

# THE ANALYSIS OF MAJOR GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN STUDENTS' WRITING

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates and classifies grammatical errors in writing made by year nine students at SMP Gembala Baik Bilingual Class. The samples of this research were 30 students randomly selected from 61 students. Descriptive qualitative was used to describe the errors made by the 30 students. They were asked to write about their holidays, and then the analysis was conducted to see the errors found in their writings. The results show that There were three errors in noun endings, two errors in subject-verb agreement, four errors in verb tense, four errors in verb form, eight errors in capitalization, six errors in sentence fragment, and two errors in comma errors. The information of the types of students' errors can be used as a guidance to evaluate the weakness or progress of students' ability in learning English, particularly in writing.

**Keywords:** grammatical errors, error analysis, contrastive analysis, English learning.

## **Abstrak**

*Studi ini meneliti dan mengklasifikasikan kesalahan tata bahasa dalam tulisan yang dibuat oleh siswa kelas sembilan SMP Gembala Baik kelas Bilingual. Sampel dari penelitian ini adalah 30 siswa yang dipilih secara acak dari 61 siswa. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan untuk menggambarkan kesalahan yang dibuat oleh 30 siswa. Mereka diminta untuk menulis karangan tentang liburan mereka, dan kemudian analisis dilakukan untuk melihat kesalahan yang ditemukan dalam tulisan-tulisan mereka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada tiga kesalahan di noun endings, dua kesalahan dalam subject-verb agreement, empat kesalahan dalam verb tense, empat kesalahan dalam verb form, delapan kesalahan dalam capitalization, enam kesalahan dalam sentence fragment, dan dua kesalahan dalam comma errors. Informasi dari jenis kesalahan siswa dapat digunakan sebagai pedoman untuk mengevaluasi kelemahan atau kemajuan dari kemampuan siswa dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, terutama dalam menulis .*

**Kata Kunci:** kesalahan gramatikal, analisis kesalahan, analisis kontrastif, pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is one of the skills that must be learned by the students. The learners use five general components of the writing process; they are content, form, grammar, style, and mechanic. The composition was important for the learners to communicate their idea in written English. Richards (2015: 20) says that the

philosophy of the second school is that we live in an imperfect world and consequently errors will always occur in spite of our best efforts. People often produce incorrect utterances. Brown (2007) names the learning condition above as error. In learning English, it is common that students make mistake or errors both in spoken or written form. According to Pawlak (2012:3 07) error correction is often considered to be one of a teacher's basic professional responsibilities, and is frequently expected by students and demanded by the learning institution. Lado (1981) states that the students who come into contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. The elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for the students while those elements that are different will be difficult. Based on the statements above, the students frequently got some difficulties. In other words, the students sometimes made grammatical errors; in this case, they were very likely to make errors probably because of the language habit in their mother tongue that was sometimes slightly or absolutely different from English.

A linguistic analysis that focuses on the process of identifying and describing the learners' error in target language learning. In composing a good writing, we should notice some aspects. Grammar is one of the important aspects that should be mastered in order to make a well-structured writing. James (2014) states that students' erroneous output – their composition errors in particular – are not one remove, but two removes from the native speaker's version. We are not only correcting the errors into what learners want to say but also correcting the errors into what the native speakers would have said or write. The error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of native speaker, reflecting the inter-language competence of the learner. Brown (2007: 259) states the fact that the learners do make errors and that these errors can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learners, led to a surge of the study of learners' errors, called error analysis.

Errors that students make when they learn a language are very common. Further, according to Dulay (1982: 138) people cannot learn without first systematically committing errors. By making errors, students know the correct

one, and those errors can motivate students to learn. In the learning process, the students still made errors and mistakes, so it is important to analyze their errors and diagnose the difficulty of the study in the classroom.

Therefore, error analysis is used to detect the students' errors. It was needed because the result of the analysis would give some contributions in attempting to decrease errors done by the students in learning English, especially in SMP Gembala Baik.

In this research, the students' errors on grammar were analyzed by asking them to write a composition about their holidays. The major errors were mostly made by the students on grammar were observed. So, it was very important to know how many kinds of errors in writing to help them understand writing skill well. Based on the background previously presented, the problem formulation is the major errors mostly made by the second year students at SMP Gembala Baik in writing a composition about their holiday. Purposes of the study are: (1) To investigate types of grammatical errors made by the year nine students at SMP Gembala Baik Bilingual Class; and (2) To describe characteristics of the errors and give examples of the errors in order to find out the proper ways to solve those errors.

## **METHOD**

The population for this research consisted of 61 year nine students at SMP Gembala Baik Bilingual Class 2015/2016 academic year. The samples of this research were 30 students randomly selected from 61 year nine students at SMP Gembala Baik Bilingual Class 2015/2016 academic year. Data were collected from 30 students' 150-200 words essay telling about their holidays. In the first class time, the students were asked to write a 150-200 words essay to tell about their holidays in one hour. Then, the essays were collected for error analysis. The method of descriptive qualitative was analysing the data by describing the errors made by the students. Qualitative research was concerned with description. The students' errors were identified and classified based on major error categories in Richards and Renandya (2010) they are nouns (nouns endings, and articles), verbs

(subject-verb agreement, verb tense, and verb form), punctuation and sentence structure (sentence fragments, comma errors, run-on sentences, and semicolon errors), word form errors, and preposition errors.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The students' major errors in writing can be classified into five types: nouns, verbs, punctuation and structure, word form, and preposition form. The students' major errors are shown below.

### **Type 1: Nouns**

#### Noun endings

There was 4 *person* who stayed at Wong's house, me, Alexander, Merdion , and Rxy. ... (1)

I have too many *film* that I want to watch. ... (2)

And i bought some *novel*. ... (3)

#### Articles

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### **Type 2: Verbs**

#### Subject-verb agreement

There *was* 4 person who stayed at Wong's house, me, Alexander, Merdion , and Rxy. ... (1)

The *games that I've played is* just Point Blank and Dragon Nest. ... (2)

#### Verb tense

I would say it a 'long' holiday because I *do* absolutely nothing. ... (1)

I was the one who woke up earliest. After that I took a bath, then Wong's mom *prepare* breakfast for us. ... (2)

I went to mall to *bought* some clothes and shoes for Chinese new year. ... (3)

This holiday I didn't *went* anywhere, I just stayed at Pontianak. ... (4)

#### Verb form

I invited many people *to came*. ... (1)

There were so many things that we can *played*. ... (2)

*Towent* to Kuching we used bus. ... (3)

We hurried to *went* home. ... (4)

### **Type 3: Punctuation and Sentence Structure**

#### Capitalization

I and my family had our *easter* holiday in Singapore. ... (1)

Actually, we were in Singapore for 5 days, from *friday* until *tuesday*. And on *tuesday* we went back to Pontianak. ... (2)

I and my sister invited our friends to *came* to celebrate the *new year* together. ... (3)

At 12 o'clock we played the firework with the neighbour together and said happy *new year*. ... (4)

When we arrived in the mall, we went to *gramedia*. ... (5)

After that we went to buy some clothes for the *chinese new year*. ... (6)

I went to *kaisar ,ligo , mitraanda and megamall*. ... (7)

I went to many places to search clothes and shoes for Chinese *new year*. ... (8)

#### Sentence fragments

*Only me, my mother, my brother, and my grandma who stayed in there with my cousins, named Evelyn and Vincent*. ... (1)

Whereas, my mom, grandma, uncle, and auntie talked each other and ate snacks. ... (2)

After that continuing my games. ... (3)

And me? ... (4)

The next day, in the morning, because there didn't have a bathroom. ... (5)

In 2 years ago, when I was on 7<sup>th</sup> grade. ... (6)

Comma errors

*But*, only Rexy, Alex, Merdion and Tomy came to the party. ... (1)

I was the one who woke up earliest. After that I took a bath, *then* Wong's mom prepare breakfast for us. ... (2)

Run-on sentences

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Semicolon errors

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**Type 4: Word Form Errors**

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**Type 5: Preposition Errors**

*At*christmas holiday, i went to Jakarta to see my older sister and her son. ... (1)

**Table 1. Corrections of the Errors**

Categories	Errors	Corrections
<b>Type 1: Nouns</b>		
<i>Noun endings</i>	... 4 <i>person</i> ... ... <i>manyfilm</i> . ... ... <i>some novel</i> .	... 4 <i>persons</i> ... ... <i>manyfilms</i> . ... ... <i>some novels</i> .
<i>Articles</i>	-	-
<b>Type 2: Verbs</b>		
Subject-verb	There <i>was</i> ... The <i>games that I've</i>	There <i>were</i> ... The <i>games that I've</i>

agreement	<i>played is ...</i>	<i>played are ...</i>
Verb tense	...I <i>do</i> ... ...then Wong's mom <i>prepare</i> ... ...to <i>bought</i> ... ...I didn't <i>went</i> ...	...I <i>did</i> ... ...then Wong's mom <i>prepared</i> ... ...to <i>buy</i> ... ...I didn't <i>go</i> ...
Verb form	...to <i>came</i> . ... we can <i>played</i> To <i>went</i> to Kuching ... We hurried to <i>went</i> ...	...to <i>come</i> . ... we can <i>play</i> To <i>go</i> to Kuching ... We hurried to <i>go</i> ...

**Type 3:  
Punctuation  
and Sentence  
structure**

Capitalization	... <i>easter</i> holiday in Singapore ...from <i>friday</i> until <i>tuesday</i> . And on <i>tuesday</i> .... ... <i>new year</i> together ... <i>new year</i> . ... we went to <u><i>gramedia</i></u> . ... <i>chinese new year</i> . I went to <i>kaisar ,ligo ,</i> <i>mitraanda and megamall</i> ... Chinese <i>new year</i> .	... <i>Easter</i> holiday in Singapore ...from <i>Friday</i> until <i>Tuesday</i> . And on <i>Tuesday</i> .... ... <i>New Year</i> together ... <i>New Year</i> . ... we went to <u><i>Gramedia</i></u> . ... <i>Chinese New Year</i> . I went to <i>Kaisar ,Ligo ,</i> <i>Mitraanda and Megamall</i> ... Chinese <i>New Year</i> .
Sentence fragments	<i>Only me, my mother, my brother, and my grandma who stayed in there with my cousins, named Evelyn and Vincent.</i>	Only my mother, my brother, my grandma and me who stayed in there with my cousins: Evelyn and Vincent.
	Whereas, my mom, grandma, uncle, and auntie talked each other and ate snacks. After that continuing my games.	My mom, grandma, uncle, and auntie talked each other and ate snacks. After that I continue playing my games.
	And me? The next day, in the morning, because there	Me? The next day, in the morning, there wasn't any

	didn't have a bathroom. In 2 years ago, when I was on 7 <sup>th</sup> grade.	bathroom. 2 years ago, I was in 7th grade.
	<i>But</i> , only Rexy, Alex, Merdion and Tomy came to the party.	But only Rexy, Alex, Merdion, and Tomy came to the party.
Comma errors	I was the one who woke up earliest. After that I took a bath, <i>then</i> Wong's mom prepare breakfast for us.	I was the one who woke up earliest. After that I took a bath, <i>and then</i> Wong's mom prepare breakfast for us
Run-on sentences	-	-.
Semicolon errors	-	-
<b>Type 4: Word Form Errors</b>	-	-
<b>Type 5: Preposition Errors</b>	<i>At</i> Christmas holiday, I went to Jakarta to see my older sister and her son.	<i>On</i> Christmas holiday, I went to Jakarta to see my older sister and her son.

The table above shows the corrections of the errors made by the students. It lists all the errors and corrections of errors. The correction of the errors are provided in the table. We can see the mistakes more clearly to identify errors and specify the necessary corrections to make the sentences correct.

**Table 2. Frequency of the Errors**

Categories	Frequency
Type 1: Nouns	
Noun endings	3
Articles	-
Total	3
Type 2: Verbs	
Subject-verb agreement	2

Verb tense	4
Verb form	4
Total	12
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Type 3: Punctuation and Sentence structure	
Capitalization	8
Sentence fragments	6
Comma errors	2
Run-on sentences	-
Semicolon errors	-
Total	16
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Type 4: Word Form Errors	-
Total	-
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Type 5: Preposition Errors	1
Total	1
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Based on the result above, it shows that there are three errors found in noun endings. All of them are in plural form of nouns. There is no error found in articles. There are two errors found in subject-verb agreement. There are four errors found in verb tense. There are four errors found in verb form. There are eight errors found in capitalization. There are six errors found in sentence fragment. There are two errors found in comma errors. There is no error found in run-on sentences. There is no error found in run-on sentences semicolon. There is no error found in word form. There is one error found in preposition.

In nouns, the errors made were mostly in noun endings. The students still made errors in determining the plural noun before quantifiers. Notice 4 person, many film and some novel in the above sentences. 4, many and, some are quantifiers. They are followed by plural nouns.

In verbs, errors made in subject-verb agreement, verb tense, and verb form. The students also had difficulty in determining the plural verb of be in subject-verb agreement. While in verb tense, the students were confused to put the correct

verb tenses in complex sentences. In verb form, most errors were found in to-infinitive and modal.

In capitalization, students failed to capitalize the name of event, name of days, and name of places. Capitalization is very simple but it seems some students still had problems in this part. Sentence fragments and comma errors were made by the students too. Subject and verb are the basic parts to create a sentence. The missing of any of these parts will make a sentence fragment error. The students don't know that we need to put comma before "and".

The students had a good mastery for the use of preposition. There was only one error noticed. Preposition *at* was misused by the students.

## **CONCLUSION**

Most of the year nine students at SMP Gembala Baik Bilingual Class made errors in Punctuation and Sentence Structure, verbs, nouns, and preposition. Capitalization is the biggest portion of errors made by students. The students also have difficulties in sentence fragments, verb form, verb tense, noun endings, comma, and preposition. The corrections of errors are provided. The corrections of the errors can be used by the students to make the correct sentences.

The errors made by the students varied from easy to difficult. There were some simple errors made by the students. These errors could be avoided if the students understood the basic rules of the grammar.

These errors must be carefully considered by the teachers in teaching English grammar. If the teacher failed to make the students aware of the mistakes they made, the mistakes would be fossilized. They will do the same mistakes again and again without realizing that they are making mistakes.

English teachers may use the information of the types of students' errors as a guidance to evaluate the weakness or progress of students' ability in learning English, particularly in writing. They should take the errors into account, analyze them and provide proper correction.

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