

Grammatical Errors Committed by Students in Writing Cause and Effect Paragraphs

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the grammatical errors and analyze the sources of grammatical errors committed by students in writing cause and effect paragraphs. This research used a mixed-method design as the research design. The data were collected through document collection of mid-term tests and final tests. The subjects of this study were students in two classes of the English Language Education Program. The results of this study showed that the types of grammatical errors in students' writing were omissions 54 errors (44%), misformation 37 errors (31%), addition 28 errors (23%), and misordering 3 errors (2%). The total errors committed by students in their paragraph writing were 122 errors. Meanwhile, the source of errors in students' writing was caused by intralingual transfer 82 (67%), interlingual transfer 35 (29%), and communication strategies 5 (4%). In writing, it is encouraged to check grammar through grammar checking that are available in order to reduce grammar mistakes and make the message of the writing clearer. Teachers are encouraged to pay attention to students' grammar and use teaching technique that can improve students' grammar.

Keywords: *Writing, Grammar, Errors, Cause-Effect*

INTRODUCTION

Writing skill is one of the aspects that must be possessed by every language learner. This skill is trained from simple to complex sentence levels. The ability to write is not only for students. Writing skills are important because writing is used to translate our thoughts, ideas, information, opinions, and all the things we want to convey into documents or papers that are certainly accessible and useful for others so that the message conveyed through writing is effective and meaningful (Alisha et al., 2019). In writing, students must be able to identify and apply various items included in writing skills (Qamariah et al., 2020). The skills that students must understand in writing include using proper grammar, choosing the right words, using punctuation marks, and choosing good topics so that the information points made can be arranged systematically (Din & Ghani, 2019). By

writing, the students can improve their competence in English and develop their critical thinking (Ailinah, 2022).

Writing skills have different rules and types, for beginner writing paragraph is the most important one. A paragraph is connected sentences and more than just put words together, but a collection of sentences to give information about a topic (Raudatus, 2020). There are four stages in the writing paragraph, namely prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading. Paragraph writing consists of different types of text; one of them is cause and effect writing. In fact, cause and effect writing gives an overview about why an event occurs or the consequences of the event (Schimmoller, 2014). In writing a cause and effect paragraph, there are several things that must be considered such as the topic sentence, supporting sentence that provides relevant sources or examples, and closing sentence. The text must explain "why" something happens, and how the process or event occurs in logical orders (e.g., therefore, consequently) and the words and phrases of cause and effect (e.g., because of, in effect).

EFL students in Indonesia find some difficulties in writing. English learners are generally asked to do written assignments and their English competence can be seen in their writing performance (Pradnyana et al., 2022). Writing skill is still considered difficult by students, especially in writing English texts. In fact, writing requires broad knowledge and deep thought processes to produce words, sentences, and paragraphs as well as English grammar (Kumala et al., 2018). In the writing process, to write a sentence or paragraph, students must understand grammar well. But often in the writing process students cannot avoid mistakes and errors or often the sentences they make are grammatically incorrect (Erlangga et al., 2019). Among the four skills in learning English, writing is the most difficult one because most EFL students found that they have difficulties writing text. The main problem found by EFL students is related to the crucial problem in grammar which is can cause grammatical errors.

Grammar is the knowledge that useful for writers to help them on how to write sentences correctly, so the text that is made can be understood by the people who read it (Puspita, 2021). Grammar play important role in writing and can guide students on how to write correctly and ensure that the writing can be easily understood by the people who read it (Ryan et al., 2019). In addition, Lestari et al. (2021) stated that grammar is concerned with sentence analysis which provides an overview of the rules of how a language sentence is formed. Sadiyah and Royani (2019) stated that writing and grammar cannot be separated from each other because grammar rules are one of the important aspects that students must understand and pay attention to before they write something. Furthermore, grammar is central to teaching and basic knowledge for effective language learning (Wulandari & Harida, 2021). Without grammar, the message of the writing may be missed interpret by the readers and may also make the message unclear (Irmalia, 2016).

Grammatical error is considered as an error committed by students when learning a language because of the lack of students' abilities to understand the rules of the language. In addition, Dulay et al., (1982) also mentioned that error is an apparent deviation from the grammar of a native speaker, which means that language learners commit errors because they have limited knowledge of the rules of the English language. According to Bungsu et al. (2021), *errors* occur because someone does not fully understand the language system. Meanwhile, *mistakes*

occur occasionally due to momentary forgetting, mispronunciation, and usually, language learners can correct their mistakes by themselves.

Based on the research background mentioned above, this research aims at investigating the types and sources of grammatical errors committed by students in writing. In addition, this research is important to be conducted in order to describe the types of grammatical errors and to analyze the sources of the errors committed by the students of the English Language Education department in writing cause and effect paragraphs. There are two research questions needed to be answered by this study as follows: (1) "What are the types of grammatical errors committed by the students in writing cause and effect paragraphs? (2) "What are the sources of grammatical errors committed by the students in writing cause and effect paragraphs?"

METHOD

This research is used mixed-method design. It is one type of research where the research approach mixes or integrates two research approaches, both qualitative and quantitative approaches in one study to produce complete study results related to the research conducted (Pardede, 2019). The participants of this research are two classes of the second-semester students of English Language Education. Every class consists of 28-32 students with different levels of English writing competence. The data is collected through the use of document collection methods. The document consists of the midterm test and the final semester test. This research analyzed by following the procedure from Miles & Huberman (1994) which consists of data collection through collecting students' writing, data reduction in which the necessary data were omitted, data display through making a chart, and conclusion in which the writer gives answer to the research questions.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

Present briefly the findings of the study followed with discussion. Table are presented as follows: In this part, the researcher showed the result of data analysis of grammatical errors committed by students in writing cause and effect paragraphs based on Dulay et al., (1982) The data were presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Grammatical Errors

No	Grammatical Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Omission	54	44%
2	Addition	28	23%
3	Misformation	37	31%
4	Misordering	3	2%
Total		122	100%

In the table above, it can be seen that there were 122 grammatical errors made by students in writing cause and effect paragraphs. The grammatical errors are categorized into four types; omission error with 54 errors (44%), addition error with 28 errors (23%), misformation error with 37 errors (31%), and misordering error with 3 errors (2%). Based on the data in the table above, it was found that the highest errors made by students were *omission errors* and the lowest errors were *misordering errors*. The classification of types of errors committed by students in writing cause and effect paragraphs were as follows.

Omission errors were the highest and the most frequently errors found in students' writing with 54 errors. *Omission errors* occur because students were missing a word or an item that should be in the sentence. There some types of omission errors committed by students in writing cause and effect paragraph, there were *omission of article*, *omission of preposition*, *omission of to be*, *omission of plural*, and *omission of verb*. The example of *omission errors* made by students in writing cause and effect paragraphs were as follows.

- 1a. Love can make someone be **stupid person**.
- 2a. **Using** social media networks with good technology and the internet, people can interact and communicate

In sentence (1a) it can be seen that the student omitted article 'a'. Correcting the sentence (1a) can be done by adding article 'a' before the phrase '*stupid person*' to indicate singular noun countable noun. Therefore, the sentence should be "*Love can make someone be a stupid person*"; whereas in sentence (2a) the student omitted preposition 'by' to indicate doing something. The correct sentence should be "*By using social media networks with good technology and the internet, people can interact and communicate*".

Misformation errors were the second highest of grammatical errors committed by the students. *Misformation error* occurs because the students used wrong form, word, morpheme and wrong structures of grammar. In this research, it found that there were 37 errors of *misformation error* committed by the students. The types of misformation error including *regularization error*, *archi-forms*, and *alternating form*. The example of misformation errors that occur in students' writing were as follows.

- 1b. When a **women** is a smoker, active or passive this will cause several deadly diseases.
- 2b. They will get menopause sooner **then** the period in general.

In sentence (1b) the use of word '*women*' after article 'a' was incorrect because '*women*' indicate plural noun. The correct word used in this sentence should be '*woman*'. Correcting the sentence can be done by changing the word '*women*'. So, the correct sentence should be "*When a woman is a smoker, active or passive this will cause several deadly diseases.*" Meanwhile, in sentence (2b) the students misuse the word '*then*' while it should be '*than*' to compare something in general. Therefore, the correct sentence should be "*They will get menopause sooner than the period in general.*"

Addition errors were the third grammatical errors frequently committed by the students. Addition errors occur because the students added unnecessary item in the sentence and made the sentence grammatically incorrect and the item must be removed. In this research, it found that there were 28 errors in the students' writing which were divided into three types of errors; *double marking*, *regularization*, and *simple addition*.

- 1c. She had a hobby **was watched** a horror movie before going to sleep
- 2c. They will communicate or interact with **peoples** through social media

In sentence (1c) the use of to be 'was' before the word 'watched' is wrong, because 'watched' is the past participle. In addition, the sentence seems complex. Correcting sentence (1c) can be done by deleting to be 'was'. So, the correct sentence should be "*She had a hobby **watched** a horror movie before going to*

sleep". Meanwhile, in sentence (2c) there was regularization error which was in the word 'peoples', whereas the correct word should be 'people'. Therefore, the correct sentence should be 'They will communicate or interact with people through social media.

Misordering errors were the fourth grammatical errors committed by the students in writing cause and effect paragraphs. Misordering errors occur because the students misplace the use of morphemes in a sentence. In this research, there were 3 errors found in students' writing regarding to misordering, as follows.

- 1d. **Because of** a broken heart there were some people did suicide
 2d. They **quickly** fill up causing rainwater to overflow the drainage system and flood the roads

In sentence (1d) the use of the preposition 'because of' is usually use to represent the cause-effect relationship about something happened and what was the reason. In sentence (1d) there was a misplacement of the preposition 'because of' where the preposition should be placed in the middle of a sentence. So, the correct sentence should be "There were some people did suicide because of a broken heart". Meanwhile, in sentence (2d) there was misplacement of the adverb 'quickly'. Therefore, the correct sentence should be "They fill up quickly causing rainwater to overflow the drainage system and flood the roads"

The data above were the types of errors found in students' writing, especially in writing cause and effect paragraphs. The existence of grammatical errors in student writing was certainly caused by some reasons. In this case, an analysis of the sources of grammatical errors is needed to provide an overview of the sources that trigger students to make mistakes in writing paragraphs. To analyze the sources of grammatical errors in students' writing, this research used Brown's theory. According to Brown (2007), the sources of grammatical errors are categorizes into four, there are; *interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategies*. The table below was the total of the sources of student errors in writing cause and effect paragraphs

Table 2. Sources of Grammatical Errors

No	Sources of Errors	Frequency	Percentage
1	Interlingual Transfer	35	29 %
2	Intralingual Transfer	82	67%
3	Communication Strategies	5	4 %
Total		122	100%

Table 2 showed the sources of grammatical errors found in students' writing in writing cause and effect paragraphs. Based on the data above, it was found that the frequency of sources of grammatical errors in students' writing from of the highest and smallest source, including intralingual transfer were 82 (67%), interlingual transfer were 35 (29%), and communication strategies were 5 (4%).

Interlingual Transfer.

This source of errors occurs when students are influenced by the first language (mother tongue) in using the target language (Brown, 2000). This is a common thing for foreign learners when learning a second or foreign language. In this case, the first language intervention is involved in the language learning

process. For instance, in sentence (1a) “Love can make someone be **stupid person**” In this sentence, the students omitted the article 'a' between 'Love can make someone be [article] **stupid person**. Students were not used the right article in the sentence they made. This was because in Indonesian there were no rules for the use of articles, so students misuse the article, and did not use the article in the sentence they made. From this error, it indicated that students were still influenced by their mother tongue or called interlingual transfer.

Intralingual Transfer

Intralingual transfer occurs when students learn the target language but have not mastered it and apply it in new rules (Brown, 2000). For instance, in sentence “Sometimes people with a broken heart **was** doing free sex repeatedly without they were thinking ^ **the** effect for themselves.” In this sentence, the students generalize to be 'was' for all subjects in the past tense without identifying whether the subject is a singular noun or a plural noun. The correct *to be* should be '**were**' because the subject in this sentence is '**people**' which represents a plural noun of person. Then, the students also omitted the preposition '**about**' to show the cause-effect relationship. Therefore, correcting the sentence can be done by adding the preposition '**about**' between 'they were thinking [preposition] the effect for themselves.

Communication strategies

Communication strategies are related to students' learning styles (Brown, 2000). The students make strategies to understand the material easily. For instance, in sentence “But it will **effecting** people's life in the future.” In this sentence, students use *verb-ing* without being accompanied by **to be** to convey the meaning and the correct structure of their sentence. It's grammatically incorrect. The correct one is use transitive verb '**effect**'. Then students choose the wrong word 'life' to indicate the object of the writing they made without paying attention to the context or the object mentioned. Meanwhile, the correct word should be '**lives**'. This reflects that students use their own way to convey the information they have through writing regardless of whether the words or phrases used are appropriate or not.

Based on the findings and analysis above, the researcher found that students still committed errors when writing their paragraphs, such as omission, addition, misformation and misordering. Based on the results above, students made errors in each type of error. Those were omission with 54 errors (44%), addition with 28 errors (23%), misformation with 37 errors (31%), and misordering with 3 errors (2%). This result of types of errors showed that most of the students committed errors in writing their paragraphs. In this study, the finding of data explained that *omission errors* were the highest errors committed by students in writing cause and effect paragraphs.

Regarding the findings of previous studies, the findings of this study are systematically different from previous studies, in terms of the analysis of grammatical errors and the subject used. Ailinah (2022) conducted a study to investigate the grammatical errors in narrative texts. It found that the most grammatical errors made by students were misformation errors and the sources of error were intralingual transfer, interlingual transfer, and context of learning. Ramendra (2021), also conducted the study in terms to investigate the grammatical errors in essay writing. The result of this study showed that the

highest grammatical errors made by students were fragments. Furthermore, Nanning et al., (2020) also conducted a study to investigate the grammatical errors made by students in writing undergraduate theses. They concluded the study by stating the most error and the least error committed by the students there were, verb tense and subject-verb agreement. In this case, the study was conducted in different level of students' competence, subject, and object. Therefore, the results of this study are different from previous studies in terms of the number of types of grammatical errors and sources of errors in students' paragraph writing.

Based on the results of the types of errors, the researcher analyzed the sources of errors in students' paragraph writing. Those were intralingual transfer with 82 source of error or 67%, interlingual transfer with 35 sources of error or 29% and communication strategies with 5 sources of error or 4%. This study implies that the source of error that causes students to commit errors were intralingual transfer where this source of error was the highest one among the other of errors. Then, the other sources are followed by interlingual transfer and communication strategies. From the result of this research, it will help lecturers in identifying student writing problems. So that all lecturers can choose and use the most appropriate learning methods or learning techniques in teaching writing. Choosing the right learning method, will help students improve their writing skills and overcome grammatical errors in writing.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the data in the previous chapter, it was found that the students of English Language Education still made many errors in writing cause-and-effect paragraphs. Those were omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The most common types of errors made by the students are omission errors involving 54 errors with a percentage of 44%; misformation errors involving 37 errors with a percentage of 31%; addition errors involving 28 errors with a percentage of 23%; misordering errors involving 3 errors, with a percentage of 2%. The total number of grammatical errors as a whole is 122 errors. According to the result of the analysis of types of errors in students' paragraph, there were three types of sources of errors that led the students to commit errors in writing cause and effect paragraphs. Those were intralingual transfer, interlingual transfer, and communication strategies. The main source of errors is intralingual transfer with the number is 82 or 67% source of error. Then it was followed by interlingual transfer with the source of error is 35 or 29%. The last source of error that cause the students commit errors was communication strategies with the source of error is 5 or 4%.

Furthermore, the researcher gives suggestion that expected to reduce grammatical errors in writing cause and effect paragraphs. In this case, the teacher must create appropriate and impressive writing teaching techniques that can attract students' attention to English writing activities. As we know that in writing process there are several rules and types of text. Therefore, the teacher should simplify the explanation regarding these rules and types of text without reducing the content of the material provided. The teacher should provide feedback on students' writing and communicate with students about their progress in writing. Thus, the students know when they are committing errors in their writing.

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