

# AN ERROR ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' WRITING AS EFL: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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## Abstract

This study investigated the proportions (frequency and percentage) to find out the dominant types of errors by Indonesian students in writing, based on surface strategy taxonomy (hereafter SST), which classified errors into four kinds, such as omission (OM), addition (AD), misformation (MF), and misordering (MO). To conduct this study, approximately 26 students of English education program of Tarbiyah Faculty and Teacher Training of Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, both male and female were participated. This study employed qualitative research. A free writing with the topic of their experience was collected as data collecting. The writer then collected the data, identified, and analysed them by using percentage formula and categorized them to the kinds of errors based on SST. The results showed that the whole errors from students' writing are 348 errors: omission 8% (27 items), addition 15% (51 items), misformation 75% (262 items), and misordering 2% (8 items). Therefore, misformations errors is the major errors that common appears in students writing. It is recommended for the teachers not to ignore students' errors in English teaching learning process.

**Keywords:** *error analysis, surface strategy taxonomy, writing*

## I INTRODUCTION

Since writing becomes a component of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), it is highly important to grasp. Furthermore, writing is not a talent that is acquired quickly. As stated by Myles, writing well is not a skill that comes naturally to people; instead, it is typically learnt or culturally transmitted through a series of practices in formal educational settings or other contexts. Writing techniques need to be developed through practice and experience (2002). Moreover, Brown (2001:335) states there are a few important aspects of writing that should be considered when assessing the finished piece, including content, organization, vocabulary use, grammatical usage, and technical aspects like punctuation and spelling. In addition, writing abilities are crucial for assisting students in effectively communicating their ideas. As a result, the information they want to get over to their readers is understood correctly (Ananda, et.al, 2014, 81 – 82). As a result, some students agree that mastering writing is the most challenging skill. This case was found through observation in the English education department—especially in the writing course—those students faced both simple and complicated issues when writing English well. Starting on having difficulty with a variety of writing-related indications, including organization, content, vocabulary use, grammatical usage, and mechanical consideration. Mastering grammar is the most difficult for them because they must understand and master grammatical provisions in learning English (Anh, 2019).

Grammar is one of the many writing components that makes it challenging for students to compose an English essay. Grammar is a crucial subject to study when learning English since it enables students to arrange words and sentences in meaningful ways using the right grammar. Students can write well-written, easily understood sentences by understanding grammar. Grammar is therefore important when learning a new language. It should be remembered that learning grammar will improve the ability of students to communicate in language (Cagri, 2013 :125). Langan states that "A paper that contains a number of errors in grammar, mechanics, punctuation, or usage will not make a favourable impression on a reader,"(1997:86). However, they frequently errors in their writing.

It is common and inevitable to make errors when learning a language like English. When students write in English, they make a variety of mistakes because they struggle to grasp the language's structure and find it challenging to produce well-written, accurate work. As a result, according to Dulay et al. (1982:138), learning a language requires making errors on a regular basis. It implies that making errors is a necessary component of learning. However, errors made by students during the language learning process are seen as a normal step in the development of language skills rather than as a negative aspect of language acquisition. Dulay et al. state student error analysis can provide a deeper understanding of the language learning process and assist curriculum designers and teachers in selecting instructional materials that best meet the needs of language learners (1982).

There are many definitions of error analysis from various experts. Hummel states error analysis is a method used in second language acquisition research that entails classifying and describing errors to provide information about the learner's present foundational understanding of the second language system (2014:65). Additionally, error analysis (EA) is a technique for researching the acquisition of second languages that mainly focuses on learner errors and the data demonstrating how learners can explain the underlying mechanics of second language learning or acquisition (Fauziati, 2009:154).

Dulay et al. (1982:146) state EA is categorized into four groups: first, taxonomy of linguistic categories. It classifies errors into groups according to both the language component and the linguistic component. Second, Taxonomy of surface strategy. It highlights how the outside organization will alter. Surface approach falls into one of four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Third, Comparative taxonomy. It categorized using a comparative taxonomy based on how their structures differ from those of other constructs in second languages. The errors made by an Indonesian student of English can be categorized using comparative taxonomy by comparing their structure to that of errors made by young learners of English as their first language. Fourth, Taxonomy of communicative effects. This kind is predicated on how they are perceived by the reader or listener. It primarily focuses on differentiating between mistakes that appear to lead to misunderstandings and those that do not.

SST was used to evaluate the written work of the students' faults considering the previously provided explanations. Dulay et al., studying errors from the standpoint of the SST has some potential for researchers who are interested in pinpointing the mental processes that support how learners reconstruct new language. It also alerts us to the fact that some reasoning underlies the mistakes made by students. They come from the learner using temporary principles to create a new language, not from being lazy or thinking carelessly (1982:150). Error analysis is the subject of numerous studies. Many academics have studied error analysis in English as a foreign language (EFL). Rahmah Fitriani's first study (2020) was to analyse grammatical errors caused by students producing narrative texts, with a particular focus on the variations between faults made by students studying social studies and mathematics and natural science.

Moreover, Nissa, Astrid, and Husnaini (2023) discovered an error analysis of eleventh grade students' writing from three Palembang senior high schools. They found an error analysis of students' writing and the results were that they showed contents errors, paragraph organization errors, vocabulary errors, and mechanic errors. In the final study, Fauziati (2016) described the kinds and degrees of native and target language effect to provide empirical proof of the permeability of the students' interlanguage output. The research exclusively concentrates on writing errors made by college students. Furthermore, it focuses on proportions and the most dominant of students' error types. The writer was therefore eager to investigate two research problems in particular: (1) With regard to the surface strategy taxonomy, what kinds of errors (proportions) did the students make? and (2) Which error types did students make the most of?

## II MATERIALS AND METHOD

Descriptive qualitative research was used in this study to collect the data because it was described and analysed the students' errors. Bogdan & Biklen state that qualitative research involves description. Instead of using numbers, the data that is gathered is expressed in words or images. To support and strengthen the findings, the research's written results include data quotes that serve as illustrations. Fieldnotes, photos, videotapes, memos, personal documents, and other official records are among the materials included in the data set (1997). In addition, qualitative research is essential for comprehending intricate phenomena and possesses a distinctive capacity to capture the varied perspectives of humans (Hall, S., & Liebenberg, 2024)

There were 26 students of English education department, Tarbiyah Faculty and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Raden Intan Lampung class c that participated in this study. They were taken by using purposive sampling. The data were collected through free writing about their experiences. The reason why free composition was chosen as the instrument is because it is the best forms of closely observed language production. The students could freely use any rules or pattern they had learnt for their own communication purposes (Fauziati, 2017). Their writing was an assignment directly performed by the subjects in the classroom.

The students were supervised when they were writing a composition and submitted in class. Each writing consisted of 150 – 200 words. The time used in writing was only 90 minutes because it refers to the amount of time in the face-to-face learning process for essay writing courses. All the incorrect forms

in students' writing related to tenses were considered errors. The data were then analysed according to surface strategy taxonomy. The collected data were identified by underlining the errors item. After that, the students' errors were classified based on SST (Omission, Addition, Misformation, and misordering), and put into table to know the number of errors of each student did. When the data had been categorized, Sudijono's formula was used to determine the proportion of errors made by students and the number of errors of each category (2010, 43):

$$P = f/N \times 100\%$$

In which:

P: Percentage of the presence of certain type of error

F: the frequency of the presence of certain type of error

N: The Total Number of all errors

### III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The goal of the study was to determine the ratios (frequency and percentage) and the most common of the four-surface strategy taxonomy error kinds.

#### 3.1 OMISSION ERRORS

By omitting out one or more of those morphemes, the students made a mistake. The word that belongs in the well-constructed sentence was omitted out by the students. Totally, there are 27 items (8%) out of 348 students' errors. The data are shown as examples of students' errors in table 1. The bolded words above are items that need to be added to the form to make it correct. Students leave out the auxiliary verb "be." Since it indicates a verb, the auxiliary verb (was) needs to be used.

*Table 1. Students' errors in Omission*

Students' Error	Explanation	Correct Sentence
I got a news that <b>she sick</b>	The absence of verb after subject "She"	I got a news that she <b>was</b> sick
<b>When I high school</b> , I joined organization.	There is no verb after subject "I"	When I <b>was</b> in high school, I joined organization.
In the beach, we played volly ball. <b>The weather so hot</b> and we rest and bought the meals	Omission occurs when the absence of an or more items. In this case, there is no verb after subject "the weather"	In the beach, we played volly ball. The <b>weather was</b> so hot and we took a rest and bought the meals
We arrived in the beach. <b>We happy</b> because we saw wonderful view	The absence of verb "were" after subject "We"	We arrived in the beach. <b>We were</b> happy because we saw wonderful view
I was nervous but <b>I able to fight it</b>	There is no "be" after subject "I"	I got nervous, but I <b>was</b> able to fight it
I felt comfortable when <b>I among them</b>	The absence of verb "was" after subject "I"	I felt comfortable when I <b>was</b> among them

#### 3.2 ADDITION ERRORS

The presence of an item that is not required in a well-formed expression is a feature of addition errors. They are the opposite of errors in omission. The words that the students add to the statement are ones that are not necessary. In this study, there are 51 items in this category with a 15% error rate. In

table 2, the data are shown as examples of addition errors to make things apparent. For the sentences to be well-formed, the bolded words below should be eliminated because they are erroneous. They ought not to be able to form coherent sentences.

*Table 2. Students' errors in addition*

Students' Error	Explanation	Correct Sentence
When I was high school, I joined organization. I get <b>have</b> a lot friends	Appearance of an item "have" that should not appear.	When I was senior high school, I joined organization. I got a lot friends
Two days ago, we <b>will</b> went to the beach with my family	Presence of an item "will" that must not appear in well-formed	Two days ago, we went to the beach with my family
When we arrived at swimming pool, we <b>were to</b> saw view of Purus Jaya's pool.	Presence of items "were and to" that must not appear	When we arrived at swimming pool, we saw scenary of Purus Jaya's pool.
Last night, in my boarding house at 18.30 PM I <b>was</b> talked with my friends.	Presence of item "was" that must not appear in the sentence	Last night, in my boarding house at 18.30 PM I talked with my friends.

### 3.3 MISINFORMATION ERRORS

Using the incorrect morpheme or structure form is a defining feature of misformation errors. While an addition error occurs when the item given is not necessarily essential, a misformation error occurs when the learner offers an item even if it is still incorrect. It indicates that when structure and morpheme are constructed improperly, misformation error happens. In this case, there are 262 items in this category with a 75% error rate. Table 3 shows some examples of misformation errors. Misformation errors arise from incorrectly supplied items, as opposed to addition errors, which occur when an unnecessary item appears in an utterance. The bold things in the samples are distorted.

*Table 3. Students' errors in misformation*

Students' Error	Explanation	Correct Sentence
We saw some people in the beach. They swim, played, and talked to others.	Misformation in this sentence is "swim" because there is no parallel	We saw some people in the beach. They swam, played, and talked to others.
It was beautiful temple. I really enjoy this scenary	Misformation in this case was the past form of "enjoy"	It was beautiful temple. I really enjoyed this scenary
Four years ago, I go to lake with my friends	Misformation in the sentence was the plural noun of adverb of time in simple past "year"	Four years ago, I went to lake with my friends.
This holiday was not bad and we like it	Misformation in the sentence was "Like"	This holiday was not bad and we enjoyed it
The strip so good, although we feel tired.	Misformation in this case was the past form of "Feel"	The trip was so good, although we felt tired.

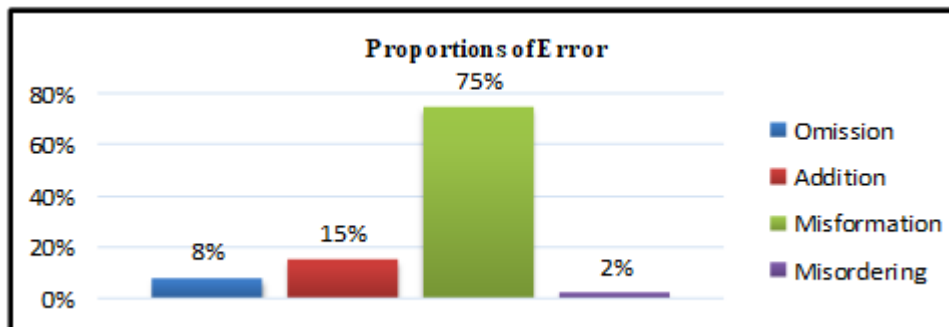
### 3.4 MISORDERING ERRORS

A misordering mistake occurs when a morpheme or group of morphemes is arranged incorrectly inside an utterance. In this instance, the students made an incorrect word order attempt. In this case, there are Eight errors in this category that represent the whole findings in misordering type, accounting for 2% of the total. Table 4 lists several instances of misordering.

*Table 4. Students' errors in misordering*

Students' Error	Explanation	Correct Sentence
Two ago days, I and my friends in the class had a beautiful planning to fill our holiday.	Incorrect placement of "Two ago days" in the sentence.	Two days ago, I and my friends in the class had a beautiful planning to spend our holiday
A week last, I went to Jogja by driving a motorcycle.	Incorrect placement of "A week last" in the sentence.	Last week, I went to Jogja by driving a motorcycle.
On the day next, I tried to walk alone around Jogjakarta.	Incorrect placement of "On the day next" in the sentences	On the next day, I tried to walk alone around Jogjakarta
In the afternoon, everyone had to Maghrib prayed together and Isya prayed	Incorrect placement of "Maghrib prayed and Isya prayed" in the sentence	In the afternoon, everyone had to pray Maghrib and Isya together

Having checked the students' writing in the usage of the simple past tense in writing based on surface strategy taxonomy, it found the proportion (frequency and percentage) that occurred on students' error was omission (8%), addition (15%), misformation (75%), and misordering (2%). Figure 1 displays such error proportions.



*Figure 1. The Proportion of Error*

### 3.5 THE MOST DOMINANT TYPE OF ERROR

SST was used to achieve the intended outcomes. Based on the results, it found that misformation—which accounts for 262 items or 75% of the errors—is the most common type of error that students made in the use simple past tense in writing. Addition errors—which account for 15% (51 items) of the errors—come next, followed by omission errors—which account for 27 items or 8%—and misordering—which account for 2% of the errors (8 items). As a result, there were 348 errors made by the students overall. The detail information is drawn in figure 3.

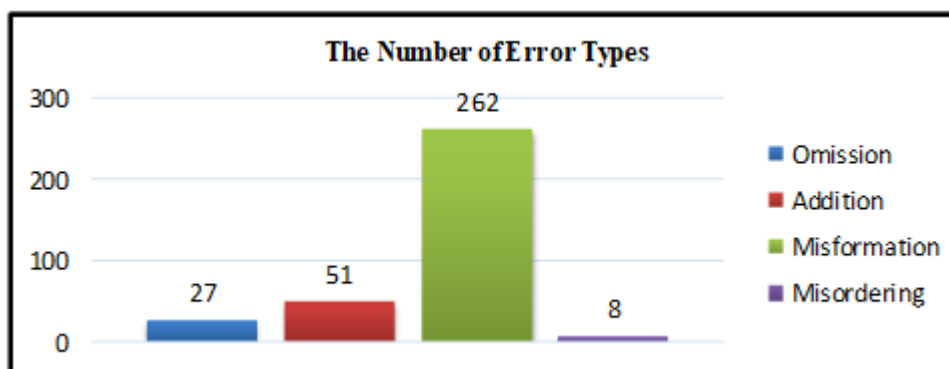


Figure 2. The most Dominant Types of Error

#### IV CONCLUSION

The following conclusions come after carrying out the investigation, analysing the data, and presenting the findings: first, there were 348 errors made by the students overall when producing recount texts. The percentage and frequency distributions of the four different error kinds are shown here. (1) The percentage of omission errors is 8%; (2) The percentage of addition errors is 15%; (3) The percentage of misformation errors is 75%; and (4) The percentage of misordering errors is 2%. The second most common type of error is misformation, which is followed by addition, omission, and misordering in that order. In addition, the most students are confused towards grammatical rules when they make an essay in their English writing. Therefore, following from the results of this study, the writer offers several suggestions. First, teachers should not ignore errors made by students, no matter how small, teachers should give more focus and more frequent opportunities for students to practice writing. Drawing on the results of this investigation, the writer makes several suggestions. First, teachers should not ignore mistakes made by students, no matter how small, teachers should give more focus and more frequent opportunities for students to practice writing. Second, teachers should organize remedial sessions to teach grammar, especially those related to tenses such as simple past tense, by placing special emphasis on the use of irregular and regular verb constructions. This is the most difficult part for students when discussing irregular and regular verbs. And thirdly, teachers should pay careful attention to students in class, because low attendance levels tend to cause more problems, meaning that the teacher's presence is really needed to reduce mistakes made by students in the process of learning a foreign language such as English.

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