

The Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Narrative Texts Written by 10th Grade High School Students

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Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis kesalahan tata bahasa dalam teks naratif yang ditulis oleh siswa kelas sepuluh. Sebanyak 28 siswa dari jurusan IPA di sebuah sekolah menengah atas dipilih sebagai partisipan menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain campuran, memadukan pendekatan kuantitatif dan kualitatif, serta menganalisis kesalahan berdasarkan taksonomi strategi permukaan Dulay et al. (1982). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesalahan pembentukan merupakan jenis kesalahan yang paling sering terjadi (43,59%), diikuti oleh kesalahan penghilangan (38,97%). Sebagian besar kesalahan tersebut berasal dari faktor perkembangan, yang mencakup 74,36% dari keseluruhan kesalahan. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa siswa memerlukan peningkatan dalam internalisasi aturan tata bahasa. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini merekomendasikan penggunaan strategi pengajaran yang lebih terarah pada jenis kesalahan yang sering muncul untuk meningkatkan kompetensi tata bahasa siswa dalam penulisan naratif. Penelitian ini juga menekankan pentingnya pengintegrasian pengajaran tata bahasa secara komprehensif dalam kurikulum untuk mengurangi kesalahan berulang dan mendukung akuisisi bahasa yang lebih baik.

Kata kunci: *Kesalahan Tata Bahasa, Teks Naratif, Taksonomi Strategi Permukaan, Kesalahan Perkembangan, Strategi Pengajaran*

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze grammatical errors in narrative texts written by tenth-grade students. A total of 28 students from the science stream at a high school were selected as participants using purposive sampling. The study employed a mixed-method design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, and analyzed the errors based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy by Dulay et al. (1982). The results showed that misformation errors were the most frequent type (43.59%), followed by omission errors (38.97%). The majority of these errors were developmental, accounting for 74.36% of the total errors. These findings suggest that students require further improvement in internalizing grammar rules. Therefore, the study recommends the use of more targeted teaching strategies focusing on the most common types of errors to improve students' grammatical competence in narrative writing. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of integrating comprehensive grammar instruction into the curriculum to reduce recurring errors and support better language acquisition.

Keywords: *Grammatical Errors, Narrative Texts, Surface Strategy Taxonomy, Developmental Errors, Instructional Strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Language teachers often face various errors produced by students, particularly in writing, which is a challenging skill to master and practice (Pablo & Lasaten, 2018). Writing, whether in a native or learned language, presents significant difficulties for students, with the most challenging aspect being the creation of coherent, accurate, and lengthy texts (Nunan, 1999). Additionally, grammar skills pose a major hurdle for EFL students, making writing proficiency even more difficult to achieve (Farooq & Uzair-ul-hassan, 2012). Mastery of English grammar, including sentence structure, paragraph development, tense usage, parallel construction, and subject-verb agreement, is essential for producing coherent texts (Mbau & Marhum, 2014).

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most complex language skills, requiring significant cognitive effort. Unlike reading, speaking, or listening, writing demands a higher level of mental engagement, as it involves organizing words, phrases, and clauses into grammatically correct sentences. As Nunan (1999) notes, writing is a mental exercise that requires generating ideas, organizing them coherently, and constructing clear, comprehensible paragraphs. Despite its importance, writing remains a significant challenge for many students, often leading to frequent grammatical errors. Meanwhile, Bozkurt & Ataizi (2020) describe grammar as a set of rules essential for understanding and constructing relationships within language. However, the complexity of these rules often makes learning grammar difficult for students. This difficulty is particularly evident when students write narrative texts, which demand proper sequencing and structure. As a result, grammatical errors are common in students' writing, especially in narrative texts (Ramadhami & Ananda, 2020).

Previous studies have extensively explored the challenges students face in mastering grammar, particularly in writing. Some researchers (Hourani, 2008; Khanom, 2014) found that grammatical errors, such as misuse of passive voice and subject-verb agreement, are prevalent among secondary students learning English as a foreign language. Alsher's (2021) research focuses on examining the writing errors made by engineering students at An-Najah National University in Palestine, comparing these errors between students from public and private schools. Using James' (1998) error analysis taxonomy, the study analyzed essays from 54 undergraduate students, with no significant statistical differences found in error frequency between the two groups. The most common errors across both groups were in grammatical errors, spelling, punctuation, formal, syntactic, semantic, and ordering categories. The studies suggest that increased exposure to English may help lessen some of L1 interference.

These studies highlight that such errors often stem from intralingual transfer, where the inherent complexity of the English language itself confounds learners. Similarly, Sukasame et al., (2014) noted that errors in tense usage are common among Thai students, underscoring the intricate nature of English grammar. In the same vein, mastering English tenses poses significant challenges for Indonesian students, primarily because Indonesian does not utilize tense variations as English does, where tenses change according to time and situation. Recognizing this issue, some researchers (Listia & Febriyanti, 2020; Muhsin, 2016; Sri Handayani & Salija, 2022) have explored this area extensively.

Muhsin's study (2016) concentrated on analysing errors made by students in using the simple present tense. It aimed to identify specific mistakes students encounter when crafting descriptive texts. Similarly Handayani & Salija (2022) examined the difficulties students face in applying the correct tenses, especially when distinguishing between simple past (verb2) and past participle forms (verb3) of regular and irregular verbs. Another investigation by Listia and Febriyanti (2020) explored the struggles students have with using aspects and tenses correctly within appropriate contexts. Several factors contribute to these difficulties, including interference from the students' first language and a lack of sufficient practice and repetition.

Despite the extensive focus on grammatical errors in various forms of writing, the specific challenges of narrative writing among Indonesian tenth-grade high school students have received limited attention. Previous research has predominantly concentrated on academic or descriptive writing, overlooking the unique demands of narrative texts. While studies have examined common grammatical issues such as tense misuse and subject-verb agreement (Muhsin, 2016; Handayani & Salija, 2022), they often addressed general writing tasks rather than the particular difficulties posed

by narrative writing. This study fills a theoretical gap by applying the Surface Strategy Taxonomy (Dulay et al., 1982) to categorize and analyze errors in narrative writing, contrasting with the broader error analysis frameworks used in earlier research. Additionally, by focusing on Indonesian high school students in the science stream, this research addresses a geographical and educational gap, contributing fresh insights into the specific grammatical difficulties faced by EFL learners in this context.

Expanding on these results, this study aims to identify the grammatical mistakes made by tenth-grade students at SMA Arif Rahman Hakim during narrative writing exercises. By analyzing these errors, the research intends to pinpoint the particular linguistic difficulties these students face in acquiring grammar skills. This is essential for producing narratives that are both coherent and structurally correct. Alhaisoni et al. (2017) highlight that error analysis is a highly effective method for identifying and explaining mistakes made by learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL). This analytical approach can uncover the roots of these errors and elucidate why they commonly occur. With a clear understanding of the causes and sources of these errors, it is possible to devise suitable corrective strategies and prioritize aspects of subsequent teaching. Additionally, the study investigates the underlying causes of these grammatical errors, whether they stem from interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, or other developmental factors. By addressing these aspects, this research aims to contribute to more effective English language teaching strategies, ultimately supporting students in overcoming these challenges and improving their writing skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of grammatical errors in narrative writing. Similar to the approach described by Vo Long and Nhi (2024), this method combines the strengths of both approaches. The quantitative aspect involved calculating the frequency and percentage of errors, while the qualitative analysis focused on identifying and understanding the types and causes of these errors. This combination, as used in Alsher's (2021) research on writing errors, enables a deeper and more nuanced understanding of learner difficulties. The study was conducted at SMA Arif Rahman Hakim in Tangerang Selatan, Banten, involving 28 tenth-grade students from the science stream. These students were selected through purposive sampling based on their English proficiency levels, as similarly practiced by Hourani (2008) and Khanom (2014) in their studies on grammatical errors. The diverse proficiency levels of the students allowed for a broader analysis of error patterns, comparable to Muhsin's (2016) examination of students' grammar struggles in descriptive writing. Data collection*utilized two key instruments: a writing test and interviews. Students were asked to write a narrative text based on one of three provided topics: "The Legend of Tangkuban Perahu," "The Legend of Malin Kundang," or "The Legend of Roro Jonggrang." This task followed the approach outlined by Sukasame et al. (2014), who emphasized using narrative writing to reveal grammatical challenges. Students wrote 200–250-word texts within a 90-minute timeframe. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to further explore the causes of grammatical errors, a method validated by Handayani & Salija (2022) in their study of tense-related struggles in students' writing. For data analysis, the researcher followed the six-step error analysis framework proposed by Gass & Selinker (2008), which includes data collection, error identification, classification, quantification, analysis of error causes, and remediation planning. Errors were classified using **Dulay et al.'s (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy**, which categorizes errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. This approach was also used in Listia & Febriyanti's (2020) study on student grammar errors. The frequency of each error type was calculated and presented in a table format, using the percentage formula suggested by Sattayatham & Ratanapinyowong (2008) to quantify the errors systematically.

$$\text{Percentage of Errors} = \frac{\text{Number of Errors (for each criterion)}}{\text{Total Number of Subjects}} \times 100\%$$

Total Number of Subjects

The sources of these errors were analyzed using Dulay et al.'s Comparative Taxonomy, categorizing them as developmental, interlingual, ambiguous, or other errors, a method supported by Touchie (1986) in his research on the developmental factors influencing language learning. Insights from student interviews were integrated into the analysis to provide further context, as recommended by Zhang & Ding (2020) in their exploration of the cognitive processes involved in language acquisition. The findings were then reported descriptively, offering a clear overview of the types and sources of errors, which served as the basis for the recommendations on improving instructional practices.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

This research examined the grammatical mistakes of tenth-grade students in their narrative compositions. The errors were classified according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, and the reasons behind these errors were explored. The results offer a deeper understanding of how often these errors occur and what causes them. After completing the test, the researcher carried out semi-structured interviews with selected students to understand their challenges in writing narrative texts. Each interview comprised five questions specifically designed to delve into the issues students face during the writing process.

Types of Grammatical Errors in Narrative Texts

In this study, twenty-eight students took part in a narrative writing test. The researcher analyzed the results, categorizing the grammatical errors using Dulay et al.'s (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which includes omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The analysis identified four main types of grammatical errors in the students' narrative writing: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, with a total of 195 errors recorded across these categories.

Table 1. Students' Grammatical Errors Recapitulation

N	O	A	MF	MO	T
S1	4	-	2	-	6
S2	9	-	4	-	13
S3	2	-	13	1	16
S4	2	1	6	1	10
S5	4	-	3	-	7
S6	6	-	8	-	14
S7	2	1	2	1	6
S8	2	2	2	-	6
S9	2	3	3	-	6
S10	1	-	1	-	2
S11	2	1	-	-	3
S12	1	4	2	-	7
S13	1	1	4	1	7
S14	3	1	3	2	9
S15	5	-	2	-	7

N	O	A	MF	MO	T
S16	5	-	3	-	8
S17	1	2	4	-	7
S18	-	2	3	-	5
S19	-	1	8	-	9
S20	3	-	1	-	4
S21	2	-	1	-	3
S22	3	1	-	-	4
S23	2	2	2	-	6
S24	2	1	1	-	4
S25	7	-	1	-	8
S26	2	2	1	-	5
S27	-	1	2	-	3
S28	3	1	3	1	8
T	76	27	85	7	195

N=name; O= omission; A= addition; MF=misformation; MO= misordering; T=total

The researcher calculated the percentages of each type of grammatical error made by the tenth-grade high school students in their narrative text writing, ranking them from most to least frequent. The results are displayed in the table and chart below.

Table 2 Percentage of Errors

Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage
Omission	76	38.97%
Addition	27	13.85%
Misformation	85	43.59%
Misordering	7	3.59%

Based on the analysis of the data, four distinct types of grammatical errors were identified in the narrative texts written by tenth-grade high school students. These errors are categorized as omission, addition, misformation, and misordering errors. The findings revealed that misformation errors were the most prevalent, accounting for 43.59% of all errors, with a total of 85 instances. Omission errors were the second most common, comprising 38.97% of the errors with 76 occurrences. Addition errors, representing 13.85% of the total, were identified 27 times. The least frequent were misordering errors, which made up 3.59% of the errors, with only 7 instances recorded. This distribution indicates that students struggled most with using the correct forms of words and structures (misformation), followed by challenges in including all necessary elements in their sentences (omission). Errors involving unnecessary additions and incorrect word order were less common but still present.

The Causes of Grammatical Errors Made Students When Writing

After identifying the types of grammatical errors, the researcher examined the causes of these errors in the students' narrative writing. Using Dulay et al., (1982) Sources of Errors

theory, the errors were categorized into four types: developmental, interlingual, ambiguous, and other errors. To strengthen the analysis, data from structured interviews with several students were also used to validate these findings.

Table 3 Sources of Errors

Sources of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage
Developmental	145	74.36%
Interlingual	12	6.15%
Ambiguous	18	9.23%
Other	20	10.26%
TOTAL	195	100%

Based on the analysis of the data, the researcher identified and calculated the causes of the 195 errors found in the students' narrative texts. These errors were categorized into four types: Developmental Errors, Interlingual Errors, Ambiguous Errors, and Other Errors. The results showed that Developmental Errors were the most common, accounting for 74.36% of the total, with 145 instances. Interlingual Errors were the least common, making up 6.15% of the errors, with 12 instances. Additionally, 18 errors (9.23%) were classified as Ambiguous, and 20 errors (10.26%) fell into the Other Errors category.

Explore the Underlying Causes of the Grammatical Errors Identified in The Students' Writing

After doing the test, the researcher conducted an interview. The purpose of these interviews was to gain deeper insights into the underlying causes of the grammatical errors identified in the students' writing, which could not be fully captured by the quantitative data alone. The 5 items of this interview were formulated based on their test. The selected students who joined the interview were chosen randomly: (1) How do you feel about using English grammar when writing a story? (2) What grammar mistakes do you often make when writing? (3) Does your native language affect your English writing? (4) Is it hard for you to make correct sentences in English? (5) How do you usually practice grammar, and what helps you avoid mistakes?

S3: "When writing a story in English, I often struggle with using the correct grammar, especially with verb forms. I tend to mix up past tense forms, which leads to frequent misinformation errors. Sometimes, I forget to include necessary words like articles or verbs, resulting in omission errors. My native language, Indonesian, sometimes influences my English writing, making it harder to avoid mistakes. I usually practice grammar by doing exercises, but I still find it challenging to apply the rules correctly in my writing."

S9: "I'm not very confident with my grammar when writing narratives. I often leave out important words, like 'the' or 'is,' which leads to omission errors. I also sometimes add extra words that aren't needed, causing addition errors. Translating directly from Indonesian into English sometimes makes my sentences sound awkward or incorrect. I know practicing more would help, but I still find sentence structure confusing."

S14: "Grammar is difficult for me, especially when I have to use different verb forms. I make a lot of misinformation errors because I'm not sure which tense to use. I also leave out words that are important for making sentences correct. My Indonesian background sometimes makes me write in a way that isn't right in English. I try to practice grammar, but I often feel like I need more help to avoid these mistakes."

S17: "I often make mistakes with word order in my sentences, which results in misordering errors. I also tend to leave out words, leading to omission errors. My native language influences my writing, making it hard to follow English grammar rules. I usually practice by doing grammar exercises, but applying what I learn in my writing is still challenging."

S28: "Writing in English is hard because I often mix up the order of words in sentences, which leads to misordering errors. I also forget to include necessary grammar elements, like articles or helping verbs. Sometimes, when I translate from Indonesian, it doesn't work well in English. I practice grammar, but I still make a lot of mistakes."

These responses reflected the types of grammatical errors (misformation, omission, addition, and misordering) and their possible causes (native language influence, lack of confidence in grammar use).

DISCUSSION

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the grammatical errors in the narrative writing of tenth-grade students, presenting a nuanced view of their linguistic challenges. Using Dulay et al.'s (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, the analysis categorizes the errors into four types: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Each category offers distinct insights into the students' struggles, reflecting and broadening previous research in this area. The first is **Misformation Errors**. They emerged as the most prevalent type, constituting 43.59% of the total errors. This high incidence indicates that students frequently struggle with selecting and applying correct grammatical forms, particularly in tense usage, verb forms, and word order. This finding is consistent with the work of Khanom (2014) and Sukasame et al. (2014), who also reported similar challenges among EFL learners. The prominence of misformation errors in this study suggests that the students' internalization of grammatical rules is incomplete, leading to frequent misapplications. Unlike Muhsin (2016), who found omission errors to be more common, the dominance of misformation errors in this context underscores the influence of the specific learning environment and the instructional methods employed.

The next is **Omission Errors**. They accounted for 38.97% of the total, were the second most common type. These errors, involving the exclusion of essential grammatical elements such as nouns, verbs, and articles, highlight a significant gap in the students' understanding of sentence structure. This gap may stem from an incomplete mastery of English grammar, as suggested by Dulay et al., (1982), and Ellis (2006). The frequency of omission errors underscores the need for targeted instructional strategies that emphasize the construction of complete and coherent sentences. Another error are **Addition Errors**. They were less frequent, representing 13.85% of the total errors. These errors typically involved the unnecessary inclusion of elements, such as redundant verbs and incorrect plural forms, indicating that students might over-apply grammatical rules. This pattern suggests a lack of nuanced understanding of when specific grammatical elements are required, a phenomenon also discussed by Dulay et al., (1982) and Brown(2000). **The last errors are Misordering Errors** were the least frequent but still notable, particularly in the incorrect positioning of adjectives and adverbs within sentences. These errors indicate that while students may understand individual words, they struggle with arranging them according to English syntactic rules., Research by Touchie (1986) emphasizes that these errors often result from developmental factors such as overgeneralization and inadequate learning. These findings align with earlier observations but also highlight the continued relevance of misordering errors as a challenge in language learning. This reinforces the need for targeted instruction to address these specific grammatical issues in language learners.

When exploring the causes of these errors, developmental errors were identified as the most common, accounting for 74.36% of the total errors. This finding aligns with Ellis' (2006) work, which describes these errors as part of the natural language acquisition process, where learners are still internalizing grammatical rules. The high frequency of developmental errors in this study suggests that many students are in the process of refining their grasp of English grammar, necessitating continuous and focused instruction. Interlingual errors, though less frequent at 6.15%, highlight the influence of the students' native language on their English writing. These errors often stem from direct translations from Indonesian to English, illustrating the challenge of negative language transfer, as discussed by Alsher (2021). Increased exposure to English may help reduce some of this native language interference. Ambiguous errors and other errors accounted for 9.23% and 10.26% of the total errors, respectively, reflecting the complex nature of language learning, where mistakes arise from various cognitive processes that do not fit neatly into specific categories. This observation resonates with Zhang and Ding's (2020) study, which emphasized the intricate relationship between cognitive development and language acquisition.

Overall, the findings underscore the need for targeted instructional strategies that address specific types of grammatical errors. Educators are encouraged to implement interactive and

contextual learning activities that emphasize proper usage in real-world scenarios. Integrating error analysis into regular classroom practices can raise students' awareness of common mistakes and their underlying causes, enhancing their grammatical competence. Future research could explore the long-term impact of tailored interventions on reducing specific types of errors. Such studies would provide valuable insights into the most effective strategies for improving grammatical accuracy among language learners, ultimately contributing to more effective English language teaching practices.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify and analyze the grammatical errors in narrative texts written by tenth-grade students, focusing on error types and their underlying causes. The research, conducted at SMA Arif Rahman Hakim with 37 students from the science major, employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings revealed that misinformation errors were the most prevalent, accounting for 43.59% of all errors, followed by omission errors at 38.97%. The study also identified developmental errors as the primary source of these issues, constituting 74.36% of all errors, indicating that students are still in the process of internalizing grammar rules. Based on these findings, the study concludes that targeted instructional strategies are necessary to address these specific types of grammatical errors. To enhance students' grammatical competence in narrative writing, educators should focus on interactive and contextual learning activities that emphasize correct usage in practical, real-world scenarios. Furthermore, incorporating regular error analysis into classroom practices can help raise students' awareness of common mistakes and their underlying causes. For future research, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to track grammatical improvements over time and assess the effectiveness of specific intervention programs designed to address these common errors. Such research could provide valuable insights into the most effective strategies for improving grammatical accuracy among language learners, ultimately contributing to more effective English language teaching practices.

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