

AN ERROR ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH RECOUNT TEXTS WRITTEN BY INDONESIAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Error analysis is widely used in EFL teaching and learning to identify the types and causes of errors made by EFL learners and to determine whether those errors are systematic or random. By examining these errors, teachers can develop effective solutions to reduce, eliminate or improve them. The purpose of this study was to investigate the grammatical errors made by senior high school students when composing recount texts. The study used a descriptive quantitative approach by analysing a corpus of 30 essays written by 15 students. Utilizing Dulay, Burt, & Krashen's (1982) framework of surface structure taxonomy for data analysis, the results reveal that students committed errors in four categories: disinformation, misordering, omission, and addition (ordered accordingly from the most to the least produced one). This study implies that recognizing students' writing errors may assist teachers in determining the focus of their instruction in order to enhance student's learning to a better condition.

Keywords: *error analysis; recount text; surface strategy taxonomy; writing*

1. Introduction

Considering the primary purpose of a language as a means of communication, proficiency in utilizing the target language, either orally or verbally, becomes a success metric for learning a second or foreign language (Bale, 2016). In today's globalized community with a highly competitive job market, the ability to write in a foreign language, particularly English, is essential and evident. Since English is the most widely used language for communication and business, it is indisputable that the ability to write effectively in English has become increasingly vital and indispensable for personal, academic, and professional success. Regarding its significance, writing has historically been the focal point of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum (Harmer, 2004).

Despite being a crucial objective of EFL instruction, writing is frequently regarded as the most challenging language skill for EFL learners to acquire (Fithriani, 2018). The intricacy of writing stems from its multifaceted cognitive process entails the acquisition of specific competencies to generate coherent and comprehensible texts. These competencies include but are not limited to vocabulary, grammar, syntax, style, and knowledge of writing systems (Fithriani, 2020; Mubarak & Budiono, 2022). As a result, the acquisition of this specific language skill demands a significant investment of time and effort. The task of cultivating writing skills among individuals who are learning a foreign language is further complicated

by linguistic obstacles and the utilization of distinct rhetorical patterns (Fithriani, 2017). The writing of students who are learning EFL is frequently impacted by their first language (L1) and the academic environment in which they acquire writing skills, ultimately resulting in challenges in achieving proficiency in this area. Furthermore, the acquisition of an EFL writing proficiency entails the cultivation of students' aptitude in composing texts of varying complexity across multiple genres, such as narrative text, descriptive text, and recount text.

Considering the difficulty associated with achieving proficiency in this area, a myriad of studies focusing on EFL writing skills have been conducted to investigate the challenges students face in mastering this skill. One of the most widely discussed topics is the errors that students make in writing in English. The research is usually framed by the Error Analysis (EA) approach. Research on the subject of EA writing has been carried out in various EFL settings, such as Bangladesh, China, Iraq, Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia (Fithriani 2020; Karim et al., 2018; Mohammed & Abdalhussein, 2015; Mubarok & Budiono, 2022; Sermsook, Liamnimitr, & Pochakorn, 2017; Suraprajit, 2021; Zheng & Park, 2013). The literature suggests that a prevalent factor contributing to writing errors among EFL students is their limited proficiency in grammar (Fithriani, 2020; Floranti & Adiantika, 2019; Murdliyana, 2019).

The identification of errors made by EFL learners in their writing has become not only important, but also essential. The studies that concentrate on error analysis in EFL writing hold great importance as they aim to identify the errors made by learners. This identification can provide valuable insights to teachers regarding the strategies that can be employed to enhance the communicative competence of learners in English written discourse (Fithriani, 2020). The objective of this study is to investigate the error analysis conducted by Indonesian students who are learning English as a foreign language in the context of composing recount texts. This study was guided by the research questions, utilizing the Surface Strategy Taxonomy as the foundational theory.

1. What types of grammatical errors are found in writing recount text made by Indonesia senior high school students?
2. What is the most frequent type of grammatical errors found in writing recount text made by Indonesia senior high school students?

2. Literature Review

The acquisition of writing skill is not an innate process. Frequently, it is instructed as a set of procedures within structured academic environments. According to Nunan (2003), the act of writing necessitates the ability to produce words and sentences while also taking into account their organization and structure within coherent paragraphs. Fithriani (2018) posits that achieving communicative objectives through writing proficiency necessitates the utilization of problem-solving techniques. Historically, writing has been regarded as a challenging aptitude to acquire in one's primary language (L1) and is notably more arduous in a non-native language due to the need for writers to convey ideas from their L1 to the target language while also arranging those ideas in novel and distinct structures. The structural and grammatical disparities as well as stylistic variations between source and target languages pose potential challenges for EFL learners when composing written texts in English. These challenges are known to contribute to the frequency of errors observed in their written work.

Grammar is a crucial component of writing. Harmer (2001) defines grammar as the systematic study of the various methods by which words within a language can undergo changes in form and be combined to create sentences. Consequently, possessing a comprehensive understanding of grammar is an essential prerequisite for achieving proficiency in English writing. In addition, writing is a form of communication that allows individuals to express themselves through the creation of written works that are designed to achieve specific objectives and effectively convey messages to their intended audience. Proficiency in grammar facilitates the use of appropriate sentence structure and word order, thereby enhancing the clarity and accuracy of the intended meaning.

In the Indonesian context, a significant proportion of EFL learners hold the belief that acquiring and honing writing skills is a challenging task. This is attributed to the need for meticulousness at the level of individual sentences, specifically, the attainment of grammatical accuracy in constructing sentences. The main emphasis of writing instruction is centered on exercises that aim to enhance language structures at the sentence level (Fithriani, 2020). The pedagogical approach to writing teaching entails assisting students to improve their writing ability by graduating from simple texts to more complex ones across many genres, one of which is recount text, with a primary emphasis on ensuring grammatical and syntactical lucidity (Fithriani, 2017, 2020).

The genre of recount text is included in the curriculum for Indonesian secondary school students who are studying English as a foreign language. Anderson & Anderson (1997) define recount texts as a form of written narrative that chronologically recounts past events, providing readers with a descriptive overview of what transpired. According to Gerot & Wignell (1994), the function of a recount in social contexts is to narrate past events with the intention of either providing information or amusement. The recount genre serves as a means of reconstructing past events, providing readers with information regarding the individuals involved, the sequence of events, the location of said events, and the temporal context in which they occurred. The utilization of language serves to both preserve and interpret past experiences, thereby facilitating their recreation. In English writing, it is commonly accepted that a recount text comprises three primary components, namely the orientation, the sequence of events, and the reorientation. The composition typically incorporates various linguistic elements, such as the utilization of the simple past, past continuous, past perfect, and past perfect continuous verb tenses, the implementation of temporal sequencing, the emphasis on particular participants, the application of conjunctions, and the use of action verbs.

3. Research Method

The present study employed a quantitative descriptive methodology utilizing a simple quantification or cross-sectional survey design. Creswell (2014) posits that the descriptive research method involves the systematic and accurate collection of information with the aim of providing a comprehensive depiction of a population, situation, or phenomenon in its current state. Descriptive research can be quantitative by involving the collection of quantifiable data for statistical analysis of a sample population. The identification of patterns, connections, and trends over time can be facilitated through the use of numerical data obtained from surveys, polls, and experiments.

The study's participants consisted of thirty twelfth-grade students, comprising 18 females and 12 males, who attended a public senior high school located in Deli Serdang, Indonesia. The primary means of data collection in this research involved the utilization of written products produced by students. Data collection was conducted between November 21st and 26th, 2022. As part of the learning process, participants were instructed to compose a recount text detailing their holiday experiences. The participants were allotted 45 minutes to compose a written account of their most recent vacation on a single sheet of paper.

The collected data were analyzed in some steps. First, we identified the errors by reading the students' writing and underlining the errors. After identifying the errors based on Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy (look at Table 1 for details), we calculated the percentage of errors using the following formula:

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

X = the percentage type of writings' error

F = Frequency type of writings' error

N = Total number of writings' error

100% = Standard Percentage

The errors were categorized according to their respective locations. Upon categorizing the errors, the researchers proceeded to compute the frequency of each error and subsequently determined the total error by dividing the frequency of occurrence by the corresponding F value (how many errors of omission, errors of addition, errors of misformation, and errors of missordering). Subsequently, we computed the total number of errors that transpired, denoted as N, by dividing it by the number of cases, or the total frequency. Subsequently, we sought to determine the percentage error by employing the formula and the proportion of each error.

No	Types of errors	Definition	Examples
1.	Omission	Omission is recognized by the absence of morphemes in the sentences. In this case, certain linguistic structures may be overlooked by students due to the complicated nature of their work. These errors are in the form of an incomplete sentence, which includes the omission of an item or part of speech. If that happens, the utterance becomes strange, and the utterance's expression is unclear.	F: I bought three chair yesterday. T: I bought three chairs yesterday.
2.	Addition	Addition is the existence of anything that is required to be absent from a well-formed utterance. This also implies that students not only omit redundant elements but also add redundant elements. An ineffective sentence that contains words that should not be there will cause confusion and inaccurate meaning.	F: Please answer my letter soon. T: Please answer to my letter soon.
3.	Misorder	Misordering is indicated by the incorrect placement of certain morphemes. The effect of different grammatical rules from the students' first language on the target language causes this inaccuracy.	F: We last night went to the party. T: We went to the party last night .

4.	Misformat ion	Misformation is the incorrect use of a morpheme or structure. A misformation error occurs when the incorrect morpheme or word is used. The learners provide something that is inappropriate in a misformation error. This error will cause a misunderstanding of the meaning conveyed by the author.	F: He is not afraid from dogs. T: He is not afraid of dogs.
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Table 1. Categories of errors based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

4. Results and Discussion

The objective of this research was to identify grammatical errors found in the recount texts produced by Indonesian secondary school students who are learning English as a foreign language. The present study employed Dulay, Burt, and Krashen’s (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy (SST) to analyze and classify the errors after the data had been identified. The result of data analysis shows that the students made errors in the four categories of SST, namely misformation, disorder, addition, and omission, with a total of 200 errors found in 30 recount essays written by the students.

Upon close examination of the data depicted in Chart 1, it becomes apparent that the category of error denoted as "misinformation" accounts for the greatest number of errors, comprising over half (79%) of the total errors generated during the data analysis phase. The category labelled as "Misorder" accounts for the second highest proportion of errors at 9%, while the remaining two categories, namely "Omission" and "Addition," each contribute equally at 6%. The examples of each category of errors as found on the students’ works are elaborated in the next sub-points.

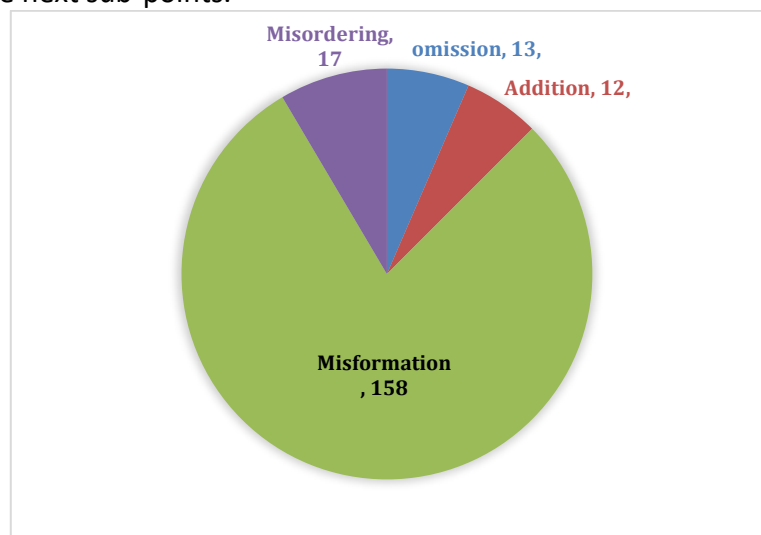


Chart 1. Distribution of students' errors

1. Errors of Omission

The research findings indicate that the students' recount texts contained 13 instances of errors of omission. A significant proportion of the student participants demonstrated a tendency to omit certain grammatical elements, including forms of the copula verb "to be" (i.e., "was" and "were"). A number of students exhibited incorrect usage of prepositions in their written work. The remaining individuals were also experiencing confusion regarding the

appropriate usage of articles. The subsequent instances denote inaccuracies identified within the dataset. The symbols "F" and "T" have been utilized in the course of the exposition to denote "false" for the student's initial sentence containing an error and "true" for the accurate version that features bolded item(s) to indicate the modifications made.

F: I and my family went to the cinema bought three popcorns.

T: *I and my family went to the cinema **and** bought three popcorns.*

F: Next day, we back to Medan.

T: *Next day we **went** back to Medan.*

F: In the morning, went to the river.

T: *In the morning, **we** went to river.*

2. Errors of Addition

A total of 12 instances of addition errors were identified in the recount text writing of senior high school third-grade students. A significant proportion of the student participants exhibited uncertainty regarding the utilization of morphemes to denote singular and plural forms, as well as the appropriate application of prepositions and articles in constructing sentences. The subsequent instances are exemplars derived from the dataset:

F: One day at Sunday I and my friends went the beach.

T: *One day **on** Sunday, I and my friends went **to** the beach.*

F: The night was so fun and **so** sad because...

T: *The night was so fun and sad because...*

F: Several **some** years ago, I and my family...

T: *Several years ago, I and my family...*

3. Error of Misformation

The study's results indicate that a total of 158 instances of misinformation errors were identified in the recount texts produced by the students. A significant number of students tend to commit errors while attempting to modify the form of verbs, primarily due to the absence of any provision for altering the form of words concerning tenses in the Indonesian language. In the context of the writing assignment, it is imperative that the students possess the ability to modify the verb tense. Consequently, the employment of verb 1 was a common practice among students when conveying past events in their written recount compositions. Examples:

Research findings revealed that 158 misformation errors were found in the students' recount texts. Most students made mistakes when changing the form of verbs because there is no such thing as changing the form of words related to tenses in Indonesian. Meanwhile, in the writing task, the students must be able to change the verb form. As a result, the students often used verb 1 to express the past event in writing recount texts. Example:

F: I **have** some plans to go to the beach.

T: *I **had** some plans to go the beach.*

F: We went **by** Padang on 2018.

T: *We went **from** Padang on 2018.*

F: We have **took** a picture...

T: We have **taken** a picture...

F: I'm **so** excited.

T: I was **excited**.

F: My family and I ate **to** restaurant.

T: My family and I ate **in** to restaurant.

4. Errors of Misorder

Finally, a total of 17 instances of misorder errors were identified in the recount texts produced by the students. In this instance, a number of students experienced uncertainty regarding the appropriate placement of a morpheme within a given utterance. The individuals in question committed errors pertaining to word order, as well as the misuse of adjective phrases, noun phrases, possessive nouns, and adverbs. Examples:

F: We went to the *airport kualanamu*.

T: We went to the **Kualanamu** airport.

F: We *so had* excited.

T: We **had so** excited.

F: *Day second*, we went to the twins tower...

T: **Second day**, we went to the twins tower...

Typically, during the composition of recount texts, 12th grade students exhibit a higher frequency of misinformation errors compared to other types of errors. The formation of errors can be attributed to the incorrect usage of verbs, the verb "to be", inadequate information quantity in nouns, and the misuse of personal pronouns. The findings of this study are consistent with prior research conducted by Gau, Maharani, & Nugraha (2022), who reported a 36% incidence of misinformation errors made by ninth-grade students in Denpasar, Indonesia. The findings also echo those of Floranti and Adiantika's (2019), who found 'misinformation' as the most dominant type of error made by the students in their study.

The outcome of this study underscores the importance of educators offering sufficient direction and utilizing diverse pedagogical approaches and instructional resources to inspire and aid learners in enhancing their writing proficiencies. It is anticipated that individuals will possess enhanced proficiency in written expression through the use of suitable linguistic conventions to convey their perspectives. In order to produce written work, it is imperative for the writer to adhere to the appropriate conventions of the English language. In order to develop proficiency in the English language, it is imperative to adhere to all prescribed guidelines for written communication. Ineffectiveness in writing may result from errors, leading to a failure to convey the intended message to the reader. Adequate mastery of grammar and a comprehensive comprehension of writing conventions are essential prerequisites for generating well-organized written works.

5. Conclusion

Upon conducting data analysis, the researchers ascertain that the students who participated in their study committed errors falling under the four categories as identified in the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. Upon conducting data analysis, the researchers have identified the results of the mistake analysis of recount texts authored by senior high school students in the twelfth grade. The findings indicate the presence of four distinct types of errors in recount texts, specifically omissions. The aforementioned type of error accounted for 13 items, or 6% of the total errors identified. Subsequently, it was found that 12 items, constituting 6% of the sample, contained additions. Moreover, 158 items, accounting for 79% of the sample, were found to have misformations. Lastly, misorders were detected in 17 items, representing 9% of the sample. It has been observed that in the composition of recount texts, students in the third grade of senior high school tend to make errors related to misinformation more frequently than any other type of error.

With respect to the study's findings, the researchers recommend that EFL teachers allocate greater consideration to their students. It is recommended that teachers offer additional support to students in the resolution of problems, with the aim of reducing or eliminating errors in the composition of a recount text. It is recommended that the materials be clarified, particularly in the context of writing recount text and utilizing the simple past tense. It is recommended that teachers promote the memorization of verb forms, encompassing both regular and irregular variations, among their students. Moreover, teachers ought to endeavor to discover a more effective approach to instruct students, specifically in the context of composing a recount text. Furthermore, to augment their understanding and proficiency in verb tenses, students are encouraged to devote more focus to the pedagogical process, specifically with regards to the utilization of the simple past tense. It is imperative that students exhibit greater levels of motivation towards acquiring proficiency in English, with a particular emphasis on the development of writing skills. Notwithstanding the constraints of the study, the scholars aspire that forthcoming research endeavors will delve into the intricate and extensive matter of writing inaccuracies committed by pupils in various genres of literature.

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