

## Analysis of Grammatical Errors in EFL Students' Recount Texts

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### ABSTRACT

Writing in a foreign language is one of the most challenging skills. Consequently, grammar errors continue to be a significant challenge in writing for individuals learning English as a second language. Analyzing the errors made by EFL students is essential as they offer valuable insights into the second language acquisition process. This study aimed to identify the main kinds of grammatical issues and the key sources of grammatical errors in students' recount text. This research was conducted as a descriptive qualitative study. This study focused on the texts produced by first-semester students in the Information System Department during the General English Classroom. The data were identified and examined using the error theory proposed by Dulay et al. (1982) on surface approach taxonomy and the concept of the source of errors introduced by Brown (2007). The data revealed that the predominant type of grammatical error was misformation, with 35 errors or 37.33% of the total errors. The predominant source of grammatical errors was intralingual transfer, leading to 48 errors, which constituted 43.43% of the overall total.

Keywords: grammatical errors, students writing, recount text

### ABSTRAK

*Menulis dalam bahasa asing adalah salah satu keterampilan yang paling sulit untuk dikuasai. Akibatnya, kesalahan tata bahasa terus menjadi masalah besar dalam proses menulis bagi seseorang yang sedang belajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Menganalisis kesalahan yang dibuat oleh siswa sangat penting karena kesalahan tersebut merupakan hal yang berharga dalam proses pemerolehan Bahasa Asing. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis kesalahan tata bahasa dan sumber kesalahan tata bahasa dalam teks recount siswa. Penelitian ini dilakukan sebagai studi kualitatif deskriptif, berfokus pada teks yang dihasilkan oleh mahasiswa semester pertama di Departemen Sistem Informasi di Kelas Bahasa Inggris Umum. Data tersebut diidentifikasi dan diperiksa menggunakan teori kesalahan tata bahasa yang diusulkan oleh Dulay et al. (1982) dan teori sumber kesalahan tata bahasa yang diperkenalkan oleh Brown. (2007). Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa jenis kesalahan tata bahasa yang paling dominan adalah misformation, dengan 35 kesalahan atau 37,33% dari total semua kesalahan. Jenis sumber penyebab kesalahan tata bahasa adalah intralingual transfer, yaitu menyebabkan 48 kesalahan, yang merupakan 43,43% dari total keseluruhan.*

**Kata kunci:** kesalahan tata bahasan, tulisan siswa, teks recount

## A. Introduction

Acquiring English as a second language is not as simple as mastering one's native language. Individuals engage with the language of others grammatically and culturally distinct from their own. It is crucial to master the language components and four skills of a second language to acquire it. Language skills include speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities. Grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are the essential components of language. We must learn all the components in order to enhance our language proficiency.

Studying grammar facilitates the acquisition of a language. Correct usage of grammatical structures will enable individuals to communicate and write in English accurately. Students proficient in grammar may effortlessly construct accurate sentences in both spoken and written forms.

Writing is challenging for all language users, regardless of whether the language is their native, secondary, or foreign language. Richards & Renandya (2022) contend that second language learners perceive writing as the most challenging ability to master. Writing necessitates a variety of intricate talents and involves a multifaceted cognitive process.

Understanding proficient grammar is crucial for achieving writing skills. However, grammar errors continue to be a significant difficulty in writing. The errors occurred because English grammar contains structural and functional distinctions unique from Indonesian.

Dulay (1999:136) states that errors represent the imperfect aspect of learner writing. They are segments of writing that diverge from a chosen standard of proficient language use. The previously mentioned remark indicates that in acquiring a second language, learners frequently generate incorrect phrases in speech and writing, even after an extended study period. They committed errors in acquiring the target

language due to its rules differing from their native speech. These errors occur due to the influence of the rules of the native language on the standards of the target language.

It indicates that learners make mistakes because they need to sufficiently comprehend the rules of the language they are trying to learn. They may repeat the same errors in future instances. The errors made by the learners offer valuable insights into adopting a second language.

Frazier & Brown (2001) define *error analysis* as observing, analyzing, and classifying deviations from the rules of a second language, thereby revealing the systems employed by the learner. This concept aligns with Crystal's proposition in Sunardi Hasyim (2002), which defines *error analysis* as a method for identifying, classifying, and systematically interpreting the incorrect forms generated by individuals acquiring a foreign language, employing principles and procedures established by linguistics. The following definitions explain that error analysis is an effort to discover, classify, and interpret the errors committed by an individual in speaking or writing, performed to get insights on common challenges encountered in producing English sentences. Error analysis facilitates the learner's acquisition of the target language by allowing the teacher to identify particular cases when the student needs to fix errors, reducing difficulties related to foreign language learning.

The current study utilized the survey strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982), which explicitly examines the structural modifications the learners produced. They may need to remove items and include ones that are not relevant, deviating from the sentence structure. They have the potential to deform and rearrange the components incorrectly. The survey approach taxonomy is categorized into four distinct groups: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

Omission error refers to leaving out a necessary element in a sentence, resulting in incorrect sentence formation. Any morphemes and words in a sentence have the same potential to be omitted. However, language learners more frequently omit grammatical morphemes. Little words that play a minor role in conveying the meaning of a sentence, such as inflections, copula, prepositions, and the third person marker *as*, like in sentences incorrect: 'the first, we from Bekasi.' Correct: 'The first, we went from Bekasi'. The students omitted the verb from the sentence. This kind of error is found in the early stage of the learning process of language acquisition. Sometimes, the learners also use words and phrases of their first language in writing or speaking.

Secondly, an addition error occurs when learners include an item in a sentence that should not be included. These errors usually occur in the later stage of language acquisition when the learner understands the rules of the target language. These errors are caused by too faithful use of specific rules in the target language. It can be classified into three categories: double marking, regularization, and simple addition. Like in the sentence, incorrect: 'Sherina and I was played roleplay', the correct: 'Sherina and I played roleplay'.

Thirdly, misformation errors occur when an incorrect form of an item is used in the wrong location where the correct form should be inserted in the phrase. It is characterized by using the wrong form of the morpheme or structure (Dulay et al., 1982). The students select the wrong forms of phonemes, morphemes, structures, or words. Misformation can be categorized into regularization, archaic form, and alternating form.

Fourthly, a misordering error refers to the incorrect placement of a morpheme in the sequence of words in a spoken sentence. This error occurs when learners wrongly place the sequence of words in the sentence. The misordering error occurs systematically in constructions that have been acquired, for example, in direct and indirect questions: 'What is daddy doing?' in the sentence, the learner is using the declarative sentence

order that had been acquired that should be what is daddy doing?

Erdogan (2005) argues that errors originate from interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer. Interlingual errors arise from language transfer influenced by the learner's native language. They may manifest at various levels, including phonological, morphological, grammatical, and lexico-semantic features. An Indonesian student may neglect to include the plural suffix at the end of a word, as the Indonesian language does not employ a plural marker in that position. Intralingual transfer and developmental errors occur when learners attempt to formulate concepts and hypotheses for acquiring the target language due to inadequate experience and knowledge.

Intralingual errors are caused by interference within the target language. Richards (2001:46) states that intralingual or developmental errors signify the learner's proficiency at a certain level and exemplify some general traits of language acquisition. This mistake can be categorized into four components. The suggested factors include overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts, which are hypothesized.

The first is overgeneralization. It is a negative intralingual error dealing with items that are contrasted in the target language's grammar. The learners generate unusual constructions instead of two conventional structures in the target language. For instance, 'We didn't went to Bandung'. Consequently, they erroneously generalize that the simple past tense 'ed' suffix is unnecessary in negative constructions. The structure of English sentences differs from their expectations.

The second is ignorance of rule restriction. Based on this type of error, the learners fail to observe the restriction of existing structures. For instance, 'He talked to me, He asked to me, He told to me'. In this case, they should reduce 'to' in the sentence 'He asked to me' because he applied the same preposition to different verbs. Based on this type of error, the learners fail to observe the restriction of existing structures.

The third is the incomplete application of rules. This type of error occurs when a learner needs to apply the rules entirely due to the stimulus sentences. For example, the lecturer's question is Where did he go?, then the students' response is He go to the library.

The last is false concepts hypothesized. This kind of error is sometimes called a conceptual error, and it can happen when you do not understand the difference between things in the target language. This kind of mistake can happen when teaching materials are not mastered well.

A prior study by Aziz et al., (2020) revealed that omission was the most prevalent fault in the students' compositions. Intralingual transfer was the primary source of errors in the students' essays. Comparable findings were observed in the research conducted by Hartati et al. (2023), where the predominant error was omission errors, and in Manik & Arie Suwastini's study (2020)), which indicated that the primary category of grammatical error was also omission, with intralingual transfer identified as the essential source of these grammatical errors.

Previous studies suggest that errors can manifest in various forms. This study aimed to identify the various types of errors found in students' recount texts and to determine the underlying causes of these errors. The questions guiding this study are articulated as follows. What are the main grammatical errors made by students in the Information Systems department when writing recount texts? What are the primary sources of grammatical errors made by the Information Systems department students when writing recount texts?

This study focused on identifying and analyzing the predominant types of grammatical errors and their sources in writing recount texts by Information System students in a general English classroom at the University of Bina Sarana Informatika.

## **B. Research Method**

The researcher utilized descriptive analysis as the methodology. The researcher chose to conduct descriptive research to investigate grammatical error in the students'

recount text and the source of grammatical errors made by students in a real classroom setting during General English class.

Qualitative research involves the analysis and interpretation of non-numerical data. According to Jacobs, Ary & Razavieh (2005), a qualitative investigation is specifically designed to gather information about the present state of phenomena. The text attempts to depict significant occurrences that commonly take place in the classroom.

The outcome of this investigation was portrayed in a descriptive manner. The data were gathered by observing the 10 students' recount texts from Information system department at University of Bina sarana Informatika. The students wrote recount texts on the theme of "Childhood Memories". The observation was undertaken to ascertain the inaccuracies that happened in the students' recount text. In accordance with the error categories suggested by Dulay et al. (1982), this study utilized an observation checklist to systematically document the detected data during the observation process.

Pole and Lampard (2002) define the term "document" as any object that has been created or produced by human activity. Documents can often convey more meaning than a spoken response to interview questions. Pole and Lampard (2002: 152) highlight that documents can offer researchers valuable insights into a topic or location, serving as a catalyst for theorizing and contributing to various beneficial parts of the research process.

## **C. Result and Discussion**

### **The type of grammatical errors**

This study aimed to identify and analyze the predominant types of grammatical errors made by first-semester students in the Information Systems department during general English classes, as well as to examine the sources of these errors. The students' recount texts were examined and analyzed utilizing Dulay et al.'s surface

strategy taxonomy to identify the types of grammatical errors.

**Table 1. The types of error**

No	Types of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	omission	28	37.83%
2	misformation	35	47.29%
3	addition	9	12.16%
4	misorder	2	2.7%
Total		74	100%

Table 1. shows the types error of EFL students' recount text. They committed omission, addition, misformation, and misordering errors. The major grammatical errors committed by the students was misformation, with 35 errors or 47.29% of the total errors. The next most frequent error was omission, with 28 errors or 37.83% of the total errors. The third was addition, with 9 errors or 12.16% of the total errors and the fourth most frequent errors was misordering, with 2 errors or 2.7% of the total errors.

## Discussion

The first type of grammatical error made by the students was misformation error. A total of 35 misformation errors were made, which includes 47.29% of all errors. The students employed morphemes or structures that were grammatically incorrect. An example of a misformation error is in the sentence, "I like to played with my cousins." The word "played" made the sentence incorrect. It should be the basic form of the verb "play." Because of its following infinitive "to." Another instance of misinformation errors was, "I took the busway to got there." The verb "got" ought to be replaced with "get". Because it also follows the infinitive "to." The students committed a grammatical error by putting

the past form of the verb after the infinitive "to," which should be replaced with the base form. In these sentences, the students employed morphemes or structures that were grammatically incorrect.

The second error was omission. Omission errors occurred 28 times, representing 37.83% of the overall errors. The following examples illustrate omission errors made by the students. At the start, they missed the pronoun "-my." For example, in the sentence "I went there with grandfather," the words 'grandfather' should be preceded by the possessive adjective "my." Another instance of omission error is found in the sentence "in elementary school, I had many friends," where the student incorrectly omits the article 'the' preceding the term "elementary." The following omission error was a student neglecting the verb in the sentence 'the first, we from Bekasi'; it should be 'We went from Bekasi.' In English grammar, an appropriate sentence must have at least one verb. In this error, the student leaves out a necessary sentence element, resulting in incorrect sentence formation.

The third type of grammatical error was addition, with a total amount of 9 or 12.16%. This typically occurs when students include an element that should not be there in a sentence. For example, "when I was a child, I am lived in Bandung." The students inserted 'am' and the past tense verb 'lived' into the same sentence, resulting in grammatical redundancy. The auxiliary 'am' should be eliminated as the sentence is verbal and does not require it to convey the action. The students also constructed sentences using double verbs. For example, "I am also liked fruits." It should be written, "I also liked fruits." The same error can be found in the following sentence, 'Sherina and I was played roleplay,' it should be 'Sherina and I played roleplay.' The presence of incorrect items in students' statements illustrated their developing errors.

The fourth type of grammatical error was misordering, with a total of 2 errors, representing 2.7%. This error refers to the "improper positioning of a morpheme or collection of morphemes inside a sentence" (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 162). It can appear as

adverb misplacement, subject misplacement, and so on. Consider this first example of adverb misplacement: 'I didn't have even powder on my face.' The placement of the adverb 'even' is incorrect. Adverbs should be positioned between the subject and the main verb or following the modal or auxiliary verb. The following example of misordering error involves the incorrect positioning of a morpheme. For instance, "I want to talk about my memories childhood." The term "memories childhood" is a literal translation of "kenangan masa kecil" in Indonesian. In English grammar, the additional word 'childhood' should be before the main word 'memories.' It should be written as 'Childhood memories.' This error occurs due to the difference in word order between English and Indonesian.

### The sources of error

This study aims to identify and analyze the primary sources of grammatical errors in students' recount texts. The students' recount texts were examined and analyzed utilizing the source of grammatical error from Brown's theory.

**Table 2. The sources of error**

No	Sources of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Interlingual Transfer	34	45.94%
2	Intralingual transfer	40	54.05%
Total		74	100%

Table 2. shows the sources of error in EFL students' recount text. The main source of error made by the students was intralingual transfer, which represented 40 errors or 54.05% of the total errors. The next primary source of errors was interlingual transfer, which represented 34 errors or 45.94% of the overall errors.

### Discussion

The main source of error in this study is intralingual transfer. Intralingual or developmental errors signify the learner's proficiency at a certain level and illustrate certain common characteristics of language acquisition. The source that most frequently affected the students' grammatical errors was identified as the source of 40 errors, constituting 54.05% of the total errors. This occurs when students are still unfamiliar with the target language, leading to the overgeneralization of one of its rules to other sentence structures and the incomplete execution of the language's rules.

For example, "I can went to Dunia Fantasy." The students employed the present modal "can" rather than "could" and utilized the past word "went" instead of "go" following the modal verb "can." This blunder occurred due to the student's inability to identify English tenses and their impact on verb forms, particularly with modal verbs. The student failed to acknowledge that the sentence was intended to convey previous experience, requiring the use of past tense; hence, the verb should be in its past form, changing "can" to "could." This is followed by the base form of the verb 'go.' Another example is in the following sentence. "We spend all the time in my room." This statement indicates that the student generalized the verb "spend" for the past tense despite using "spent" as the correct past tense form. In another example, a student exhibited over-generalization of the past tense concept in irregular verbs. The student incorrectly used regular verbs by appending '-ed' to the verb in the sentence 'He putted me in football academy' instead of employing the irregular past tense form 'put'.

The next primary source of error is interlingual transmission. The error originated from the student, resulting in a total of 34, which constitutes 45.94% of all errors. The situation occurred when the students' native language affected the target language. These errors mainly result from the impact of the Indonesian language, showing a literal translation of Indonesian words into English. The students used the structure of their own language. The

Indonesian language is used to produce English sentences.

For instance, the students wrote, "I want to talk about my memories childhood." The correct structure should be "I want to talk about my childhood memories." The sentence indicates that the students utilized the structure of their native language, Indonesian, to formulate the English sentence.

Another example is, "I involved in many more activity." The noun "activity" requires the addition of the plural marker "s" to change into "activities." The students failed to use the suffix "s" as a plural marker. This error occurred from the absence of the suffix "s" as a plural marker in their native language. As a result, the students failed to use the plural form of the countable noun "activity." The errors resulted from the influence of the student's native language on their target language production.

#### D. Conclusion and Suggestion

From the data mentioned previously and discussions, two conclusions may be drawn regarding the problems of this research. At first, four categories of grammatical errors were identified among 10 first-semester students of the System Information department in their recount text writing, as per the theory proposed by Dulay et al. (1982: 154). The errors consisted of omissions, additions, misformations, and misorderings. The predominant grammatical error was misformation, with a total number of 35 or 37.33%. The subject's predominant grammatical errors were misformation, primarily caused by intralingual transfer.

Second, two sources of grammatical errors committed by students were identified according to the idea provided by Brown (2007: 263). They were interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer. The predominant source of grammatical errors was intralingual transfer, with an overall number of 40 errors or 54.05%

of the total. The next was Interlingual transfer with number of 34 errors or 45.94% of the total. It can be concluded that the errors made by students while creating recount texts are influenced by both interlingual and intralingual transfer.

Therefore, the English lecturer must focus on students' grammar to minimize grammatical error in their writing. The research was limited to students in the System Information Department. Consequently, it is imperative to undertake additional research in broader contexts within higher educational institutions to facilitate the expansion of the findings.

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