

# STRATEGIES TO REDUCE GRAMMATICAL OVERGENERALIZATION IN ESL STUDENTS' WRITTEN ENGLISH

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## Abstract

Overgeneralization is an error commonly made by ESL students when making English sentences. It is frequently found in their writing, for examples, "I sleped because I was tired", "She watches on TV", etc. Such errors have no relation to the students' first language (L1), but instead of the English itself (L2). English has a lot of exceptions in its rules. It is also influenced by both processes of thinking: Inductive and Deductive Reasoning. Many strategies are used by teachers to overcome such error. However, this phenomenon is often found in the writing of students today. This paper, firstly, points out briefly about overgeneralization, the causes of students' written English, learning strategies of overgeneralization, and two factors of overgeneralization. In addition, this paper explains strategies to reduce grammatical overgeneralization. In general, the strategies involve both students' activities which involve self-correcting, working co-operatively, revising the edited work, submitting the work to the teacher, and teachers' interference which involves asking the student to discuss the problem together, correcting and commenting, giving back the work to revise, submitting the revised work to the teacher.

**Keywords:** *Overgeneralization, ESL Students' Written English, Inductive and Deductive Reasoning*

## Introduction

Making English sentences in writing is not an easy thing for students, especially for those whose first language is not English. Besides the difference between the first language and the English itself often causes problems for them since English has its own special rules and constraints of grammar needed to form sentences. One of the examples is the additional suffix "ed" of regular verbs, like *cook-cooked, translate-translated*, etc. However, not all verbs are

attached by that suffix to indicate past actions, for examples, *go-went, buy-bought*, etc. they are called 'irregular verbs'.

When we teach the students of both high schools and university, we often find that they frequently make errors related to the exception in English rules. For example, the student write "I sleped because I was tired" or "She watches on TV" (Yusuf, 2012: 46). In the former example, the student seems to fall into an assumption that to indicate past events, it needs to add the