



## ANALYSIS GRAMMATICAL ERROR ON THE STUDENTS' WRITING SENTENCES AT THE FIRST SEMESTER OF UNIVERSITAS PAMULANG

Erni Susianti Nainggolan  
Universitas Pamulang: English Department  
Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia  
dosen01683@unpam.ac.id

---

### Article History

Submitted date:  
2021-11-27  
Accepted date:  
2021-12-04  
Published date:  
2021-12-28

### Keywords:

error analysis,  
grammatical error, writing

---

### Abstract

Patterns of English are important for the students. It consists of all the elements of language, such as content, grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, and sentence pattern. Writing has a complex process. The students have to connect their ideas coherently with the writing when they are writing. In fact, not many of them can connect their ideas with the content easily. Regarding the problems above, the researcher did the research of grammatical error on the students' writing sentences, entitled "Analysis Grammatical Error on the Students' Writing Sentences at the First Semester of Universitas Pamulang". This study aims to know and analyze the students' errors in writing some sentences. The errors focused on the tense, preposition, and sentence pattern. The research used a descriptive qualitative method in which the data was taken from students' sentences. The result of the research showed that every student made an error. The biggest error was an error in sentence pattern.

---

### Abstrak

---

### Kata Kunci:

analisis kesalahan,  
kesalahan tata bahasa,  
menulis.

Mengenal pola atau formula bahasa Inggris penting bagi mahasiswa. Pola bahasa Inggris mencakup tentang isi, tata bahasa, tanda baca, pengejaan, kosa kata, dan pola kalimat. Menulis memiliki proses yang kompleks. Mahasiswa harus menghubungkan antara ide dengan tulisannya dengan jelas. Kenyataannya, tidaklah mudah bagi mereka untuk menyelaraskan antara ide dengan isi tulisan. Berdasarkan permasalahan di atas, peneliti melakukan penelitian fokus pada *grammatical error* berjudul "Analysis Grammatical Error on the Students' Writing Sentences at the First Semester of Universitas Pamulang". Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan menganalisa kesalahan pada kalimat-kalimat mahasiswa. Diutamakan pada *tense*, *preposition*, dan *sentence pattern*. Peneliti menggunakan *qualitative method* dimana data diambil dari kalimat-kalimat mahasiswa. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa setiap mahasiswa memiliki kesalahan dalam menulis kalimat. Prosentase kesalahan yang tertinggi yaitu pada bagian *sentence pattern* (*pola kalimat*).

---

### Introduction

Writing is one of the skills of English which students have in a classroom, beside listening, speaking, and reading. Writing is an ability for the pupils in order to show or communicate their idea or opinion on paper into statements and paragraphs that will be known by a reader. It consists of all the elements of a language, such as content, grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, and sentence pattern. The element language is not easy to master. Grammar and sentence patterns are commonly considered as the most difficult. As a result, they have some difficulties writing sentences. It can be understood because writing has a

complex process. In writing, the students are asked to know a word first. Then, write a simple sentence. After that make the sentences into a paragraph. Absolutely, it is not as easy as the students think. They have to connect their ideas coherently with the writing when they are writing. The ideas must be in accordance with the element's language use. In fact, not many of them can connect their ideas with the content well. Therefore, this is a teacher's role to be active in a class room while he is teaching writing skill. The teacher should be able to guide the students in writing, so the grammar can be avoided effectively. In this study, the researcher focuses on the students' writing using tenses, prepositions, and sentence patterns. They still have problems with those elements' language. The researcher would like to know and analyze the students' errors, the percentage of errors, and also the cause of errors.

Grammatical error is words applied on prescriptive grammar to convey a sample of having a fault, unusual, or contentious usage, suchlike an incorrect verb tense, error on capitalization, or preposition. Students who want to write a sentence in foreign language have to know about the grammar rules in the language first. Grammar is a set of rules in a language that allow a person to combine several words into larger units (Greenbaum and Nelson, 2002, p. 1). It means grammar has an important role in a Language if a person wants to create understandable sentences. According to Burt and Kiparsky (in Putri & Dewanti, 2017, p. 2), grammatical error is an error that violates grammatical rules in a language and it makes someone's writing not good to be seen by readers. Someone's writing sometimes looks bad because it lacks grammatical rules, such as part of speech. It can make someone's writing not appropriate enough to be read and seen by the reader because error breaks all the grammatical error in language. It should be considered by writers or students in this case when they want to write sentences. Based on the experience of the researcher, Indonesian students have difficulties in applying grammar rules of the English language. It is because of limited knowledge about grammar and rare occasions to use it. They sometimes write sentences freely without regard to the grammar or pattern of sentence. That's why grammar is able to make students have an error in writing. For example, error in tense can be one of the student's problems.

An error analysis ought to be executed by teachers not only to explain the errors done by the students but also to understand the causes of errors. Error analysis is a way to gather errors found in students' sentences. Teachers try to identify and clarify the errors which the students made. It helps students to know the reasons behind the errors found. To do an error analysis in writing, a person should decide on what kind of written sentences that he or she wants to analyze using error analysis. The research focuses on tense, preposition, and sentence pattern errors. There are sixteen tenses in English which the students should know and learn until they are in a university. Here, the researcher has mainly focused on simple present tense, past tense, and present perfect tense, preposition, and sentence pattern will follow the tense usage. For example, she drank it last night. The sentence is not right because of the wrong tense. From those indicators, the students can make errors in different indicators. Corder in Ellis (2003, p. 56) mentioned five ways in doing error analysis. They are (1) collecting samples; (2) identifying error; (3) describing error; (4) explaining error and (5) evaluating or correcting error.

The terms of mistake and error sometimes are considered as the same categories. Actually, they are not the same things. The students can make mistakes and errors in their learning process. As Brown (2000, p. 257) said that learning is a process which consists of the making of mistakes. Commonly, a mistake is a way of doing something wrong unintentionally. It is usually accidental and can be corrected soon. For example, a student could miss a letter or mistype when writing. On the other hand, error is the wrong action that is caused by the lack of knowledge or something the students haven't studied before. For instance, the students have

a lack of tenses, sentence patterns, and prepositions, consequently they can make an error. There are several types of errors made by someone in learning the language (Rosani, 2009, p. 75-76), namely Referential Error, Register Error, Textual Error, and Productive Error. In English, especially writing skill, a common error is Textual Error. Textual Error is an error in the use of grammar rules. For instance, she went to school yesterday. The sentence is supposed to be that she went to school yesterday.

There are some previous researches that have conducted the research about writing. One of them is taken from Nugraha Panji Kusuma (2019) stating that the most error of students' writing is verb tense error, then add a word error, punctuation, word choice, capitalization, etc. It could be concluded that the students do not pay attention to English Grammar rules. The researcher considers that every student has their own problems and errors while they are writing some sentences in English. The problems or errors should be corrected by teachers in order to decrease the next errors in the future.

Regarding the problems above, the researcher wants to do research on grammatical errors on the students' writing sentences, entitled "Analysis Grammatical Errors on the Students' Writing Sentences at the First Semester of Universitas Pamulang". It focuses on error in tenses, Error in preposition, and error in sentence pattern. The aims of the study are to comprehend the students' ability in writing sentences using different tenses and analyze the grammatical errors on the students' sentences when they write sentences by using simple present tense, past tense, and present perfect tense. The researcher has three research questions that want to be identified: the grammatical errors' occurrence, the percentage of the errors, and the causes of the error in writing sentences.

## **Methodology**

In this part, it will be shown the details of research design, setting of time and place, population, the instrument for the study, technique of collecting and analyzing the data.

### **Research Design**

Error analysis is considered as qualitative research. The research carried out descriptive qualitative studies. Descriptive qualitative is research that asks questions about nature incidence, or distribution of variables; it involves describing but not manipulating variables. Descriptive qualitative data are collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Johnson and Christensen (2007) said, "Qualitative research is research that relies on the collection of qualitative data."

Qualitative research analyzes data that rely on words from a small amount to individuals so that the participants' view is gained. Furthermore, it is a process of step used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue (Creswell, 2012). According to the statements, it can be concluded that qualitative research is a method mostly taken from data of the samples that is explored and also analyzed.

### **The Population and Sample**

Population is related to data of the research itself. It is not related to the person or amount of objects. As Margono (2004, p. 180) said: "*Populasi adalah seluruh data yang menjadi perhatian kita dalam suatu ruang lingkup dan waktu yang kita tentukan. Jadi populasi berhubungan dengan data, bukan manusianya.*" The researcher took the students' writing sentences as the population of the research. "*Sampel adalah bagian dari jumlah dan karakteristik yang dimiliki oleh suatu populasi tersebut.*" (Sugiyono, 2012, p. 80) It means sample is related to the number of participants in research. There were 25 students of Faculty of Letters, Universitas Pamulang, South Tangerang as the population in this study. They were in the first semester.

### **Technique of Collecting the Data**

To gain the expected result, the researcher used data and information which could assist the research. There are two types of data in this research; they are primary and secondary data. Primary data which was obtained and collected directly from the students. Further, the primary data were processed by the researcher to generate the data analysis. First, the students were given the material by the researcher. They learnt about simple present tense, past tense, present perfect tense, and preposition. Then, they tried to make some sentences with those tenses and prepositions by using their own words. The researcher gave explanations and corrections to their beginning writing. After that, they wrote sentences which were adjusted to the topic given, as a post test. Finally, the researcher did analysis on the students' writing.

It focused on the grammatical errors which the students made. Meanwhile, the Secondary data collection was collected from searching literature research or library research. The researcher browsed the internet and read some books. This data made the research more complete. The theory or the analysis from some experts were important to support the research which could run smoothly.

### **Technique of Analyzing the Data**

Before analyzing the data, the researcher collected the data, then classified it into three types or categories of grammatical errors. They are error in tense, error in preposition, and error in sentence pattern (Subject +Verb +Object +Adverb). Those categories would be the assessment for the researcher in order to analyze the students' writing.

The research was about grammatical errors in tenses and part of speech on the students' writing sentences. The researcher took the data by asking the students to write sentences in English as the clues given. It was the instrument of this study.

Grammatical error was the focus on the research. The data was analyzed based on the categories of errors, three categories:

#### *1. Error in Tenses*

Students sometimes use a tense without considering the function or the time of tenses. They do it because they do not know about the tenses well. Error in tenses considered in the analysis of students' errors when they made a mistake in using the right tense in a sentence. For example, Susan drinks a cup of tea yesterday. It should be corrected referring to the adverb of time. It should be Susan drank a cup of tea yesterday. It is a past tense case. \

#### *2. Error in Preposition*

Preposition is needed in a sentence. It can describe a relationship between a word and another word in a good sentence. In another word, it indicates where or when something is in relation to something else. This type can make students confused or misplace a preposition. For example, I will go to Bandung in December 15th, 2020. It should be I will go to Bandung on December 15th, 2020.

#### *3. Error in Sentence Pattern*

Sentence pattern is made up of phrases and clauses. A phrase is a group of words, but it is not a complete sentence because it does not have a subject or verb. It just has one component which can develop a perfect sentence. Meanwhile, a clause contains a subject (as an actor) and a verb (doing an action) at least. Beside a subject and a verb (transitive or intransitive verb), there is a mistake that the students made. It was about complement. For example, Today, she appears. It should be she appears calm today.

Based on the analysis, there were 10 out of 25 students who did error in tenses, 9 students did error in preposition, and 12 students did error in sentence pattern. It showed that students made some errors in three categories studied.

### **Finding and Discussion**

Descriptive qualitative was used in this research. It was achieved by collecting data in a class. The students were asked to write sentences in simple present tense, past tense, and present perfect tense. The sentences then are analyzed based on the patterns given. The samples were the students of English Literature of Universitas Pamulang. The data were found from the students' writing. The steps that the researcher took the data were making sentences, identifying sentences, and analyzing sentences.

First, the researcher asked the students to write sentences using three tenses, such as simple present sense, past tense, and present perfect tense. Before writing some sentences, the researcher gave the materials several times. Then, the students wrote some sentences with those tenses given. The researcher kept watching them while they were writing.

After writing some sentences, the researcher identified and analyzed the sentences based on some categories. The main point, the researcher focused on the errors which are in the students' sentences. The errors were focused on error in tenses, error in preposition, and error in sentence pattern. The students sometimes make mistakes in those categories. Having errors in tenses often occurs because of lack of comprehensive understanding, meanwhile errors in prepositions can happen if the students don't know the function of the preposition. Moreover, errors in sentence patterns mostly exist in sentences.

Third, as the last step the researcher analyzed the students' sentences. Then the sentences were analyzed. The research's result was presented in descriptive qualitative. The data calculation was done upon the errors occurred. First step, the errors presented on the table were counted to find the common errors. Next, each type of error was calculated by using a simple formula in order to gain the percentage of errors occurring. The formula Is described as follows:

$$X = \frac{n}{nt} \times 100\%$$

X (percentage of errors type)

n (the number of a particular type of error)

nt (the total number of all types of errors)

In fact, there were two steps of data analysis that had to be done by the researcher. To identify the problems was the first step to be done. This step was done by investigating the students' sentences and distinguishing the errors they made. Secondly, classifying what kinds of errors showed. Finally, evaluating and correcting the sentences. From the data taken, there were some errors from the 25 students' writing. The errors were classified into errors in tenses, error in preposition, and error in sentence pattern. The study mainly focused on errors in simple present tense, past tense, and present perfect tense. The whole of the data are not shown in this part, but only represented by some representative data. In the analysis, the findings showed the types of error, the sample of students' sentences with errors, the corrected of the sample sentences, and the percentage of the occurrence of errors. The result from the analysis showed that there were 40% errors in tenses. There were 36% errors in prepositions in the 25 students' sentences. Then, 48% error in sentence pattern.

The students made errors in tenses, such as she comes to school every day; in eight months, the virus has happened. Error is a preposition such as they have written it on the whiteboard; I arrived there on Sunday morning. The last, error in sentence pattern occurred when the students misplaced the words in orderly or incomplete sentences. Beside a subject and a verb, there was an error that the students made. It was about adverb position. They wrote adverbs at the beginning of the sentence or without an adverb.

For example, you diligently read it every day; she irons every afternoon.

Table 1. The Amount of the Students' Error

Types Of Error	The Amount Of Students Error	Percentage
Error in Tenses	10 students	40%
Error in Preposition	9 students	36%
Error in Sentence Pattern	12 students	48%

Table 2. The Sample Sentences of the Students

Category	Formula	Students' Sentences	Corrected Sentences
Simple Present Tense	S+Verb Base (s/es) + O + Adverb of Time	She come to school everyday	She comes to school everyday
		At night, my brother and I am reading the books at night	My brother and I read the books at night
Past Tense	S + V2 + O + Adverb of Time	He sent a cake	He sent a cake last night
		I withdrew money yesterday	I withdrew money yesterday
Present Perfect Tense	S + Has/Have + V3 + O + Adverb of Time	She has left the room a few minutes ago	She has left the room for a few minutes ago
		Geese has eaten them	Geese have eaten them recently
Preposition	In, on, at, because of	They have written it at the whiteboard	They have written it at the whiteboard
		You come to my house at Sunday	You come to my house at Sunday
Sentence Pattern	S + Transitive verb + Direct Object	You iron every afternoon	You iron every afternoon
		Kinanti gave a pen to her	Kinanti gave her a pen
	S + Transitive verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object	She appears at night	She appears calm
		S + Linking verb + Subject Complement	

## Conclusion

The improvement of knowledge should be increased in order to achieve a better understanding. Understanding the pattern of tenses, prepositions, and sentence patterns are more efficient and effective for the students in order to make the sentences. By knowing them, the students are capable of writing the sentences easily. If they don't know them, they will get confused. From the result given, it can be concluded that the students have error in tenses about 40%, error in preposition about 36%, and error in sentence pattern about 48%. From the data,

the highest error is sentence pattern. There were some causes of error, like the students' carelessness. It also happened because the students had some difficulties in writing sentences, for they didn't know the right pattern of sentences. The students sometimes forget to put word by word orderly or they are used to using Bahasa Indonesia in English. In addition, they have a lack of knowledge.

For the teacher should give any right patterns and correct the students' sentences. Moreover, sentence patterns should be one of the best things to be learnt. Don't ignore it hopefully. From the mistakes or errors that have been made, teachers have a responsibility to analyze and correct the students' errors. Students should be given more exercises to write some sentences. Lastly, positive thinking and encouraging them in studying are the best ways to improve their abilities.

### References:

- Agustina, V., & Junining, E. (2015). Error Analysis in the Travel Writing Made by the Students of English Study Program. *Journal of Education and Language Studies*.
- Alberto, David LV. (2008, April 20). Error Analysis in a Written Composition. Accessed from [http://www.csielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1657-07902008000200008](http://www.csielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1657-07902008000200008)
- Arikunto, S. (2013). *Prosedur Penelitian: Suatu Pendekatan Praktik*. Jakarta: ineka Cipta.
- Azar, Schramm. Betty. (2002). *Fundamentals of English Grammar (3rd ed.)*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Belo, P.M. (2017). An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Writing Descriptive Text by the First Year Students of Vocational School of Economics and Commerce Becora , Dili East Timor in School Year 2016/2017. *IJAR*
- Brown, H.D. (2001). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.
- Grammarly Blog, Simple Past, accessed on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, from <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/simple-past/>
- Grammarly Blog, Simple Present Tense, accessed on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, from <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/simple-present/>
- Greenbaum, S. & Nelson, G. (2002). *An Introduction to English Grammar (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Hermi. (2015). Grammatical Error Analysis in Recount Texts Made by the Students of Cokroaminoto University of Palopo. *Ethica Lingua*, 87-101.
- Kolln, M. (1999). *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical choices, rhetorical effects (3rd Ed.)*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Kusuma, Nugraha Panji. (2019). Analysis of the Grammatical Error in Writing Recount Text at the Tenth Grade students of SMA Islam Sudirman Ambarawa in the Academic Year of 2019/2020. Salatiga: English Education Department Teacher Training and Education Faculty-IAIN Salatiga.
- Murphy, Raymond. (2004). *English Grammar in Use (3rd ed.)*. Singapore: KHL Printing Co Pte Ltd.
- Richards, J.C & Reinandya, W.A. (2002). *Methodology in Language Teaching. An Anthology of Current Practice*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Suwarni, Eripuddin, Batdal Niati. (2016). An Analysis on the students' Grammatical Error in Writing Skill of Recount Text at The Tenth Grade of SMA Muhammadiyah Rambah. Riau: Faculty of Teacher Training Education. University of Pasir Pangaraian-Riau.