Error Analysis of English Passive Voice Use among Ninth-grade Vietnamese Students

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to scrutinise common errors of 9th graders in the use of English passive voice (EPV), which is a challenging aspect of learning English for most EFLL/ ESL learners. The participants were those who were learning at a secondary school in a Vietnamese rural region. The research analysed the EPV errors in 162 student tests, which include all EPV structures, namely simple passives with 'be', simple passives with 'get', complex passives with 'be', pseudo passives with 'get' or 'have', and stative passives. To better analyse the participants' performance, the test is divided into two main sections: 18 closed-ended test items and one open-ended writing task. The research results showed that these learners made the most misformation errors in both sections of the test. On the other hand, all the other types of errors accounted for the same fraction in the open-ended task, while misorder errors were the least common category in the closed-ended test items. Specifically, omission and addition errors are mainly caused by the participants being careless with the auxiliary verb 'be'. In contrast, the misformation subcategories are much more diverse, with using completely wrong passive structures and wrong past participles being the predominant faults in closed-ended and open-ended sections, respectively.

Keywords: English passive voice; passive voice errors, error analysis; Vietnamese learners, ninth graders

INTRODUCTION

Indeed, the passive voice is widely used in English, particularly in academic writing. Consequently, mastering the passive voice becomes crucial for non-native English-speaking college students, especially in academic writing contexts (Swales & Feak, 2000). Numerous studies have sought to identify the best approaches to teaching the passive voice and addressing the common errors learners make when using it (Amadi, 2018; Hinkel, 2001; Myhill, 2003).

Recognising the importance of the English passive voice (EPV from now on) in English learning, educational institutions worldwide, including public schools in Vietnam, have integrated it into their teaching syllabi. However, the prevalent teaching method, primarily involving conversion exercises, has led to comprehension and practice issues, resulting in unavoidable errors (Cooray, 1967). As such, it becomes crucial to identify and classify learners' errors systematically and develop strategies to correct and prevent them while still fostering a positive learning environment.

Undoubtedly, errors are an inevitable part of language learning; thus, they are expected to be quite common during the process of language acquisition. Additionally, being aware of the causes of errors can aid the teacher in teaching the language and grammar to the students so they

can absorb the proper language structure. In other words, errors allow teachers to identify student weaknesses and provide the necessary corrective instruction, hence playing an important role in language teaching and learning (Gass & Selinker, 1992). As a result, teachers should make an effort to identify and classify learners' errors with the aim of finding the most optimal solutions to correct and prevent them while still encouraging learners in the classroom.

Because of the importance of English passive voice in English learning, most English educational institutions in Vietnam have integrated this grammatical point into the teaching syllabus, using the coursebook series Solution, Global Success, Explore English, etc. From the observation of the writers, many Vietnamese learners struggle with EPV despite the fact that it is an essential component of their English curriculum at school. Although they have been taught how to form a sentence in passive voice by English teachers, they still struggle to use it correctly and appropriately.

To identify those EPV errors in a systematic classification and also suggest strategies to limit them, several researchers around the world, namely Abualzain (2019), Hadi (2021), Lghzeel and Raha (2020) have tried to come up with their frameworks for Error Analysis (EA from now on), which are closely related to their mother tongue. Nevertheless, quite a few Vietnamese researchers have touched on errors in this aspect of grammar, such as T. M. H. Nguyen (2010). Even when Bui (2011) presented an elaborate study for teaching this grammatical structure, the result of her experiment was acceptable only to a small group of adult learners at university who were already competent in English grammar to some extent. Even if some Vietnamese researchers investigate passive voice errors in English, their studies have only focused on errors in translation from Vietnamese to English (T. B. H. Nguyen, 2021; Phan et al., 2021) or the usage of EPV by adult learners (Bui, 2011; N. H. Nguyen & Dang, 2022). Unfortunately, most Vietnamese scholars tended to treat EPV errors as a minor part of their EA (H. M. A. Nguyen et al., 2022; M. N. Nguyen, 2020)

Unfortunately, it can be seen that most of the research focusing on errors in EPV to date is mostly concerned with those made in the translation process of English-majored students or made by adult learners, not with teenagers, which leads to a lack of insights into this aspect for implication in teaching students at younger ages and lower levels. Undeniably, there have been a few discussions of the common errors committed by pre-intermediate learners in using EPV, 9th graders in secondary school in particular. In reality, the researchers discovered during the teaching process and observation that teenagers are also prone to a number of common errors when they encounter this grammatical point, or they even tend to use it in circumstances where it should not be utilised. Therefore, the researchers determined that there should be a complete investigation of passive voice errors made by secondary school students when learning English in order to have full and specific insight into the errors that students typically commit and strategies to tackle them.

The aforementioned problems are the reasons why the researchers decided to investigate EPV errors to fill this theoretical and empirical gap in research about EPV errors. To identify the errors that secondary school students usually commit in EPV, the researchers conducted a test on students in 9th grade at NBK Secondary School in Binh Duong Province, which may provide valuable insights into the specific issues experienced by this demographic.

The research questions in this study are:

(1) What common errors in EPV do 9th-grade Vietnamese students commit in closed-ended test items?
(2) What common errors in EPV do 9th-grade Vietnamese students commit in a writing task?

LITERATURE REVIEW

DEFINITION AND THE ROLE OF ENGLISH PASSIVE VOICE

Before discussing the concept of EPV, it is vital to initially understand what 'voice' is. Stilman (2004) explained that this term simply refers to whether the subject of a sentence is the performer or the receiver of the action. The voice of a verb describes the relationship between the action that the verb performs and the subject or object of the action. There are two forms of voice in the English language, namely 'active' and 'passive'. Take the chapter about passive voice in the book of Murphy and Smalzer (2000) as a typical example:

> "When we use an active verb, we say what the subject does:
> - My grandfather was a builder. He built this house in 1961.
> - It's a big company. It employs two hundred people.
>
> When we use a passive verb, we say:
> - 'How old is this house?' 'It was built in 1961.'
> - Two hundred people are employed by the company."

In terms of the circumstances favouring the passive voice, Smalley et al. (2001) claimed that although most writing texts involve using active voice, academic writing is likely to employ EPV when the speaker or writer wants to express that who or what causes the action is unknown or unimportant. For instance, "A lot of money was stolen in the robbery. (somebody stole it, but we don't know who)". The passive sentence that does not mention the agent like this sentence is called 'agentless passive' which is another name for 'non-agentive passive' and is particularly common when the agent is vague, unknown, or unimportant (Eckersley & Eckersley, 1961). The speakers also tend to use 'agentless passive' in the case that they don't know, or don't know exactly, or have forgotten who did the action (Thomson & Martinet, 2015). For example, "The president was murdered". The definition of EPV has pointed out a significant difference between EPV and Vietnamese passive voice. In fact, several researchers claim that the Vietnamese grammatical system does not have such a passive structure as the one in English. More specifically, some Vietnamese linguists (H. C. Nguyen, 2009; T. T. Nguyen, 2009) argue that Vietnamese is an isolating language; therefore, Vietnamese verbs do not have a passive voice.

AN OVERVIEW OF PASSIVE STRUCTURES

SIMPLE PASSIVES WITH 'BE'

In most grammar-based textbooks, the form of EPV is presented rather straightforwardly as "be + past participle". For example, the book by Azar and Hagen (2009) provides English learners with detailed and well-explained steps to form the passive structure.

E.g.:
Active: (1a) Tom (subject) caught (verb) the ball. (object)
Passive: (1b) Tom caught the ball (subject) (verb).

While (1a) and (1b) have the same meaning, in the passive (1b), the object of an active verb becomes the subject of the passive verb. It means that the ball in (1a) becomes the subject of the passive verb in (1b). It is noted that the subject of an active verb follows 'by' in a passive sentence. The noun that follows 'by' is called the 'agent'. In (1b), "Tom" is the agent.

SIMPLE PASSIVES WITH 'GET'

The passive with 'get' is common in spoken English. It is also believed that English be passives and English get passives do not differ in the sense they are both passives (Bruening & Tran, 2015). Azar and Hagen (2009), however, warned that this structure does not seem appropriate in a formal writing context. In other words, in colloquial speech and informal English, 'get' is more likely to be used instead of 'be' (Thomson & Martinet, 2015).

For example, you'll get (=be) sacked if you are late again.
'Get' can be followed by several adjectives, giving the idea of change, becoming,
beginning to be, or growing to be. 'Get' can also be followed by a past participle that functions as an adjective describing the subject.

For example, eating too much will make you fat (you are not fat now, but you will be if you eat too much).
E.g., I got tired, so I stopped studying.

COMPLEX PASSIVES WITH 'BE'

This structure can only be used with certain transitive verbs such as "believe", consider", "expect", "know", "report", "think", "understand", and "say" (Murphy & Smalzer, 2000), as the following example.

(2a) It is said that he is 100 years old.
(2b) He is said to be 100 years old.

Both (2a) and (2b) mean: 'People say that Mr. Green is 100 years old.'. In this case, the verb is used according to the following structure:

There are two ways to change the active sentence into a passive one as follows:
Active: S + say/ think/ believe… + (that) + S + V.
Passive (1): It + passive verb + finite clause.

This structure is often found in news reports where the speaker does not need to mention the source of the information. (Eastwood, 1994)

For example, it is believed that young adults spend too much time on social media.
Passive (2): Subject + passive verb + to-infinitive

This structure is a similar alternative to the aforementioned structure (1) (Hewings, 1999)

For example, It is considered that Steve Jobs was a genius in his field.
For example, Steve Jobs was considered to be a genius in his field.

PSEUDO PASSIVES WITH 'GET' OR 'HAVE'

According to Eastwood (1994), this structure is often used to:

- describe a situation when the subject wants someone else to do something for him or her.
For, I had/ got my motorbike washed yesterday.
- refer to something negative or unwanted. In this case, it has the same meaning as a passive sentence.

For example, she had her car damaged in an accident.
- imply the completion of an activity, especially if a time expression is mentioned.

For example, We tried to get the work done before the deadline.
There are two ways to change the active sentence into a passive one as follows:
Active: N1 + have + S.O + V-inf + N2.
Passive: N1 + have + N2 + passive verb + by N1.

This structure is used to express that a person arranges for somebody else to do something for him.

E.g., Alex repaired the computer. (Alex repaired the computer himself)
For Alex had the roof repaired. (Alex arranged for somebody else to repair the computer)
Passive: N1 + get + N2 + passive verb + by N1.
Active: N1 + get + S.O + to V-inf + N2.

In most cases, this structure has the same meaning as the pseudo-passive with 'have', as in the following example:

E.g., I am going to get the roof repaired. (= I am going to have the roof repaired)

STATIVE PASSIVES

For example, she broke the vase this morning. Now the vase is broken.
In the stative passive, as in the above example:

- The passive form is used to describe an existing situation or state.
- No action is taking place; the action happened earlier.
- There is no by-phrase.
- The past participle functions as an adjective.
- Prepositions other than 'by' can follow stative passive verbs
E.g., He is interested in history.

ERROR ANALYSIS

This study would specifically employ the surface strategy taxonomy, which is one of the four most optimal taxonomies recommended by Dulay (1982), to analyse 9th graders' EPV errors related to form. A surface strategy taxonomy is a system that is claimed to emphasise the ways surface structures are changed. It consists of four main categories - errors of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, which were employed in a plethora of studies (Ariffin et al., 2021; Budianto, 2019; Hasan & Munandar, 2018; Kadiatmaja, 2021; Kasini & Pusparaini, 2019; Pandapatan, 2022). James (2013) also suggested these error categories.

OMISSION

According to the definitions of Dulay (1982) and Singh et al. (2017), L2 learners make omission errors when they omit an item that is essential in a well-formed utterance. Dulay (1982) especially highlighted the fact that the absence of grammatical morphemes is much more frequent than that of content words. Take the incorrect sentence "John monitor class" as an example. Its correct version, "John is the monitor of the class", consists of three content morphemes: "John", "monitor", and "class", which carry the bulk of the referential meaning. Therefore, as long as one could listen to or read those three words, he or she could deduce a meaningful sentence.

Mahdun et al. (2022) and Ratmo and MPd (2017) affirmed that omission errors related to EPV are committed when one omits the preposition, the auxiliary verb 'be' and the suffix 'ed' in past participle verbs. The typical cases of omission errors in EPV - omitting the preposition and the auxiliary verb 'be' were also confirmed in plenty of research (Abbas et al., 2019; Abualzain, 2019; Adriyani, 2019; Darohim, 2020; Hadi, 2021; Jung, 2006; Lghzeel & Raha, 2020; Mahdun et al., 2022; Ratmo & MPd, 2017).

ADDITION

Addition errors, which may be observed in the speech production of both L1 and L2 learners, can be viewed as the opposite of omission because they are identified by the presence of an item that should not appear in a correct utterance. Dulay (1982) presented three types of addition errors: double markings, regularisation, and simple addition.

E.g., She doesn't like cats. (double markings)

Addition errors related to EPV can be those committed when one adds an extra auxiliary verb to the sentences (Hadi, 2021; Ratmo & MPd, 2017) and repeats the noun or subject (Abualzain, 2019; Ratmo & MPd, 2017) in sentences.

MISFORMATION

There are three common types of misformation errors, which are characterised by the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. This category includes regularisation errors, archi-forms, and alternating forms.

E.g., That dogs. (archi-forms)
E.g., She would have seen him. (alternating form)

Misformation errors related to EPV can be those committed when one uses wrong subject-verb agreement and wrong past participle verbs (Darohim, 2020; Jung, 2006; Mahdun et al., 2022; Ratmo & MPd, 2017). Other typical error cases are wrong prepositions (Jung, 2006) and wrong auxiliary verbs in sentences (Hadi, 2021; Mahdun et al., 2022).

MISORDERING

Miss-ordering errors are made due to the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. This type of error can be observed in both L1 and L2 learners' acquired construction and is especially common in direct and indirect questions. For example, in the utterance "What you are doing?", the component "are you" is misordered.

Misorder errors related to EPV can be those committed when one misorders adverbs (Darohim, 2020), the auxiliary verb 'be', and the subject of the sentences (Ratmo & MPd, 2017). For instance, the learner may write "How the main characters are described in the film?" instead of "How are the main characters described in the film?" or write "How is the writer developed plot in the film?" instead of "How is the plot developed in the film?".

From the literature discussed in previous sections of this chapter, the conceptual framework guiding the study is synthesised in Figure 1. Specifically, this study would employ the surface strategy taxonomy of Dulay (1982) to analyse EPV errors. There are four major types of errors discussed in this study: omission, addition, misorder, and misformation.
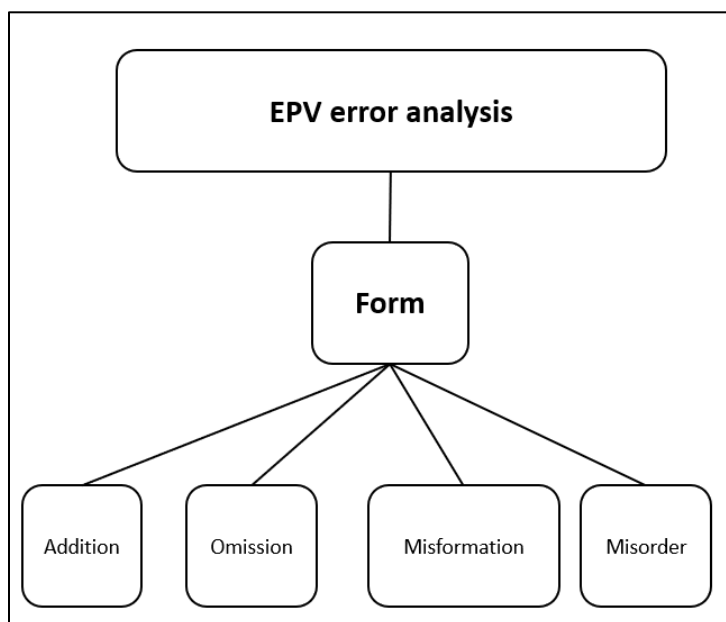

FIGURE 1. Conceptual framework

PREVIOUS STUDIES

In a study attempting to analyse university students' errors in using EPV and find out what factors led to such errors, Hadi (2021) employed the error taxonomy invented by Dulay (1982) and two instruments, namely a written test and a student interview. She found out that 38 students in the fifth semester in South Jakarta in her study made misformation errors the most frequently (more than half of the total) errors, followed by omission and addition errors with 16.5% and 16.1%, respectively. In more detail, due to intralingual transfer - the incorrect generalisation of rules within L2 - participants committed those misformation errors as they generalised the regular or irregular verbs into regular verbs, which only require the suffix 'ed' at the end of the verbs. They also did not detect whether sentences were written in the past, present, or continuous tense. Furthermore, they did not know how to arrange the words correctly. Similar to the findings of Hadi (2021), the work of Abualzain (2019), Ratmo and MPd (2017) confirmed that the most frequent errors are misformation types, and two other less common ones are omission and addition. These researchers blamed translation and first language interference for causing most errors rather than intralingual transfer. Besides, omission errors were also primarily caused by students' carelessness and lack of explicit training in EPV. However, both these studies aimed to explore the sources and types of passive errors committed by university students. Abualzain (2019) focused on the errors of 30 chemical students in writing lab reports, while Ratmo and MPd (2017) looked at 30 selected proposals with 34 sentences containing EPV from a research methodology class. Interestingly, Abualzain (2019) also employed a teachers' questionnaire apart from the writing lab report to shed light on the difficulties faced by those students in using passive voice in writing lab reports and the importance of writing lab reports properly.

In Vietnam, most studies investigating errors in EPV have been carried out on adult learners. As far as errors in speaking are concerned, N. H. Nguyen and Dang (2022) carried out a study to examine the common mistakes that 83 MBA students from four classes with various English proficiency levels and learning methods at Tay Do University made in English speaking. Two research instruments were used to answer the research question: a questionnaire with four questions and 45 closed statements and four observation periods in the students' listening and speaking classes. Most graduate students in this research considered changing the form of verbs and using 'by' in conversations typically challenging for them. Nearly three-quarters of the participants confessed that although they already had a grasp of passive voice in both languages, they still thought that EPV was very complicated or even much more difficult than its counter in Vietnamese. In the observing process, the participants kept using the active forms. Once asked to use EPV, they became worried and confused about whether or not to use 'by' in the passive form or not. It took them a long time to change verbs into the past participle form and create sentences, and not many of them could produce one with the right structure the first time.

Bui (2011) investigated common errors in EPV use by upper-intermediate students as well as the cause for these errors and gave advice to help the teachers improve the teaching of the passive voice; they conducted a study with 106 randomly selected third-year students from three classes of an academy. She employed both quantitative and qualitative methodology, using a self-designed diagnostic test and interviews (with nine students and four teachers) as a tool to collect data serving for the probing into the teachers' and students' views on the difficulties of acquiring the passive and on the causes of the errors. With the results from the aforementioned instruments, she suggested that the errors were mainly related to the meaning and use of EPV, objectivity, and agentless passive in particular. Other less common errors were made in the focus of passives, the

verb matter, and the form of passive voice, especially in get-passive, have-passive, complex passives, and progressive passives. Regarding the errors related to the meaning and use, adult students in her study made the most errors with respect to focus, errors in agentive passive (the agent will not appear but will be implicit in the context), errors in agentless passive, errors in respect of objectivity, and errors in respect of verbs. She assumed these errors were due to the fact that the students were confused in sentences where the passive sentences do not have an agent, and they failed to recognise the objective tone or impersonal tone of EPV in the context. In terms of the form of the passive, the author found out that most of her students easily formed simple passive sentences with to be, but many had difficulties forming complex passive, passives with 'have', and passives with 'get'.

Strikingly, when discussing how much the mother tongue influences the language transfer in the EPV, the author affirmed that the frequent occurrence of the words 'bị' and 'được', which are typically seen in Vietnamese passive sentences does affect the language transfer of the learners to some extent, leading to some obvious interlingual errors. Likewise, Pham (2016) also attributed the errors in the writing of first-year university students in his research to mother tongue interference. In more detail, in his research into negative mother tongue language transfer in English writing products, he analysed three types of writing, including informal letter writing, description, and narrative, of 40 freshmen in advanced programs at a university and reached the conclusion that the student participants tended to employ the incorrect form of voice in English in some cases because whenever facing a circumstance in which they need to use the word 'bị' or 'được', they automatically translate the sentence into English passive voice even though it should be in active voice.

In general, it can be concluded that most research on EPV errors, whether in Vietnam or other countries, mainly focused on adult participants, which calls for the need for an investigation into errors committed by adolescents to fill in this research gap.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section describes the method design of the study in detail, specifying the participants, instruments, data collection procedure, and data analysis procedure.

This study followed a descriptive research design, with the data drawn from a student test. Regarding the sampling method, the researchers employed convenience sampling for the study. In particular, the sample of this study consisted of 162 students from four 9th-grade classes selected with the help of the English teachers at the research site – a secondary school in Binh Duong Province, Vietnam. Regarding the genders, 100 students were female, and 62 were male. The researchers hoped that the research sample would be representative of the population of all 9th graders in NBK.

Those students were chosen because they shared some similarities in learning English, which are:

(1) They were taught about EPV with the same materials and syllabus.

(2) Their knowledge about EPV was consolidated in both morning official classes and extra afternoon classes.

The students at NBK Secondary School have to learn English in four grades, from grade 6 to grade 9. However, in conducting this study, the researchers only focused on students in grade 9th because they have been imparted nearly enough knowledge on EPV and are in the process of practising EPV, compared to those in grade 8th who have just been introduced to this grammatical feature. As for 9th graders, who are the main focus of this study, they have to take six periods of English language each week, including three periods in the morning and three periods in the afternoon, which equals about 51 periods each semester (17 weeks) and 102 periods for the whole school year with each period lasting for 45 minutes. The aim of the curriculum is to provide students with linguistic knowledge as well as to improve their skills so that they can achieve the pre-intermediate level of English proficiency.

For English subjects, a set of textbooks named "Solutions" (by Tim Falla and Paul A Davis, Oxford University Press 2010) is selected as the main teaching materials for the morning session syllabus of grade 9, which focuses on four-skill development. The coursebook "Solution" is divided into six main units, and each unit is comprised of six different sections to foster the comprehensive English abilities of learners. Those sections are "Vocabulary and Listening", "Grammar", "Culture", "Reading", "Every English", and "Writing"

This quantitative study employed a test designed by one of the researchers to identify student participants' common errors in the use of EPV and double-checked with the other researcher. The researchers chose the test as the main data-collecting instrument because, according to Seliger et al. (1989), tests can be used to gather information about the participants' ability and knowledge of the second language in various areas.

Then, the data were collected using a student test, which consisted of five main parts, 19 items, and a 30-minute allotment, and no materials were allowed. The test items were adapted from the books of Azar and Hagen (2009) and Murphy and Smalzer (2000). As a review section for the final exam, the students were required to attend the test and complete it within 30 minutes. Examples for each section of the test are enclosed in the Appendix.

The components of EPV structures in the first four closed-ended parts can be summarised as follows. Part 1 of the test is a 'filling in the blanks' task. It requires the students to form the passive voice based on the given verbs. This part demands a basic understanding of passive voice forming in both past and present tense, as in affirmative, negative, and interrogative forms. Part 2 is a "correct the error" task, which aims to test the ability of students to identify pseudo passives and stative passives. Part 3 is a multiple-choice task. This part measures students' abilities to form more advanced passive voice structures. Part 4 is a transforming task, which asks the students to rewrite the given sentences using the passive voice without changing the original meaning; at the same time, it challenges them by giving a sentence with an intransitive verb that cannot be changed into a passive verb. The researchers utilised close-ended questions adapted from other authors rather than from the textbooks as the questions presented in their books thoroughly cover all five structures of EPV, while the variety of EPV questions in the students' textbooks was quite limited.

The final part is an open-ended writing task with a familiar subject that the students learned in their syllabus - "Write about a memory that you remember the most". The object of this task is to check whether learners can apply the EPV in real-life writing accurately and meaningfully.

The data collection procedures follow the steps suggested by Corder (1974): gathering data, identifying errors, categorising errors, analysing errors, and explaining errors. This is a common procedure applied by many scholars in the field of error analysis (Ang et al., 2020; Luu & Trinh, 2023; Stapa & Izahar, 2010)

After the data was fully collected, the data analysis procedure was conducted. For EA, the papers were marked and cross-checked by the researchers, and wrong answers were sorted out. At this stage, the errors will be classified into four categories, namely omission, addition, misorder, and misformation. The researcher then quantified and analysed errors in each category using Excel. Descriptive statistics were employed, presenting students' performance in the closed-ended question items and the writing task in the test, along with the frequency rate of those of EPV error types.

To illustrate this analysing process, the writers would provide an error example in question item 18. When she was marking participants' papers, she noticed that some of them had made the same error, writing "Peggy an award has been given by the university." instead of "Peggy has been given an award by the university." It proved that this is a systematic error for a number of learners, not just a simple mistake. Therefore, she treated it as an error and then put it into the misorder category as the word "an award" in this sentence was placed in the wrong position in the sentence. It is supposed to go after the past participle "given" instead of being after the subject.

FINDINGS

RESULTS FROM THE CLOSED-ENDED TEST ITEMS

In the total of 18 closed-ended question items, the overview (see Figure 2) shows that the students produced more correct answers than incorrect answers, with 59.8% and 40.2%. However, mistakes such as the test takers omitting the testing item took up, and EPV errors related to meaning and use also constituted a minority of 13.6%, meaning that the EPV errors in terms of forms only accounted for 26.6%.
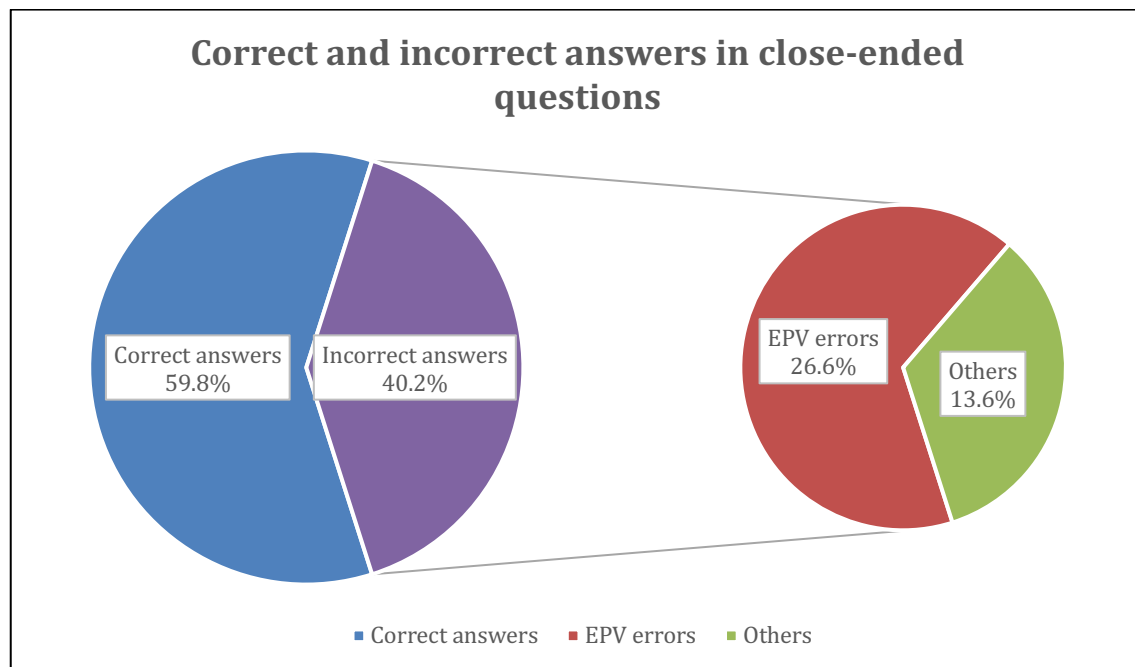

FIGURE 2. Correct and incorrect answers in closed-ended questions

By using the formula of Hadi (2021) to analyse the students' test, the researchers were able to find out what are the most common EPV errors in closed-end questions (see Figure 3).
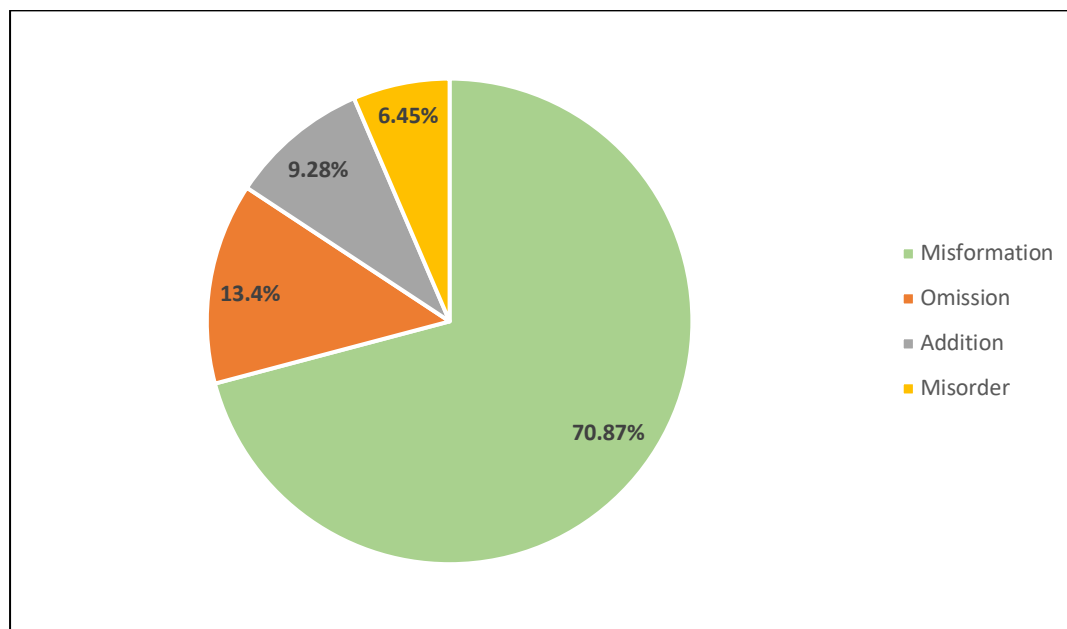

FIGURE 3. Recapitulation of types of EPV errors in closed-ended questions

Based on the figure above, it seems that among four subcategories of errors in terms of form, misformation stood out as the most common one, holding the lion's share of roughly 70%. In stark contrast, omission, addition, and misorder errors just constituted a fraction of the total, ranging from 13.4% to 6.45%. This means that misorder errors were the least frequently committed ones.

The researchers also provided a detailed breakdown of those committed errors by displaying the sample data according to its types of errors based on the surface strategy taxonomy. Frequency counts and percentages were utilised for data analysis, and the calculated percentage was based on the total number of errors (776 errors) obtained from closed-ended questions in the student test. The error samples were labelled based on the order number of the student paper (S), meaning that after being collected, each paper was assigned a random number ranging from 1 to 162.

TABLE 1. Breakdown of omission EPV errors in closed-ended questions

Error identification	Example	N = 776	
		Frequency	Percentage
Omitting the auxiliary verb 'be'	Q3. Had Tom **opened** the doors last night? (S8)	56	7.22%
Omitting 'be' in past participle verb	Q5. I'm so sad that Mickey didn't get **offer**ed the job. (S12)	26	3.35%
Omitting the preposition in sentences with ditransitive verbs	Q18. An award has been **given to Peggy** by the university. (S4)	12	1.55%

| Omitting indirect objects in sentences with ditransitive verbs | Q18. An award has been given by the university. (S56) | 4 | 0.52% |
| Omitting other components in the sentence | Q6. Did Ms.Green make the skirt herself, or did she have other people make it? (S128) | 6 | 0.77% |

Regarding errors in the omission category, which consists of five subcategories, the majority – 7.22% - came from participants omitting the auxiliary verb 'be' in EPV. For instance, they wrote, "An award has been given to Peggy by the university". The second most common omission error (3.35%) was when they omitted the suffix 'ed' in past participle, such as "I'm so sad that Mickey didn't get offered the job."

TABLE 2. Breakdown of addition EPV errors in closed-ended questions

Error identification	Example	N = 776	
		Frequency	Percentage
Adding an extra auxiliary verb 'be'	Q8. Bill has an arm **that was** broken in a fight·/ Bill has **been** broken arm. (S64)	20	2.58%
Adding· an extra "get/ got/ gotten" to the sentence	Q5. I'm so sad that Mickey **doesn't get/ wasn't got/ is got/ is get offered** the job/ Mickey **was gotten offered** the job. (S41)	10	1.29%
Adding another extra component to the sentence	Q7. It is **gettin**g hot in here. (S32)	42	5.41%

In this category, students seemed to make very limited types of errors with only three subcategories. Specifically, students (2.58%) were likely to add an extra auxiliary verb, 'be,' in the utterance containing EPV. Take erroneous sentences "Bill has an arm broken in a fight·/ Bill has been broken arm." as common examples; it can be seen that they would have been correct without those extra 'be' verbs.

TABLE 3. Breakdown of misformation EPV errors in closed-ended questions

Error identification	Example	N = 776	
		Frequency	Percentage
Using completely wrong EPV structures	Q4. James should **isn't/ aren't/ wasn't/have been told/or not told** the news because he may have been very shocked. (S52)	170	21.91%
Using wrong past participle verbs	Q8. Bill has his arm **broken** in a fight. (S160)	94	12.11%
Not changing the verb into past participle	Q2. I will tell the maid that I want to **wake** up at 6:00. (S43)	86	11.08%
Using present participle instead of past participle verbs	Q16. That song had been **recorded** at the studio before you arrived. (S81)	50	6.44%
Using wrong subject-verb agreement	Q3. **Is** the doors open by Tom last night? (S60)	42	5.41%

Using wrong prepositions	Q12. Our soccer team was excited **about** going to the game. (S3)	34	4.38%
Using the verbs 'do/ does/ did' instead of 'be.'	Q3. **Did** the doors open by Tom last night? (S22) Q15. A lot of questions were answered in training by the company. (S49)	10	1.29%
Committing other errors related to EPV formation	Q10. **People** expect the war to end soon. (S11) Q14. I am worried. (S60) Q16. That song was recorded by **our** at the studio before you arrived. (S71) Q17. **This place had been come/ Here was come** by Peter two months ago. (S8)	64	8.25%

In the most common type of incorrect answers – misformation, students made a wide variety of errors, including providing wrong past participle verbs, not changing the verb into the past participle, using present participle instead of past participle verbs, wrong subject-verb agreement, wrong prepositions, and the verbs 'do/ does/ did' instead of 'be', ranging from 12.11% to 1.23%. However, the biggest proportion of this category (21.91%) came from those who wrote completely wrong structures that could not be listed under any specific subcategories, some of which included "James should isn't/ aren't/ wasn't/ had to be told/ not telling the news because he may be very shocked."

TABLE 4. Breakdown of misorder EPV errors in closed-ended questions

Error identification	Example	N = 776	
		Frequency	Percentage
Misordering adverbs of place	Q15. The company is answering a lot of questions **during the training**. (S15)	30	3.87%
Misordering objects in sentences with ditransitive verbs	Q18. Peggy had been given an award by the university**.** (S65) Q18. Peggy, **an award** has been given by the university. (S43)	18	2.32%
Misordering adverbs of place and adverbs of time	Q16. That song had been recorded **before you arrived at the studio.** (S30)	2	0.26%

Interestingly, most of the errors belonging to the misorder category were associated with adverbs of place and ditransitive verbs. To be more specific, 3.87% of errors were committed when students misordered adverbs of place in question item 15, "A lot of questions in the training are being answered by the company", which was slightly higher than the rate of misordering objects in question item 18 - the passive sentence with the ditransitive verb 'give', 2.32%. The errors in this subcategory are "Peggy had been given by the university an award." and "Peggy an award has been given by the university."

RESULTS FROM THE WRITING TASK

In order to examine the capabilities of 9th graders in using EPV in an actual writing task, the researchers also designed an open-ended question at the end of the test, which asked them to write about a memory that they remember the most – a familiar topic in their coursebook. The overview of students' performance in such a writing task is illustrated in Figure 4.
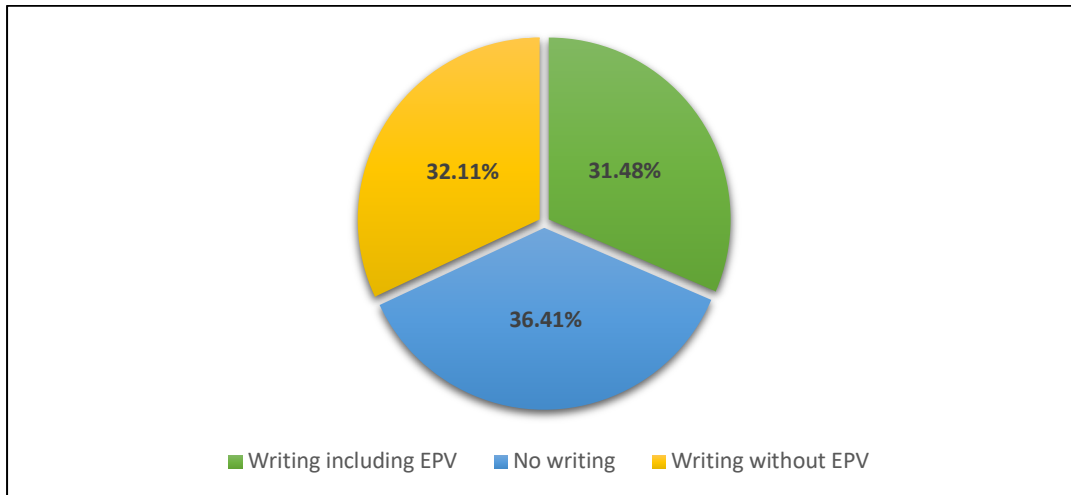

FIGURE 4. Students' completion of the writing task

It can be seen that in the total of 162 student tests delivered, nearly two-thirds of participants (63.59%) completed the writing task, but just less than a third of them (31.48%) provided the answer containing EPV structures. In the total of 51 writing tasks obtained, the writers collected 45 incorrect passive sentences. This figure was three times lower than the correct ones, at only 27.78%. An overview of EPV errors in those incorrect sentences is described in Figure 5. The percentage was calculated based on the total number of incorrect sentences.
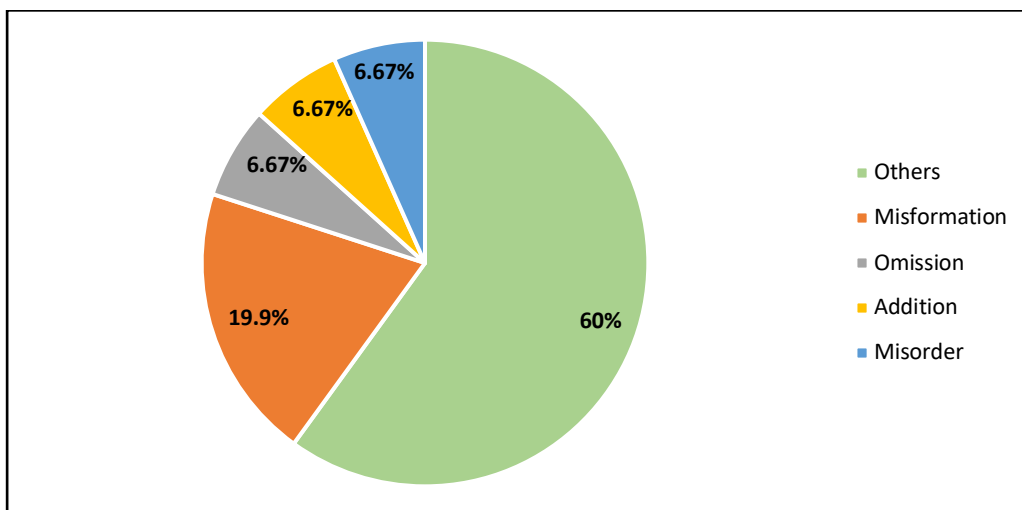

FIGURE 5. Recapitulation of types of EPV errors in the writing task

To clarify those errors, the researchers also provided a detailed breakdown by displaying the sample data according to its types of errors based on the surface strategy taxonomy. The frequency and percentages were calculated based on the total number of form-related errors (18) obtained from the writing answers. The error samples were coded based on the order number of the student paper (S).

TABLE 5. The types and percentage of students' errors in the writing task

Types of errors	Error identification	Example	N = 18	
			Frequency	Percentage
Omission	Omitting the auxiliary verb 'be'	I am very scared. (S29) We are very surprised. (S40)	2	11.11%
	Students omitted 'ed' in past participle verb	I was really **surprise**d. (S43)	1	5.56%
Addition	Adding an extra auxiliary verb 'be'	I saw a bag **was stolen** by a woman. (S7) It **was** rain. (143)	2	11.11%
	Adding another extra component to the sentence	I was **carried out** by the nurse. (S44)	1	5.56%
Misformation	Using wrong past participle verbs	I was **waken**ed up by a big thunder. (S36) The uniform was **worn** by me. (S28) I was very **worrie**d. (S62) The bus was **caught** by **our**s. (S66)	5	27.77%
	Using wrong subject-verb agreement	I **w**as surprised. (S8) The games **weren't** played. (S35)	2	11.11%
	Using wrong prepositions	The gifts were given **by** Phuong. (15)	1	5.56%
	Not changing the verb into past participle	The bicycles were **drive**n. (S115)	1	5.56%
Misorder	Misordering the agent	**Our uncle** took us to many restaurants. (S16)	3	16.66%

As can be seen from the breakdown table, misformation was the most common error for 9th graders. Most errors in this category (27.77%) were caused by using the wrong past participle verbs. This finding is strikingly in contrast with the result from closed-ended questions as this subcategory only took up a minority (12.11%) in misformation errors in the aforementioned closed-ended items. The second most common error related to misformation was subject-verb agreement (11.11%), which also contradicts the result in closed-ended questions. This is because this type of error was only ranked fifth in Table 3, taking up only 5.41%. It is also worth noting that while misorder errors in closed-ended questions could be divided into three subcategories -

misordering adverbs of place, misordering objects in sentences with ditransitive verbs, and misordering adverbs of place and adverbs of time, students had a tendency to only misorder the agent in a passive sentence when doing the writing task. Regarding the two remaining types of errors, omission and addition errors also had very limited subcategories. For example, in the writing task, 11.11% and 5.56% of students omitted the auxiliary verbs 'be' and the suffix 'ed' in the past participle verb, respectively. Likewise, 11.11% of them made errors when adding an extra auxiliary verb 'be' to the sentence.

To sum up, there are a number of obvious similarities and differences between the results from the closed-ended question items and the written one. Regarding the resemblance, in both sections of the test, students committed the same most common error type, which was misformation, taking up 70.87% of total closed-ended errors and 50% of form-related errors in the writing task. In addition, participants also tended to make the same kinds of errors in the omission and addition categories in both sections. Tables 1, 2, and 5 demonstrate that the most frequent items in these domains were those related to the auxiliary verb 'be'. As regards the disparities, it is clear that while the former section witnessed the lowest percentage of the misorder category (only 6.45%), the latter recorded the same number for all types of EPV errors with omission, addition, and misorder all accounting for 6.67%. Another notable contrast can be seen in the erroneous sentences in the misformation category. This means that the findings from the closed-ended section show that most students provided completely incorrect structures that could not be put into any specific subcategories, e.g. "Did the doors open by Tom last night?" making up 21.91%. This proportion is roughly twice as much as that of the runner-up - using wrong past participles with 12.11%. Similarly, using wrong subject-verb agreement also presented a minority of 5.41%. On the other hand, the two most dominant error items in the free writing task fell into the past participles and subject-verb agreement, with 27.77% and 11.11%, respectively.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the data collected from student tests revealed some significant points. Firstly, as regards the closed-ended items from the test result, it was found that although the students were able to write more correct answers than incorrect answers, only a few of those incorrect answers were related to forms (less than a quarter – 22.5%). This finding is consistent with that of Bui (2011), whose student participants also made more errors in terms of use and meaning than those in the form aspect. Among four subcategories of errors in terms of form classified by Dulay (1982), misformation stood out as the most common one, compared to the least frequently committed error - misorder. Omission and addition constituted a small fraction, between 13.4% and 9.28%. This totally accords with the earlier observations of Abualzain (2019), Hadi (2021), Ratmo and MPd (2017), which showed that misformation errors are indeed the most frequently committed EPV errors, followed by omission and addition ones. This finding, however, is contrary to previous studies by Kadiatmaja (2021), which have suggested that omission, misordering, and addition errors are much more common errors. This contradiction might be due to the extremely small sample size of Kadiatmaja (2021), which is only 16 students' final writing tests in an educational institution.

With the sample errors being considered, it is clear that the majority of errors in the omission category came from learners omitting the auxiliary verb 'be' in the passive structure and the suffix '-ed' in the past participle. Basically, the dearth of grammatical word parts is more

common than the lack of content words in passive voice (Dulay, 1982). In a similar vein, certain authors (Mahdun et al., 2022; Ratmo & MPd, 2017) explored three primary categories of omission errors, encompassing the omission of the preposition, the auxiliary verb 'be' and the ending 'ed' in past participle verbs. Strikingly, the omission of be-auxiliary was indeed reported in numerous studies (Abbas et al., 2019; Al-Zoubi & Abu-Eid, 2014; Hadi, 2021; Jung, 2006; Lghzeel & Raha, 2020; Mahdun et al., 2022; Phetdannuea & Ngonkum, 2016). Also, the findings of Hadi (2021), Mahdun et al. (2022), and N. H. Nguyen and Dang (2022) confirmed the predominance of errors in forming past participles. In fact, according to Mahdun et al. (2022), while the be-auxiliary omission occurred in learners' utterances at all language proficiency levels, producing the correct past participle was particularly a grave problem for beginners as they usually generalised the rules for regular verbs, which was also the case of 9th graders in this study. In the addition category, the most common case was adding an extra auxiliary verb 'be' in passive sentences. This addition error was also claimed in Hadi's (2021) and Ratmo and MPd's (2017) studies. When it comes to the most common type of error – misformation, the biggest subcategory is completely wrong structures that combine different incorrect elements, such as modal verbs accompanied by present participles. The other three prominent errors in the category are using wrong past participle verbs, not changing the verb into the past participle, and using present participle instead of past participle verbs. The misformation error regarding the misuse of present participle verbs instead of past participle verbs which was identified in Darohim's (2020) study as one of the most typical errors. The final type of error is misordering, which is typically committed when students misorder adverbs of place. This result differs from that of Darohim (2020) because this author listed the wrong placement of adverbs as the third most typical error in EPV. In fact, in Darohim's (2020) study, the participants had more problems with the placement of the subject as they could not transform the position of the object in the active sentence into the place of the subject in the passive sentence. The discrepancy may be attributed to the sample size. The participants in Darohim's study consisted of 39 students in an Islamic Boarding School, compared to 162 students in the present study. To sum up, most of the errors are associated with verb forms such as present participle verbs, past participle verbs, modal verbs, the auxiliary verb 'be', etc. This phenomenon can be explained by the discrepancy between English and Vietnamese passive sentences. There exist passive sentences in the Vietnamese language (Diep & Nguyen, 2000; Nguyen & Bui, 2004); however, the patterns of passives in Vietnamese are different from those in English. Noticeably, the predicate of passives contains an auxiliary *'bị' or 'được'.* For example, Nó *bị mắng.* (She *is shouted.*) or Truyện Romeo và Juliet *được sáng tác* bởi William Shakespeare. (Romeo and Juliet *was written* by William Shakespeare.). Apparently, the auxiliaries, e.g., '*bị' and 'được'* are added before verbs rather than the changes in verb forms. It can be inferred that this disparity may lead to EPV errors committed by Vietnamese learners.

Finally, after marking the students' writing task, the research drew a conclusion that most of them were quite reluctant with this productive skill, meaning that less than two-thirds of participants managed to complete the task and only half of the received written answers contained decent EPV structures. At the same time, the correct passive sentences featured four types of passives (simple passives with 'be', complex passives with 'be', pseudo passives with 'have', and stative passives), the incorrect ones included all four types of form-related EPV errors. Similar to the error pattern in closed-ended question items, misformation was only the most significant category in the open-ended task. It is worth noting that a large number of errors in this category were attributed to test takers using the wrong past participle verbs, which is in stark contrast to their counterparts in closed-ended questions. Subject-verb agreement was the second most

common in this aspect, accounting for more than a tenth of the total writing errors. This finding is consistent with that of several researchers (Darohim, 2020; Jung, 2006; Mahdun et al., 2022; Ratmo & MPd, 2017) since, in their studies, this kind of error also sometimes occurred. On the other hand, the share of other error types - omission, addition, and misorder – are identical, taking up a fraction of 6.67%. When looking at the students' erroneous sentences more closely, the writers found out that most omission and addition errors were committed when one forgot to add or added an extra auxiliary verb 'be' in the passive structure. Last but not least, only one type of misorder error was seen in the writing task, which was placing the agent of the sentence in the wrong position.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion that has been done, it can be concluded that, in both closed-ended and open-ended tasks, misformation is the most common type, as opposed to omission, addition, and misorder, which constitute a very insignificant share. In addition, while omission and addition errors are mainly caused by the learners being careless with the auxiliary verb 'be', the misformation subcategories are much more diverse, with using completely wrong passive structures and wrong past participles being the predominant faults in closed-ended and open-ended sections, respectively.

In the theoretical aspect, this research has made a significant contribution to the existing literature, filling the gap that many Vietnamese scholars left when they only investigated the EPV errors made by adult learners (Bui, 2011; Lu, 2009; L. D. T. Nguyen, 2007; T. H. H. Nguyen, 2008; T. M. H. Nguyen, 2010).

In terms of practicality, these findings underscore the importance of targeted instruction when teaching EPV. Specifically, English instructors should place a heightened emphasis on the proper formation of passive structures, with particular attention to the transformation of the verb 'be' and irregular verbs into their respective past participle forms. Meanwhile, students should allocate a significant amount of dedicated time to honing their skills in utilising passive voice constructions. This practice can be carried out either through independent study at home or through guided instruction provided by teachers within the classroom setting. The self-learning process can be facilitated by online games designed and assigned by teachers or other mobile English learning resources (Mandasari & Wahyudin, 2021; Wang, 2017; Zhang & Perez-Paredes, 2021). Last but not least, these research results hold implications for the design of grammar textbooks. In light of these findings, authors of grammar textbooks should allocate more extensive coverage to topics related to EPV and past participle formation. This can be achieved by dedicating additional pages to these subjects within the textbook's table of contents. Additionally, to facilitate easier reference for users, it is suggested that irregular verbs be included as an appendix, providing a valuable resource for quick and efficient lookup.

On the other hand, this study does have its limitations. First, due to time, financial, and physical constraints, the research was implemented with only 162 9th-grade students at NBK Secondary School, and the quantitative data was only collected from one test. The results of the study, therefore, may not be valid enough to be generalised to all kinds of secondary schools throughout the country due to different study environments, different teaching and learning aid facilities, etc.

The study on 9th graders' errors in using EPV in Vietnam provides valuable insights and strategies for preventing these mistakes. However, there is still room for further research in this area. Future studies should expand to include students from different grade levels to explore developmental aspects of language acquisition. Larger sample sizes and mixed methods research, combining qualitative and quantitative data, can increase the validity and reliability of findings. This approach can also offer a deeper understanding of EPV errors and the most effective strategies for error minimisation.

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APPENDIX

Part 1: Forming the passive using the verbs in parentheses in an appropriate tense
1. Sarah is wearing a shirt. It (make) ………………………….. of cotton.
Part 2: Underline the error in the following passive sentences and correct it. If the sentence is correct, tick "   " in the box • at the end of each sentence.
5. I'm so sad that Mickey didn't get offered the job. •
….………………………………………………………………………
Part 3: Choose the correct answer to fill in the blank.
9. They did not know how to paint the house so they had to ……………….
A. paint the house themselves.
B. get the house painted.
C. get the house paint.
D. have the house painted themselves.
Part 4: Rewrite the sentences in the passive voice. Some sentences can accept multiple answers. There is one sentence that cannot be rewritten in the passive voice and should be left unanswered.
15. The companies are answering a lot of questions in the training.
….………………………………………………………………………