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## AN ANALYSIS ON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS OF STUDENTS' WRITINGS

by  
Qurinta Shinta  
Universitas Semarang  
E-mail: [qorinta@gmail.com](mailto:qorinta@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this descriptive study is to examine students' grammatical errors in their writings at Diponegoro University's First Semester Public Health Students. The target population consisted of 20 Public Health students of UNDIP enrolled in an English class who were chosen at random from a pool of 75. A writing assignment was conducted to assess the students' grammatical errors based on surface strategy taxonomy. The results show the errors from the highest to the lowest percentage: misinformation (56,8%), omission (23,5%), addition (19,6%) and misordering (0%). Based on the results, it can be concluded that misinformation especially dealing with alternating forms is the most frequent errors made by students. This is caused by poor understanding of grammatical structure, lack of vocabulary mastery, and L1 direct translation tendencies*

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading, listening, speaking, and writing are the four main skills in English. Writing is widely regarded as one of the most difficult skills for foreign language students to master.

"The ESL teachers include writing skills in the syllabus because this is an essential element for students' academic success."<sup>1</sup> (Kellogg, 2008) because writing helps to i) reinforce grammatical structure, ii) increase vocabulary, and iii) support other language skills such as reading, listening, and speaking

In most of English for Specific Purpose (ESP) subjects, writing is also considered important to improve students' ability. Writing practice is usually integrated with other skills, mostly reading, in this course, and it is provided to develop students' writing skills beginning with simple sentences and progressing to complex, compound, complex compound sentences, paragraphs, and later essays.

"The actual goal, however, is not so much the acquisition of writing skills as it is the students' ability to recognize the arrangement of sentences into paragraphs and essays, along with their sentence linkers or sequence signals to demonstrate cohesive in expression."

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<sup>1</sup>Kellogg, R. T. Training writing skills: A cognitive developmental perspective. 2008

<sup>2</sup>(A Team of Writers: 2002).

A piece of writing consists of a set of paragraphs. A paragraph is usually a short paper of around 150 words which consists of an opening point called a topic sentence followed by a series of sentences which support that point. Students must understand grammatical structure as well as vocabulary in order to produce good writing. If students do not have good grammar knowledge, as a result they will not understand how to write sentences grammatically correct and how to comprehend their meaning. This study is trying to analyze what grammatical errors made by the students in their writing assignments.

The data to be analyzed for this research is taken from students' writing assignment of Public Health Students of Diponegoro University taking English Course in Semester 1. The main purposes of this research are to analyze (1) if students made grammatical errors in their writings (2) What are the most and least frequent type or errors did they make?

### LITERARY REVIEW

Grammar can be defined in a variety of ways. According to Cambridge Dictionary, Grammar is the study or use of the rules about how words change their forms and combine with other words to make sentences. Students must write sentences grammatically correct to produce an essay in a good composition. "Grammar is a basic language component that needs attention and emphasis from EFL teachers" <sup>3</sup>(Calanoga, 2019). Grammar is important because students continue to struggle with tenses and do not recognize the language structure as well. "Grammar enables learners to combine linguistic units in a grammatical sentence with its rules" <sup>4</sup>(Afdaleni, 2018; Patoc & Lasaten, 2019). "Adequate grammar competence enables learners to make effective communication because they always apply grammatical accuracy in using the language" <sup>5</sup>(Marashi, 2014). "Students can express themselves more vividly and meaningfully by using grammar" <sup>6</sup>(Bradshaw in Sioco & Vera, 2018). "If students do not have good grammar knowledge, they do not understand how to write sentences grammatically and how to comprehend their meaning" <sup>7</sup>(Cam & Tran, 2017).

From the definition above, it can be concluded that the mastery of grammar is critical for students to be able to produce meaningful writings.

Grammar's function in a sentence is to give language sense and meaning; thus, knowledge of grammar is required to master the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It can be stated that proper grammar and structure are essential in mastering English; additionally, the grammatical structure of Indonesian and English is

<sup>2</sup> A Team of Writers. English for University Teaching. Semarang; Badan Penerbit Universitas Diponegoro Semarang. xi. 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Calanoga, M. C. M., & Arellano - Tamayo, R. Error Analysis of Student Interns' Reflective Journals: Basis for a Grammar Remediation Class. *Asian EFL Journal*, 23(3.2), 220–236.2019

<sup>4</sup> Afdaleni. Students' Interest Level in Learning English Grammar. *Asian EFL Journal*, 20(4), 61–65.2018

<sup>5</sup> Marashi, H. Using Inductive and Deductive Consciousness Raising Tasks to Improve Field-Dependent and Field-Independent EFL Learners' Grammar. *The Iranian EFL Journal*, 10(3), 60–74.2014

<sup>6</sup> Sioco, E. C., & Vera, Dr. P. V. D. Grammatical Competence of Junior High School Students. *TESOL International Journal*, 13(2), 82–94. 2018

<sup>7</sup> Cam, L., & Tran, T. M. T. An Evaluation of using Games in Teaching English Grammar for First Year English-Majored Students at Dong Nai Technology University. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 16(7), 55–71.2017

completely different. "Many writers develop the components of sentence and grammar structure; one of them is created by Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue (2006)"<sup>8</sup>.

Herewith are the components to analyze students' writings:

1. The paragraph must use proper verb tenses. English, like some other languages, has different tenses. It displays the time and the action taken, whether in the past, present, or future. Correct verb tense is one of the requirements of good writing in order for the readers to understand the time line of the actions.
2. The sentences have subject-verb agreement. Subject-verb agreement is essential for avoiding misunderstandings and assisting readers in identifying the meaning that the writer intends to convey.
3. The correct use of articles (a, the) in paragraphs, which indicates whether or not the matters have already been mentioned or are known. It is also necessary to understand the distinction between article and determiner usage. Article (a) should be used for things that are unknown or unmentioned, and determiner (the) should be used for things that are known or mentioned.
4. The paragraph makes proper use of pronoun agreement and reference. Pronoun agreement/reference can be difficult for English as a Foreign Language learners at times. Avoiding repetition is one of the benefits of using pronouns in sentences, as is knowing which pronoun replaces which noun (reference).
5. There are no choppy sentences in a good paragraph. Choppy sentences are extra information added to sentences to provide readers with clear information. He or she believes that the short sentences should be separated by a period or a full stop. However, in writing, it is referred to as a choppy sentence. Choppy sentences are frequently written at the start of a text. Because the writer wishes to introduce the topics on which he or she intends to write. Too many choppy sentences in a text indicate a lack of sophistication.
6. There are no long sentences in the paragraph. A stringy sentence occurs when a writer forgets or is unaware that he or she needs to add a discourse marker. The discourse marker serves as a link between clauses or ideas. The sentence will be stringy if the connector is missing.
7. There are no sentence fragments in this paragraph. A sentence fragment, as opposed to a stringy sentence, occurs when the writer uses a connector but no clause follows the previous clause. As a result, the connector is unnecessary. It is also known as an unfinished sentence. The suggested solutions are to delete the connector and insert a period, or to continue the unfinished sentence by adding another clause.
8. There are no run-on sentences or comma splices in the paragraph. When there is no punctuation between two clauses, such as a comma, period, semicolon, or colon, a run-on sentence or comma splice occurs. A run-on sentence can be confusing to readers because it contains two clauses with two different ideas within one sentence with no markers or connectors.

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<sup>8</sup> Oshima, A. and Hogue, A. Writing Academic English. New York: Longman.2006

The other factor of this study is error Analysis. "Error analysis is a way to reveal errors which are found in speaking and writing. According to Taylor"<sup>9</sup>(1997 in Alfiyani, 2013: 23-24). It refers to the study and evaluation of measurement uncertainty. It implies that error plays a positive role in language learning because it indicates that a language learner is not effectively learning the rules of the target language.

"Error analysis, according to <sup>10</sup>Erdogan (2005: 263), is concerned with learners' performance in terms of cognitive processes. They employ recognition or coding to recognize or code the input from the target language. As a result, the evidence that learners' errors give with a knowledge of the fundamental process of second language acquisition is a key focus of mistake analysis".

<sup>11</sup>Brown (1994: 2014), "stated that "The importance of errors in a learner's interlanguage system is highlighted by error analysis. It is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the mistakes that students make. As the process of observing, analyzing, and categorizing deviations from the rules of the second language, and then revealing the systems used by learners."

According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen "There are descriptive classifications for analyzing errors: linguistic taxonomy errors, surface strategy taxonomy errors, comparative analysis taxonomy errors, and communicative effect errors." (1982, 146-191 in <sup>12</sup>Alfiyani, 2013: 24-28). However, this study merely focuses on analyzing errors from surface strategy taxonomy, this taxonomy divides errors into four categories:

*a. Omission errors.*

An omission is a type of error defined by the absence of an item that must appear in a properly formed utterance. There are two types of morphemes that are omitted more frequently than others. Morphemes are classified into two types: content morphemes and grammatical morphemes. Content words are those that carry the majority of a sentence's referential meaning, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and so on. Grammatical or function words are small words that play a minor role in conveying a sentence's meaning. They include noun and verb inflection (-s, ed, ing), the article (a, an, the), verb auxiliaries (is, will, may, can, etc), and preposition (in, on, at, etc).

*b. Addition errors*

Addition errors are distinguished by the presence of an item that should not be present in a properly/well-formed utterance. It generally occurs in the later stages of L2 acquisition or learning process that is when the learner has already acquired some target languages rules. There are three types of addition errors:

1) Double markings

This error is caused by the failure to erase certain items required in some linguistic construction. e.g., **She didn't went/goed back** instead of **She didn't go back**.

2) Regularization

<sup>9</sup> Alfiyani, L.M. An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Writing among the Second Semester Students of English Department of Yogyakarta State University in the Academic Year 2011-2012. Yogyakarta.2013

<sup>10</sup> Erdogan, V. (2005). Contribution of Error Analysis to Foreign Language Teaching.2005

<sup>11</sup> Brown, H.D. Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. 3rd Edition. Englewoods Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc. 1994

<sup>12</sup> Alfiyani, L.M. An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Writing among the Second Semester Students of English Department of Yogyakarta State University in the Academic Year 2011-2012. Yogyakarta.2013

Regularization error occurs when a marker that is typically added to a linguistic item is erroneously added to exceptional items of the given class that do not take such marker.  
e.g., **offsprings** instead of **offspring**, **vocabularies** instead of **vocabulary**

### 3) Simple addition

Simple addition errors are characterized by all addition errors. They refer to the use of an item which should not be appeared in well-formed utterances.

e.g., Tono **must brings** his books. Instead of Tono **must bring** his books.

### c. Misformation errors

Misformation errors are characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morphemes or structure. They occur when a learner write down something although it is incorrect.

There are three types of misformation errors:

#### 1) Regularization errors

Regularization errors that fall under the misformation category are those in which a regular marker is used in place of an irregular one.

e.g., **runned** instead of **run**, **womans** instead of **women**, **phenomenons** instead of **phenomena**

#### 2) Archi-forms Archi-forms errors are the wrong selection of certain forms to represent others e.g., **Her** danced with my brother instead of "**She** danced with my brother."

#### 3) Alternating forms Alternating forms error is caused by the learners' vocabulary and grammar development.

e.g., We will eat at the break time **when we are study** instead of

We will eat at the break time **after studying**

### d. Misordering errors

Misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. It occurs systematically for both L1 and L2 learners in constructions that have already have been acquired.

e.g., He is **all the time** late → **all the time** is in the wrong position

the sentence should be: He is late **all the time**

Writing is an act of communication. It is an act of making marks on certain surface in a form of graphic presentation to convey a meaning. <sup>13</sup>Cohen and Riel (1989: 15 in Hendrawaty & Saraswati, 2016: 12) defined writing as "a communicative act, a way of sharing information, observation, thoughts or ideas with ourselves and others". In accordance with this meaning, Ur (1996: 162 in Hendrawaty & Saraswati, 2016: 12) stated that "writing is widely used within foreign language course as a convenient means for engaging with aspect of language other than the writing itself. It can be said that writing is a process in which the writer discovers, organizes, and communicates his or her thoughts to the readers by using words and symbols which are put together in the written form.

This research is a replication of previous two studies 1) "An Analysis on Students' Errors in Writing Sentence Pattern" <sup>14</sup>(by Nurmala Hendrawaty, 2018). This article focused on the surface strategy taxonomy that analyses four errors: Omission, Addition,

<sup>13</sup> Hendrawaty, N. and Saraswati, R. (2016). Recognizing Learner's Potential in a Descriptive Paragraph. Developing Reflective English Language Teaching: Palembang. Sriwijaya University Press.

<sup>14</sup> Hendrawaty, Nurmala. An Analysis of Students Errors in Writing Sentence Patterns. Loquen: English Studies Journal, Volume 11, Number 01 June 2018, pp.63-68

Misinformation, and Misordering. The results show the errors from the highest to the lowest percentage: misinformation (57.6%), omission (27.47%), addition (8.8%), and misordering (6.13%). Based on the result, it can be concluded that regularization in misinformation is the most frequent error made by students. This fact may refer to the poor understanding of grammatical structure of the learners.

The other research was conducted by 2) <sup>15</sup>Tri Jampi Setyorini, Puspa Dewi, "The Grammatical Error Analysis Found in Students' Composition." This research aims at analyzing types of grammatical errors in students' essays. The result shows that the percentage for each error type are 34.06% (omission), 7.25% (addition), 57.97% (substitution), and 0.72% (permutation). Based on the result, it can be concluded that the most dominant error is substitution. This might due to students' lack of vocabulary in English.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This is descriptive qualitative research since the data are in the form of words, phrases or sentences. <sup>16</sup>Bogdan and Biklen (1992:30) state that "one of the characteristics of qualitative research is descriptive meaning the data collected are mostly in the form of texts or pictures rather than numbers. "The procedure of research can produce the descriptive data which is more informative and explicitly representative.

Twenty writing assignments were taken randomly out of 75 students of Public Health Students of Diponegoro University who took English 1 Course. These writing assignments were then analyzed based on Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982 in Alfiyanti, 2013) four descriptive classifications in analyzing errors, which are: omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering.

Steps taken to analyze the students' writing assignments are as follows: first, she checked on students' writings for grammatical errors. Then she classified the errors based on the four classifications: omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. Finally, she counted the number of errors on each classification and put them into percentage to reveal the least and most frequent error occurrences.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The 20 writing assignments by the students, as the source of data, were selected randomly out of 75 essays. Based on the analysis of the data, it was discovered that grammatical errors made by students based on Dulay, Burt, Krashen taxonomy were: omission (23,5%), addition (19,6%), misinformation (56,8%), and misordering (0%). The biggest number of errors are made in misinformation – alternating forms. These results reveal the facts that

- (1) Many students still have difficulty to make good sentences

For example:

- ..... *plastic consumption the house excessive* → this not a good sentence

<sup>15</sup> Jampi, Tri Setyorini, Dewi Puspa, Masykuri, Edi Sunjayanto. The Grammatical Error Analysis Found in Students' Composition. Vol. 10 No.2 July – December 2020. Pp. 28, 221-221

<sup>16</sup> Bogdan, C and Biklen, K. Qualitative Research for Education. Boston: Advision of Sinn and Schuster, Inc.1992.30.

- It should be → *Excessive plastic consumption*.
- *Due to is light* → should be *because it is light*, ...
  - ..... *make plastic practical to use* → should be: Therefore, plastic is practical to
  - *that accumulates without realizing it is also dangerous* --> should be ...*that accumulates is also dangerous*
  - *If this is allowed* ==> should be *if this continues to happen*
- (2) They also have problem in choosing the correct words in their writings.
- *These days* → should be *nowadays*
  - *Both ...* should be → should be *All*
  - *And these impacts* → should be *However*, these impacts
- (3) They sometimes have difficulties to differentiate between nouns and adjective, noun and verb
- For example:
- *Due to is light* → this sentence is wrong because of wrong pattern.  
It should be → *because it is light*
  - *consumptionand* → should be *consumptive*
  - *One and only planet to life* → should be *one and only planet to live*

Herewith is the table that show the number of grammatical errors in students' writing and their classifications.

**Table 1. Grammatical Errors based on Duley, Burt, Khrasen (1982) in Alfiyani 2013**

No	Name	Types of Errors according to Duley, Burt, Krashen (1982)							
		Omission	Addition			Misinformation			Misordering
			Double Markers	Regularization	Simple Addition	Regularization	Archi Forms	Alternating Forms	
1	Siska Yulia U				1. ... your neighborhood to be clean ==> should be ... <i>clean</i>			1. ... Plastic consumption in the house excessive ==> should be <i>Excessive plastic consumption</i>	
2	Vidiya A	1. Since the use of plastic become ==> should be <i>becomes</i>	1. this is become ==> should be <i>this becomes</i>			1. ... plastic the world produces ==> should be <i>produced</i> ( passive)		1. These days ==> <i>nowadays</i>	
3	Wildan Riadi		1. a simple attempts ==> should be <i>a simple attempt</i>		1. Therefore, there are ..... ==> <i>Therefore</i> is not needed			1. Due to is light ==> should be <i>because it is light</i> , ... 2. ... make plastic practical to use ==> should be <i>Therefore, plastic is practical to use</i> 3. First try to wearing ... ==> should be <i>you should try to wear</i>	

4	Alifah Inas				1. But we are all ... ==> <b>But</b> should be erased because it is not needed		1. importance ==> should be <b>important</b>	1. .... That accumulates without realizing it is also dangerous ==> should be <b>...that accumulates is also dangerous</b>	
5	Zhafarina Laili							1. ...consumptionand ==> should be <b>consumptive</b>	
6	Winiyan Wisnu						1. The plastic ==> should be <b>plastic</b>		
7	Zaenah Annabella				1. ...is depending ==> should be <b>depends on</b>				
8	Widya Ayu O	1. According to the distribution of waste can be divided ... ==> should be <b>,,, of waste, it can be divided</b> 2. Not only ... And ==> shoult be <b>Not only ...but also</b> 3. even be bad ==> should be <b>even it is bad</b>							
9	Syafrida Dearsya	1. result ==> should be <b>result in</b> 2. ... but takes decades should be <b>it takes decades</b>					1. .... But takes decades ==> <b>but should be instead of</b> 2. For reducing ==> should be <b>to reduce</b>		
10	Febry Rachel	1. The most polluting ==> should be <b>the most polluting waste</b>					1. Due to these years ==> should be <b>during these years</b> 2. ...which has very economic value ==> should be <b>..which has high economic value</b>		
11	Natasha Mauretty				1. Similarly, adult must check each other on the same ==> <b>on the same</b> should be erased because it has the same meaning as similarly		1. is to simply to cut it off ==> should be <b>it simply by cutting off</b>	1.	
12	Meycella CS						1. there is more than a few of sellers ==>		
18	Aisya Mutiara							1. At this time ==> should be <b>At the moment or nowadays</b> 2. One of the ways ==> should be <b>one of many ways</b>	
19	Tiara Hasna						1. As a young generation we ==> should be <b>As young geberations, we ....</b>		
20	Vita Nurazizah							1. And these impacts ==> should be <b>However, these impacts</b>	
	Total	12	2	0	8	8	6	15	0
				10			29		0
		Omission		Addition			Misinformation		Misordering
	Percentage	23,50%		19,60%			56,80%		0

## CONCLUSION

There are two main purposes of this research, they are to discover: (1) students' grammatical errors in their writing assignments in English I Class at Diponegoro University's First Semester Public Health Students. (2) what grammatical category is the highest and the lowest in percentage.

Based on the findings of the analysis, it was discovered that that grammatical errors



made by students based on Duley, Burt, Kharsen taxonomy were: omission (23,5%), addition (19,6%), misinformation (56,8%), and misordering (0%). While The biggest percentage was misinformation – alternating forms, the lowest was misordering.

Referring to the findings, it can be concluded that 1) students need to master the structure of complex sentences, 2) they also need more understanding/knowledge concerning the functions of noun, verb, adjective in sentences, and 3) Students' writings were highly influenced by L1 direct translation, therefore students need more practice on how to make sentences correctly both in pattern, structure, and meaning.

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