

## COMMON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN STUDENTS' WRITING (A Case Study Of The First-Year Students Of Ist Akprind Yogyakarta)

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### Abstract

This study is intended to find out and describe grammatical errors made by the first-year students of the Statistics Department of IST AKPRIND Yogyakarta. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method. The data are taken from 30 students' writing on free topics. The grammatical found are classified based on the surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay et. al. (1982): they are omission errors, addition errors, misformation errors, and misordering errors. The results of the data analysis showed that there were 558 errors of 206 sentences taken from 30 writing that consist of 44.09% misformation errors, 27.06%, omission errors, 22.35% addition errors, and 4.92% misordering errors. From these findings, it was concluded that grammatical errors were caused by interlingual and intralingual interference. Therefore, teachers are suggested to give more emphasis on the structure of English which is different from Bahasa Indonesia, and pay more attention to the structure of the language that is considered difficult.

**Keywords:** *grammar, grammatical errors, students' writing*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini untuk melihat kesalahan grammar yang dilakukan oleh mahasiswa jurusan Statistik semester satu angkatan tahun 2017/2018 di IST AKPRIND Yogyakarta. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Pengambilan sampel kalimat berasal dari 30 karangan bahasa Inggris. Pengelompokan kesalahan grammar menggunakan surface strategy taxonomi yang dibuat oleh Dulay et. al. (1982) yaitu Omission Error, Addition Error, Misformation Error, and Misordering Errors. Hasil analisa data menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 558 kesalahan dari 206 kalimat yang diambil dari 30 karangan yang terdiri dari 44.09% misformation errors, 27.06%, omission errors, 22.35% addition errors and 4.92% misordering errors. Dari hasil temuan tersebut disimpulkan kesalahan grammar disebabkan oleh interlingual dan intralingual interference. Oleh karena itu kepada pengajar disarankan untuk lebih menekankan pada struktur bahasa Inggris yang berbeda dengan bahasa Indonesia dan lebih memperhatikan struktur bahasa yang dianggap sulit.

**Kata kunci:** *grammar, kesalahan grammar, karangan mahasiswa*

## INTRODUCTION

English is the most important of the foreign languages to be taught in Indonesia due to the role of English as an international language. This foreign language is taught at schools starting from elementary school up to the university level. In learning English as a foreign language, it is inevitable that all non-English learners make countless mistakes and errors due to the differences between English and their target language (Dulay, 1982; Brown, 2001; Erdogan, 2005). It means that for all foreign language learners, making errors or mistakes naturally happens since it is a part of learning in the language acquisition process.

The learners' difficulties in foreign language learning may result in the form of mistakes and/or errors in language components such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Some experts have differentiated mistakes from errors. Dulay et al. (1982) state that mistakes refer to errors caused by factors such as fatigue and inattention; it deals with 'performance errors'. While errors, which resulted from lack of knowledge of the rules of the target language reserved for systematic deviation due to the learners' still developing knowledge of the L2 rule system. Ellis cited in Shariq (2020) also states that errors are caused by a lack of knowledge about the target language, and are distinguishable from mistakes, which are caused by a lapse

in language performance. According to the Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics in Erdogan (2005), mistakes can be self-corrected by a learner because they deal with lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspects of performance. Whereas, an error can not be self-corrected by a learner due to faulty or incomplete learning.

Grammar is one of the basic language components. Grammar is defined as the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence is very important since it takes a role in the idea of delivery (Brown, 2001). It is the most fundamental element of language learning for second/foreign language learners (Krishnasamy, J. (2015) and needs attention and emphasis in EFL teaching (Calanoga, 2019). However, most non-English learners often ignore grammar when they practice English both in spoken or written forms because they think that grammar is difficult and boring to learn due to so many different grammatical rules from their native languages. They do not realize that knowing and using grammatical rules are very important in delivering ideas. Richard and Renandya as cited in Marashi (2014) state that grammar can not be ignored since without grammar the learner's language development is limited. With adequate grammar competence, learners always apply grammatical accuracy in using the language which enables them to make effective communication (Marashi, 2014) and enables them to explain their thoughts vividly and meaningfully (Sioco & Vera, 2018). Therefore, mastering grammar is needed for foreign language learners to be able to deliver messages correctly. Mistakes in the area of grammar will cause misunderstandings in both spoken and written communication.

Grammatical Errors may occur in the writing of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners that involve the use of articles, verb tense, prepositions, subject-

verb agreement; and involving word order. These grammatical errors are due to the existence of the different grammatical rules between English and their target language (Dulay, 1982; Brown, 2001; Erdogan, 2005). For example, there are some different grammatical rules between English and Bahasa Indonesia. English has the concept of tense for verbs (simple present, simple past, present participle) and subject-verb agreement in English whereas Bahasa Indonesia does not. English also has gender pronouns such as *he*, *she*, but Bahasa Indonesia does not have gender pronouns and its pronouns are not as varied as English. These differences in grammar rules cause EFL learners to make grammatical errors in their writing.

Error analysis explores learners' errors in second/foreign language learning. According to Gass (2013), error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make; it compares the errors made by learners in producing the target language and the target language form. Errors are not good things in learning English. However, making errors cannot be considered negative since it is a part of learning (Ma'mun, 2016; Turmudi, 2019). Brown (2001) also emphasizes that errors are worth to be carefully analyzed in order to understand that committing errors is included in the process of constructing a new language system. Error analysis is useful for both students and teachers. For students, error analysis will show them what aspect of grammar which is difficult for them, show the errors made by the students, know the source or the cause of the error, and how the students can learn from their mistakes in order they will not make some errors repeatedly. For teachers, it is required to evaluate themselves whether they are successful or not in teaching English and then take pedagogical precautions towards them (Erdogan, 2005).

Based on the researcher's experience in teaching English at the first-year students of the Statistics Department of IST

AKPRIND Yogyakarta, there are still a lot of grammatical errors in students' writing. For example, they wrote "*I am go*", instead of "*I am going*", and "*score high*" instead of "*high score*". The purpose of the study then is to reveal the grammatical errors in the students' writing made by the first-year students of the Statistics Department of IST AKPRIND Yogyakarta. To classify the error, the surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982) is used since this taxonomy is considered to be the most appropriate taxonomy that can be applied to classify errors on the base of their observable characteristics.

The students' grammatical errors are classified based on the surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al (1982), they are errors of Omission, errors of Addition, errors of Misformation, and errors of Misordering. Ellis (2008) and Kazemian, and Shabaz (2015) explain omission is characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance (He like doing sport on Sunday). Addition is characterized by the presence of an item that must not appear in a well-formed utterance (she does not visits her grandmother). Misformation is due to the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure (this cats). Misordering is characterized by the incorrect placement of morphemes or a group of morphemes in an utterance (I don't know what should you do).

According to Erdogan (2005), sources of errors are classified into two categories; Interlingual transfer, and Intralingual transfer. Interlingual transfer is produced by learners of the second or target language in the process of acquiring a second language as a result of language transfer from native language to target language (Brown cited in Asni and Susanti, 2018). Intralingual transfer is caused by negative/wrong transfer of the target language to the target language itself (Tamimi in Khresheh 2016)

To investigate the errors, the study takes student's writing made by the first-year students of the Statistics Department of IST AKPRIND Yogyakarta. The study only focuses on two errors in students' sentence construction: morphological and syntactical errors. It means that the focus of the study is on the errors of subject and verb agreement, the use of pronouns, part of speech, and other problems in sentence structures.

The result of the study is expected to provide information for English teachers or lecturers that can be useful to improve English teaching-learning activities. Knowing the type of error made by students will help them to develop appropriate teaching techniques and materials. For the students, knowing their errors will help them to improve their mastery and competence in English.

## **METHODOLOGY**

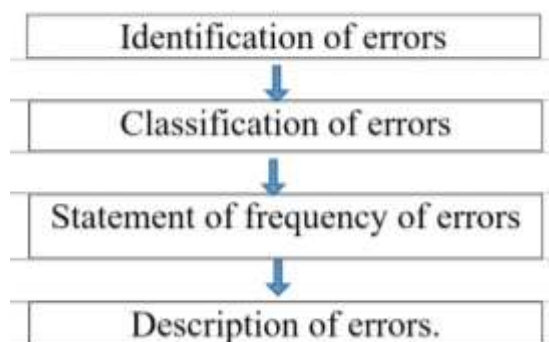
This study applies a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to describe the data obtained as they found in the field. The study investigates, analyzes, and categorizes grammatical errors made by the first-year students of the Statistics Department of IST AKPRIND Yogyakarta. No treatment is given to the students. It only describes the errors and determines which kind of errors they belong to based on the surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982).

The study was conducted at IST AKPRIND Yogyakarta located on Jalan Kalisahak No.28, Balapan, Yogyakarta. The population of the study was 30 first-year non-English students of the Statistics Department of IST AKPRIND Yogyakarta who took English course in the academic year of 2017/2018.

The data source is obtained from the results of the writing task done by 30 first-year non-English students of the Statistics Department of IST AKPRIND Yogyakarta. From the collected writings that the students have done, some writings are

chosen to be analyzed. The analysis is focused on the errors made by the students.

The data analysis in this study is done in some ordered steps: identification of errors, classification of errors, statement of frequency of errors, and description of errors. From the data collection, there are 30 students' writing. The sentences containing errors are identified. After the errors have been identified, the next step is classifying them based on the surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al (1982) is used. The errors are classified into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering errors.



The next step is data calculation. The data calculation is done to find out the frequency of occurrences of each error. The calculation is done upon the errors classified based on the surface strategy taxonomy. Firstly, the errors listed in the table are counted. Next, each type of error is calculated by using a simple formula to obtain the percentage of the error occurrence. The formula is described as follows:

$$X = \frac{N}{Nt} \times 100\%$$

Where:

X: Percentage of error type

N: The number of a particular type of error

Nt: The total number of all types of errors

## RESEARCH FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

Having been analyzed based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy by Dulay et al

(1982), the errors are counted. The result of counting the errors is presented including the frequency and percentage of each of them. The following table presents the frequency and percentage of each type of error based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy by Dulay et al (1982):

**Table 1.** Types, Frequency and Percentage of Errors in Students' Writing

Types of Error	Frequency	Percentage
Misformation	254	44.09 %
Omission	159	27.60 %
Addition	117	23.43 %
Misordering	28	4.86 %
Total	558	100%

From the table above it can be seen that misformation error comes as the type of error with the highest frequency of occurrence which makes up 44.09 % of all errors. Omission error is the type of error that comes in the second place among the most occurred error, it makes up 27.60 %. Addition error comes as the third highest frequency which makes up 23.43 %. The lowest frequency is misordering errors. It amounts to 4.86 %.

Errors of misformation make up 44.09 %. The misformation errors found are misformation of past tense which make up 26.37 %, misformation of verb 17.32 %, misformation of to be 16.14% misformation of noun (8.26 %), misformation of article (7.87%), misformation of preposition (7.48 %), misformation of pronoun (3.14%) and others (13.38 %).

Misformation in past tense verb comes as the most frequently occurring misformation error, it amounts (26.37 %). Misformation of past tense verbs here is characterized when the past tense verb is actually needed, the students use another form of verbs such as infinitive, irregular verbs, or others just like the following sentences

- *I make you cried and angry*
- *My school announced that we become the winner in cultural parade.*

They should be



- *I made you cry and angry*
- *My school announced that we became the winner in cultural parade.*

The misinformation error of past tense can be due to the student's lack of target language rules.

From the data analysis, the omission errors become the second highest frequencies. They consist of omission of plural-s (26 errors = 16.35 %), omission of verb inflection- ed (23 errors = 14.46%), omission of articles (22 errors = 13.83%), omission of preposition (21 errors = 13.20 %), omission of to be (20 = 12.57 %), omission of others (26 = %), omission of verb (10 errors = 6.28%), omission of others (25 errors=15.72%)

Omission of plural-s is the most occurred omission error that makes up 16.35 % of all this type of omission errors. This omission can be seen in the following sentence:

- *I have two sister and one brother*
- *Bali has many wonderful place for tourist destination*

The correct ones should be:

- *I have two sisters and one brother*
- *Bali has many wonderful places for tourist destinations*

The errors might be due to the negative transfer of interlingual inference. The difference between Bahasa Indonesia and English makes students confused.

Omission of verb inflection ed/d occurs in 14.46 % (23 occurrences). It can be seen in the sentence *She always help me to complete my homework*. That sentence lacks of verb inflection –ed because it tells about a past story. The error might be due to the negative transfer of interlingual interference. There is no concept of past tense verbs in Bahasa Indonesia like in English that leads to the students' confusion.

Addition errors of *to be* is the most occurred addition error that makes up 14.5 % of all addition errors. The example of addition of to be is as follows:

- *We are match in all thing.*

- *Now I am study at Insitut Sains & Teknologi AKPRIND Yogyakarta*
- *Before that we were pray together*
- *I am not be a good kid for you*

The addition of *to be* in those sentences might be due to the all-too-faithful use of *to be*. The students have acquired the rule of *to be* but the students applied inappropriately *to be* in those sentences due to students' lack of the target language rules. These errors occur as a result of intralingual interference. Students have acquired certain rules and due too-faithfully use of this particular rule they apply the rule incorrectly.

Misordering errors occurred in the lowest frequency of the other errors. Misordering of adjectives appears in the first place of occurrence of misordering errors, like the following sentences :

- *I hope I can get score high on this exam*
- *There is I get many story about university the best.*

The misordering of adjectives *high* and *best* in those sentences might be due to the negative interference of Bahasa Indonesia as the students' L-1. Those sentences are word-for-word translations of the native language ( Bahasa Indonesia): nilai tinggi (score high), it should be high score and the best university. Students make misordering of adjectives due to the direct translation of their native language (Bahasa Indonesia).

Another misordering error is misordering of adverbs occurs in the sentences like *Fortunately, my friend quickly helped me* and *He quickly went to his friend deer*. Those misordering errors are also due to the negative interference of Bahasa Indonesia as students' L1. The sentence is also word-for-word translation of the native language.

From all errors that have been found mostly students' errors still deal with inconsistency in using tense, especially in using past tense verbs to tell stories in the past. It can be understood since tense is acquired in a later stage of language acquisition (Krashen 1977, as cited in

Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1993). Furthermore, all the errors appear because of not only the students' lack of target language rules knowledge but also the effect of 'transferred' from the native language (Bahasa Indonesia ).

## CONCLUSION

In this study, there are 558 errors found from 205 sentences taken from 30 students' writing. The errors are classified into errors of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Errors of misformation come as the highest frequency of all errors. The second highest frequency occurring error is omission errors. Addition errors appear as the third highest frequency of all errors. The lowest frequency of errors found in the data is misordering errors.

Based on the data analysis, it seems that the three highest frequencies of errors are errors of misformation, errors of omission, and errors of addition. From those types of errors, errors of past tense seem to be the most frequently appearing errors. This may occur since most students told stories that used past tense. The different rules between English grammar and Bahasa Indonesia also might cause errors. In other words, the negative interferences of interlingual and intralingual are the major cause for students making errors.

The teachers are suggested to give the students more exposure to the English structure that are different from those in Bahasa Indonesia and to pay attention to structures that often create difficulties for students. The students are suggested to pay more attention to the grammatical area that is considered difficult and to do more exercises to get familiar with English structures that are different from Bahasa Indonesia.

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