may be, nor where she or he may have come from or transferred to.

- Gender-biased/ Opinion-biased Writing Style: This writing style with such subject pronouns as *someone*, *he*, *she*, *we*, is often preferred by students of English as a foreign language.

When *someone* goes to live in another country, *he* or *she* will find many new things that are not familiar.

- Repetition of Words or/and Phrases: This is the writing style that learners of English should not use to avoid the boredom for readers.

When *someone* goes to live in another country, *he* or *she* will find many *new things* that are not familiar. Some of these *new things* may be difficult for *him* or *her* to get used to.

- Compound or Integrated Interlingual Errors: Two or many of the above types of writing style errors are possible to appear in an English opinion essay due to various reasons. They are described and discussed in the Findings and Discussion.

Error Analysis: Corder (1971) and Richards' (1992) define it as: 'The study and analysis of the errors made by foreign language learners by the comparison between learners' interlanguage (learners' version of the target language) and target language forms to identify strategies learners use in language learning; to identify the cause of learners' errors; and to obtain information on common difficulties in language learning, as an aid to teaching or in the preparation of teaching material'.

Motivation, the Importance of Motivation in Learning English

Motivation plays a kernel role in learning a foreign language because it determines the success or failure of the learners when they have to learn a language which is different from their native one. Spolsky (1990), Woolfolk and Margetts (2007) believe that students with higher motivation learn better as they pay attention to their learning, do their exercises and participate in the learning activities more positively. According to Harmer (1991), there are two pivotal factors

which could affect the learners' motivation in learning language in general and English in particular. Most importantly is the learners' internal motivation involving their interests, their goals of learning. Secondly are the external motivation involving facilities of classroom or school including lights, blackboard, tables, chairs, libraries, ... and the teachers' teaching method which could have a great influence on the learners' learning attitude because they are the ones that directly teach their students.

3. DATA COLLECTING INSTRUMENTS AND RESEARCH SUBJECTS

The research instruments were 44 IELTS-formatted opinion essay final-term tests done by 44 Vietnamese students of English major in their 2nd-year from an Intermediate Writing class at Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. These students had learnt essay writing for 45 periods with two main textbooks: *Longman Academic Writing Series 3: Paragraphs to Essays* and *Longman Academic Writing Series 4: Essays* (Oshima & Hogue, 2013). They in 2 groups (22 in each group) wrote their essays within 40 minutes with 250 words on the same topic of *environment pollution* but with different writing tasks:

- Group1: Do you believe that innovation (new inventions or technologies) can help solve pollution problems? Why or why not?
- Group2: In many urban areas, the rise in air pollution is becoming a significant concern. What are the main causes of this increase, and what effects does it have on the environment and public health?

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION – STUDENTS' INTERLINGUAL WRITING STYLE ERRORS

This part describes different kinds of Interlingual writing style errors committed in the opinion essays on the topic of environment pollution by the two groups of research students who learned in the same Intermediate writing class under investigation to find out the causes.

Group 1

Writing task: Innovation – pollution solution (Topic: Environment pollution)

Table 1 shows that *Gender/Opinion bias* was the most common Interlingual error committed by the first group (N = 30 # F = 136.3%). Let us consider the following thesis statement at the end of an introduction paragraph of an opinion essay in which the object pronoun *us* indicating the rice-culture feature of Vietnamese students, where collectivism of village and commune is highly appreciated and determines the seeking - for - agreement social communication style (Trần, 2000, pp. 25, 315). As a result, the word *us* should have been replaced by the noun *people* to avoid imposition on the reader to agree with the writer's viewpoint to express negative politeness in English writing style:

In my opinion, innovation can help *people (us)* reduce the figure for pollution.

Also ranking the first was *Overemphasis/Exaggeration* (N = 29 # F = 132%).

Innovation *would/could (will)* reduce the traffic jams.

The auxiliary verb *will* of the maximum certainty of the writer's opinion shows the strong imposition on the reader to reach a consensus. This echoes the optimism feature of Vietnamese communication according to the Vietnamese collectivism culture (Trần, 2000, pp. 101, 102). Instead, the subjunctive past *would* of *will* or *could* of *can* should have been utilized for the tentativeness of the writer to diminish the imposition level to express negative politeness or pessimism in English writing style (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 136).

In addition, *Repetition of Words or/and Phrases* was the most common problem (N = 24 # F = 109.1%). This problem could have resulted from the influence of the Asian culture in general and the East Asian including the Indonesian in particular as Vietnamese culture space lies within the Indonesian inhabiting area where the Repetition of Words or/and Phrases is accepted and highly appreciated (Trần, 2000, p. 30, Gabi, 2002, p. 62).

I believe technologies can help solve *pollution problems*. This essay would discuss *them* (*pollution problems*).

In the above introductory paragraph, the noun phrase *pollution problems* could have been substituted by the plural pronoun *them* to avoid repetition at the second reference.

Spoken Style /Letter Writing Style error was the second most common (N = 19 # F = 86.3%).

I will give an example of pollution – water pollution.

In the topic sentence of a body paragraph of an essay, the phrase *I will give* revealing the spoken style unsuitable for the academic writing style and could be revised as follows:

Water pollution is one kind of problem.

The error due to *Overgeneralization* was made as the third common N = 8 (# F = 36.3%).

People (Everyone) should resort to innovation reasonably to have a good life.

In this concluding sentence of an essay, the indefinite pronoun *everyone* discloses the writer's intense overgeneralization to persuade the reader to agree with his/her opinion. This style of writing reflects the even raking communication of most Vietnamese people (Trần, 2000, pp. 165, 167). Accordingly, the word *everyone* could be superseded by the noun *people* to avoid imposition to be suitable for the English writing style.

Equally common was *And/But, So-clause- Initial* error (N = 7 # F = 31.8%). This reflects the deeply ingrained imprint of the Asian culture in which the Japanese students prefer using short, simple clauses or sentences initiated with the words *and*, *but* or *so* (Gabi, 2002, p. 62). Let us take the case of the third body paragraph of an essay in which the adverb *so* used by the Vietnamese students at the beginning of a clause should be replaced by an if-clause to align with English opinion essay writing style.

Third, many new innovations are used, *so* we need lots of energy like electricity, electric infrastructure which could release lots of smoke making the air polluted.

Third, *if* many new innovations are used, we need lots of energy like electricity, electric infrastructure which could release lots of smoke making the air polluted.

A few students committed *Listing)/ Giving Definitions* errors making up N = 5 # F = 23.7%.

First, innovations *include websites, apps* to give people new ways to solve problems.

In this topic sentence of a body paragraph, the phrase *include websites, apps* listed some breakthrough technical products making students commit Interlingual writing style error. This has been influenced from the Vietnamese collectivism culture where the synthesis of the factors is highly appreciated (Trần, 2000, pp. 96, 298). This problem could have been solved by crossing out the group of words as follows.

First, innovations could give people new ways to solve problems.

Few errors of using *Information-overloaded* Sentences have been found in the students' essays of this group constituting N = 4 # F = 18.2%.

Since environment is like people's home, it needs being looked after by them, and people believe that innovation (new inventions or technologies) can help solve pollution problems.

In this opening paragraph of an English essay, there have been too much information embedded in the compound complex sentence, which makes readers difficult to grasp its meaning. This reflects the imprint of semantic grammar of Vietnamese language as the students' mother tongue (Trần, 2000, p. 164) and Iranian language as an Asian language (Gabi, 2002, p. 62). This type of error could be tackled by dividing this too long sentence into the two separate sentences.

Since environment is like people's home, it needs being looked after by them. People believe that innovation (new inventions or technologies) can help solve pollution problems.

This group of students made no error of *Long Complex Subjects* when writing about Innovation – pollution solution (N = 0 # F = 0%).

Noticeably, the *Integrated Interlingual* errors of two or more of the above types of errors committed by this student group appeared in all their English opinion essays. Let us take a look at the following topic sentence in a body paragraph.

One of the reasons I believe that innovation (new inventions or technologies) can help solve pollution problems is the technology can clean everywhere people can't do, for instance, in the sea, under the pool, on the glass of the tower, etc.

There were up to six Interlingual writing style errors in this sentence: the error of *Repetition of Words or/and Phrases* from the writing task [*believe that innovation (new inventions or technologies)*], *Long Complex Subjects* [*One of the reasons I believe that innovation (new inventions or technologies) can help solve pollution problems*] before the finite verb *is*, *Overgeneralization* via the indefinite adverb *everywhere*, *Spoken /Letter Writing Style* with the abbreviated negative auxiliary verb *can't*, *Listing/Giving Definition* with the too long groups of words namely *for instance, in the sea, under the pool, on the glass of the tower, etc.*, *Information-overloaded Sentence* rendering a lengthy topic sentence as a body paragraph *One of the reasons ...the glass of the tower, etc.* of the essay.

This sentence could be written into a topic sentence and a supporting sentence as normally written in English writing style.

Firstly, *renovation* like technology can do *many things* that people *cannot*. *Let us take the case of cleaning* in the sea, under the pool, on the glass of the tower.

It could be seen that in most cases, the Interlingual errors committed by this group made up approximately 50% or more. This could have been due to the internal factor such as students' learning motivation and the external element like learning environment especially the University facility such as the library for the students to approach to get access to its reference resources, the teacher's essay writing teaching, their attitude and method of error correction as well.

Group 2

Writing task: Rising air pollution – cause & effect (Topic: Environment pollution)

Table 1 reveals that *Gender-/Opinion-biased* error of this second group of the class was as common as that of the first group (N= 30 # F = 136.3%).

The main cause of this increase in air pollution is *people (our)* mindset.

In this example, the possessive adjective *our* expressing the optimistic and subjective attitude of the writer in his/her viewpoint by inducing the reader into agreeing with his/her opinion. Therefore, this word should have been substituted by *people* to indicate the writer's pessimistic and objective writing style in English to avoid imposition on the reader.

Equally most frequently made error was *Overemphasis/Exaggeration* (N = 30 # F = 136.3%).

People *should (need to)* have solutions for air pollution.

The verb *need* expressing strong imposition had better be replaced by *should* (The past subjunctive of *shall*) showing the high level of tentativeness to minimize the imposition on the reader to express negative politeness in an English essay.

As frequently was *Repetition of Words or/and Phrases*, accounting for N = 22 # F = 100%. In the following opening sentence in the introductory paragraph of an essay on *Rising air pollution – cause & effect*, several words, phrases (*areas, become, significant concern, air pollution*) in the writing task were repeated and should have been superseded by *places, grow, turn, severe problem, the pollution of air* to express the creative English writing style free from the Indonesian one.

In several *places (areas), the pollution of air (air pollution)* has *turned/grown (become)* into *a severe problem (significant concern)*.

More than 50% of *And/But, So-clause Initial* errors was made, constituting N = 14 # F = 63.6%.

As a result (So), air pollution affects the people's life.

In the above sentence, the clause-initial adverb *so* echoed the deeply rooted influence from the Japanese language on the Vietnamese students and should have been replaced by other cause-effect preposition or adverb phrases such as: *as a result, therefore, accordingly*, etc. which could suit the native English writing style.

Half of the *Spoken /Letter Writing* Style errors were detected in the students' essays.

In the opening sentence of the following concluding paragraph of an essay, the verb phrase *get to* indicated the spoken and informal style other than the academic and formal writing style in English. Hence, it should have been substituted by *should*.

Accordingly, people *should (get to)* stop this rise in air pollution because of their health.

Nearly 50% (N = 10 # F = 45.4%) errors of *Overgeneralization* was found in the essays of this group.

In the following instance, the phrase *such as Carbon dioxide, and more (...)* reflected the writer's overgeneralized idea and was not suitable to be used in the topic sentence for English writing style and should have been omitted. This again reveals the influence on these learners from the overgeneralized communication style of most Vietnamese people.

Furthermore, the burning of fossil fuels also releases harmful smokes such as Carbon dioxide, *and more (...)*

Furthermore, the burning of fossil fuels also releases harmful smokes.

Less common was *Listing)/ Giving Definition* error (N = 5 # F = 22.7%).

Next, smoke from motorized vehicles (*such as motorbikes, cars, trucks*) causes pollution.

The above topic sentence of a body paragraph in the essay listed too many factors like *motorbikes, cars, trucks* after the phrase *such as*, which should have been deleted for it is unacceptable in the direct English writing style. This problem could be attributed to the lingering effect of the indirect or beating- about - the- bush communicating style of Vietnamese culture on that of these Vietnamese students. Indeed, Trần (2000, p.158) has affirmed that Vietnamese people often communicate indirectly, lengthily before going to the focal point.

Rhetorical Question errors also appeared less frequently than many other types of Interlingual errors for this group of students (N = 4 # F = 18.2%) but more commonly than the error of the same type for the first group (N = 0 # F = 0%).

Why does air pollution increase too much and does it have any effects on the environment and public health?

The above thesis sentence at the end of an introductory paragraph of the essay included two rhetorical questions on the cause of rising air pollution, and its likely effect on the environment and people's health. This reflects the Vietnamese roundabout writing style (Trần, 2000, p. 158) before giving the viewpoint on an issue of the Vietnamese students of English even the major ones. As a result, it could be written under a declarative sentence to reveal clearly the opinion of the writer in an English essay.

There are several main reasons for this air pollution increase and its likely effects on the environment and human health.

Long Complex Subject errors were less common (N = 3 # F = 13.6%) than the other kinds of errors for this group of students while they did not occur for the first group (N = 0 # F = 0%).

Moreover, *the result of increase in air pollution* is make the earth hotter and lead to natural disaster.

The writer used the topic sentence with the subject under a complex noun phrase *the result of increase in air pollution*, in which the main subject was the noun phrase *the result* modified by the prepositional phrase *of increase* which in its turn was modified by another prepositional phrase *in air pollution*. This echoes the influence of Asian language including Chinese, Korean, Thais, where the main idea of a sentence is normally expressed via a complex noun phrase at its beginning. Instead, this complex noun phrase could be substituted by a simple one like *air pollution increase*:

Moreover, *air pollution increase* makes the earth hotter and leads to natural disaster.

Similarly, some *Information-overloaded Sentence* errors were detected in this student group's essays constituting N = 3 # F = 13.6%, which could be dealt with by using the two separate condensed sentences.

From my point of view, air pollution should be prevented as soon as possible because this plays a crucial role in not only helping protect the environment today but also the health of the earth in the future.

From my point of view, air pollution should be prevented as soon as possible. *This plays a crucial role in helping protect the environment today and the health of the earth in the future.*

Similar to the first group of students in this class, this second group made no error of Exclamation (N = 0 # F = 0%).

Remarkably, like those in the first group of this class, all the students in this second group made Integrated Interlingual Errors of two or more Interlingual writing style errors in their English opinion essays. This again reflects the deeply engrained effect of the Asian language on the English writing style of these Vietnamese students.

In the first place, *we will talk about* one of the main causes of the increase in *air pollution* from private vehicles *like cars, motorbikes, containers, ...*

In this topic sentence of the first body paragraph of an essay, there were up to six Interlingual Errors: *Gender-/Opinion-biased* through *we*, *Overemphasis/Exaggeration* via *will*, *Spoken/Letter Writing Style* with *talk about*, *Repetition of Word or/and Phrase* of *air pollution* from the writing task, *Listing/ Giving Definitions* of *cars, motorbikes, containers* in the topic sentence after *like*, *Overgeneralization* via *... (etc.)*; all of which negatively influenced the writing style and the meaning of the whole opinion essay. The revision of the above topic sentence could be as follows.

In the first place, the increase in *air pollution* could mainly result from private vehicles.

Noticeably, Table 1 reveals that both groups committed various types of Interlingual writing style errors, among which the overwhelming were *Gender-/Opinion-biased*, *Overemphasis/Exaggeration*, *Repetition of Words or/and Phrases*, and *Spoken/Letter Writing style*. This shows the lingering influence of some Asian languages namely Vietnamese, Indonesian, Japanese on the English essay writing style of these Vietnamese students of English to fill up the gap in their academic knowledge of English essay writing style due to the teaching and learning environment. This is against the viewpoint of Slama (1971), Nemser (1971) that the operation of transfer is not heavily influenced by individual learning strategies. Furthermore, in most cases, the second group committed the equivalent or higher number and fraction of Interlingual errors than the first one though they had learnt the same module of Intermediate Writing in the same class, with the same teacher, at the same University in Vietnam, did the same IELTS-formatted writing test on opinion essay of the same topic within the same time allowance. Accordingly, this error problem could be mainly attributed to the students' learning motivation.

Table 1

Students' Interlingual Writing Style Errors

Groups (Essay number)	Group 1 (22 essays)		Group 2 (22 essays)	
Topic	Environment pollution		Environment pollution	
Writing task	Innovation – pollution solution		Rising air pollution – cause & effect	
Kinds of Errors	N	F (%)	N	F (%)
Overgeneralization	8	36.3	10	45.4
Overemphasis/Exaggeration	29	132	30	136.3
Spoken Style /Letter Writing Style	19	86.3	11	50
Exclamation	0	0	0	0

Listing)/ Giving Definitions	5	23.7	5	22.7
Rhetorical Questions	0	0	4	18.2
<i>And/But, So</i> -clause Initial	7	31.8	14	63.6
Long Complex Subjects	0	0	3	13.6
Information-overloaded Sentences	4	18.2	3	13.6
Repetition of Words or/and Phrases	24	109.1	22	100
Gender-/Opinion-biased Writing Style	30	136.3	30	136.3
Total	126	573.7	132	599.7

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

In general, all the essays of the second-year undergraduate English major students in the two groups of the Intermediate Writing class under investigation have encompassed the Integrated Interlingual writing style errors with various subtypes in their English opinion essays though they dealt with the same topic with the same or different writing tasks, within the same time allowance, learn in the same class of Writing with the same Writing lecturer at the same University. This echoes that the pivotal cause of the Interlingual writing style errors may be their humble learning motivation apart from such other causes as the reference resource, the University academic seminar, the lecturers' teaching method and their error correction attitude. These goes against those findings of Nguyen (2019)' study on learning motivation of non-English major students in their first and second year at The Vietnam National University – University of Engineering and Technology that the second-year students had higher learning motivation than those first-year ones for they had had more time learning in the university environment. This may have resulted from the fact that those students in Nguyen Tat Thanh University were the English major ones who had had to learn too many more specialized subjects in English at the second-year phase, especially Essay Writing – one of the more difficult productive language skills than those non-specialized English in Nguyen (2019)' study.

From these roots of the problem, some solutions could be put forward to help Vietnamese students of English in general and those of major English at Nguyen Tat Thanh University in particular minimize and even avoid Interlingual writing style errors in their English opinion essays.

Implications

Learners' Learning Motivation and Regular Practice

The research findings show that low motivation is the major cause of Interlingual writing style errors made by the students under investigation. Accordingly, at the beginning of the Writing course, they should have a strict motivation, long-term goal and responsibility for it. This is in line with Truong, Huynh, Ho (2025, p. 1952)'s conclusion that when they become a university student, particularly a private university one, students should be aware of the role of motivation in learning a foreign language, both intrinsic and extrinsic, so as to move forward academically, and self-confidently with clear aims and motives. In addition, they should practice writing English opinion essays more often at home to improve their writing style and avoid making Interlingual errors. Truly, Saito, Dewaele, and Hanzawa (2017) conclude that there is an

inevitable relation between learners' frequent practice and the linguistic progress they make in learning.

Teachers' Teaching, Error Correcting Attitude and Approach

The interference with the native language is one of the crucial causes of errors in the learners' English essays (Halim1 & Halim2, 2024, p. 160). Accordingly, teachers of essay writing should have a contrastive analysis of writing style in English and Vietnamese to help learners avoid Interlingual errors.

In addition, teachers should be open-minded for learners' errors so that they do not feel afraid when receiving the error correction from their teachers. This is in line with Ngo (2024)'s viewpoint in her dissertation on teachers' emotion regulating strategy for students of English in some universities in Vietnam. What's more, teachers and learners could both participate in the error correcting process. Teachers could in class analyze the common error types, subtypes and correct them basing on their causes. Moreover, teachers could task students with less common error correction homework in groups so that they could discuss at home to save time in class and improve their brainstorming. This dual error correction approach has been confirmed in many previous studies by Maarof, Yamat, Li (2011); Perdani (2020); Vo (2022) that the majority of pupils desired the use of both teacher and peer criticism simultaneously in the error correcting process. This approach was discovered to be more useful and crucial for improving the students' writing capacity.

The University's Material Resources and Academic Seminar

The University library should be frequently updated and supplemented with the Writing books especially the essay ones for the students to do reference to. More importantly, there should be the Language and Culture books in service so that teachers and students could read to teach and learn Writing better. Bianco (2017, p. 19) confirms that the orientation towards the multi-culture language teaching and learning could prepare students to participate in the multi-language and - culture world. Sharing this viewpoint, Dang and Nguyen (2022, p. 201) conclude that language teaching should be regarded as a process towards using language as a social activity which has an intertwined relationship with cultural and intercultural development.

Most importantly, the University could organize the University or/and inter-university seminars in Vietnam or abroad on the strong points and drawbacks of ChatGPT usage. This could help students on one hand exploit its potential and on the other hand avoid the plagiarism risk when they write opinion English essays.

In general, there is a close bond between learning motivation and the efficacy in learning the Intermediate Writing of the students. The interest and the passion of the students (internal motivation) and the external motivation from the University, the teachers could contribute to the learners' success of essay writing learning and avoiding their Interlingual writing style errors.

However, this study is constrained to a humble sample population and mainly focuses on the error analysis of Interlingual writing style errors committed by the second year English major students other than the first, the third or the fourth-year ones learning at Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Besides, questionnaires and interviews as the data collection instruments have not been used. This has left the likely gaps for further research.

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Author contributions

The author claims the authorship for meeting all the three the following conditions:

- She makes substantial contributions to conception and design, and acquisition of data, and analysis and interpretation of data;
- She participates in drafting the article and revising it critically for important intellectual content;
- She gives final approval of the version to be submitted and any revised version.

Ethical statement

I declare that this manuscript has not been published before, in whole or in part, and is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere.

Conflict of interests

I declare that I have no conflict of interests.

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