



**GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING UNDERGRADUATE THESIS PROPOSAL:
A STUDY CASE ON THE LAST SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM
OF NUSA CENDANA UNIVERSITY IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021**

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ABSTRACT: Research with topics like this is not new, educators usually try to find out the weaknesses of their students in terms of mastery of grammar to solve the teaching and learning problems. English study Program of FKIP, Universitas Nusa Cendana also see this as something urgent so it is very necessary to do to see and identify the weaknesses of students English Education study program in writing scientific papers (thesis) from the grammatical point of view by using the surface strategy taxonomy approach introduced by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). This research is expected to contribute to the teaching and learning process in the study program, especially for several related subjects such as Writing I, II, III, and Academic Writing. By identifying students' problems in writing thesis proposals, educators, especially lecturers of the English Education Study Program are expected to be able to map the problems of English study program students and make them a reference for teaching.

Keywords: *grammatical errors, writing, surface strategy taxonomy, undergraduate, proposal.*

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a foreign language is not an easy task. As English Study Program Students, they are thought how to master 4 (four) skills, such as Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing. One of the most difficult skills to be dealt with is Writing. Hamp - Lyons in Nunan (1991: 91) explains that writing is commonly a difficult activity for most people, both in their mother tongue and in a foreign language. It is because the writing skill requires capabilities more than other language skills and it needs special preparation. Writing is a complex process. In writing, there are several language aspects involved such as model texts, prepositions, spell-check, punctuation, and grammar.

In the English Study Program of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Science of Nusa Cendana University, students are trained to be able to master writing skills, by providing them the subjects to learn. Those subjects are arranged based on the level namely Writing I, Writing II, Writing III and the last is Academic Writing. Each subject has its own teaching aims. The students are introduced to the whole complexity of the writing process and types of text, trained to write based on the text types, and organized their writing. All the learning processes in Writing I to III are expected to prepare students to learn Academic writing and at the end of the course will produce students who are proficient in writing, especially when it comes to writing their own undergraduate thesis proposals.

In writing an undergraduate thesis proposal, a student needs to pay attention to mechanisms of writing such as organization, unity, coherence, conciseness, clarity, and vocabulary, and grammatical rules. Reflecting on many cases that happened in English Study Program, students are still struggling in writing a good thesis proposal. Based on the researchers' prior observation as lecturers and also as thesis supervisors, the most common problem that occurs in students' thesis is grammatical errors. Students may come with a great idea related to the topics they are working on but in the end, the messages or information can not be stated clearly because of grammar problems. Some of them are still affected by their native language or their first language, so when they produce a sentence or paragraph in English, the structure will be in their L1, they end up translating the word from their L1 into English and create awkward sentences or even paragraph as the last result. Bewa, I, and Affifudin (2019) also point out 2 reasons behind the problems, the first is the lack of practicing writing and also the impact or interference of students' first language during the process of writing.

Based on the arguments above, the researchers would like to conduct a research under the topic of grammatical errors that occur in students' undergraduate thesis proposals. This research is expected to be able to provide some feedback for the lectures that focus their teaching on Writing to recognize their students' weaknesses in grammar

especially when doing academic writing. This investigation will be helpful in Writing Class since the typical mistakes or errors have been identified early, so lecturers will find the best strategies to correct students' grammatical errors from the beginning. It is also very beneficial for the students to help them do self-recognizing related to the grammar aspect that may hard for them, it will give a valuable impact if they know the typical errors that may come to their path.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The two common terms used to describe the inaccuracy in applying grammar into writing are Errors and Mistakes. Both terms seem similar but in fact, they are quite different. Ellis (2005:263) suggested 2 ways to differentiate between error and mistake, the first is to check the consistency of the learner's performance. If he sometimes uses the correct form and sometimes the wrong one, it is called a mistake. However, if he always uses it incorrectly, it is then an error. The second way is to ask the learner to try to correct his own utterance. If he is unable to correct it then it is called errors; but if he is successful, then they are mistakes. From the theory above, it can be inferred that *error* is an inaccuracy in using the grammatical rules caused by one's lack of understanding of rules, while *mistake* is simply performance failure in using the rules.

Sources of errors can be categorized into two (a) interlingual transfer, and (b) intralingual transfer. An interlingual transfer is a significant source for language learners. Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1992) defines interlingual errors as being the result of language transfer, which is caused by the learner's first language. However, this should not be confused with the behaviouristic approach of language transfer. Error analysis does not regard them as the persistence of old habits, but rather as signs that the learner is internalizing and investigating the system of the new language. Interlingual errors may occur at different levels such as the transfer of phonological, morphological, grammatical, and lexical-semantic elements of the native language into the target language, while Intralingual errors result from faulty or partial learning of the target language rather than language transfer. They may be caused by the influence of one target language item upon another. For example, learners attempt to use two tense markers at the same time in one sentence since they have not mastered the language yet. When they say: *He is comes here*, it is because the singularity of the third person requires *-is* in present continuous, and *--s* at

the end of a verb in the simple present tense. In short, intralingual errors occur as a result of learners' attempts to build up concepts and hypotheses about the target language from their limited experience with it.

Heidi Dulay (1982: 146-192) proposes four types of error, they are *Error based on Linguistic Category*, *Error Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy*, *Error Based on Comparative Taxonomy*, *Error Based on Communicative Effect Taxonomy*. However, in this research, the writer classifies the students' errors based on the surface strategy taxonomy. In which surface strategy taxonomy highlight the ways surface structure is altered: students may omit necessary items (omission) or add unnecessary ones (addition) they may misinformation items (selection) or disorder them (misordering).

Besides the error analysis method mentioned above, to add more insight this research also utilizes the surface strategy taxonomy that was proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen in 1982 (as cited in Tarigan,1990) in analyzing the errors committed by the students. The surface strategy taxonomy according to them consists of four elements, which are: 1) **omission**, 2) **addition**, 3) **misformation**, and 4) **misordering**.

Error categorized as omissions are errors in sentences that do not contain some elements that must exist in the sentences. For example, the sentence *My mother a teacher* instead of *My mother is a teacher* that complies with the structure of good English grammar by having copula *is*.

The error of addition is the opposite of the omission. This error happens due to the occurrence of an element that does not need to exist. There are three types of addition: a) **Addition due to double markings**. For example *He didn't went to Kuala Lumpur*. b) **Addition due to regularizations**. For example *Those childs are my neighbour*". c) **Addition due to simple addition**. For example *We stay in over there*.

The error of misformation is marked by the use of wrong morphemes and structures where the user is using one grammatical form in place of another grammatical form. In this case, a learner provides a sentence that is grammatically incorrect in English. For example: *"The dog eated the chicken"*. Misformation has three types of errors, 1) **regularizations**: it happens when a learner uses regular and irregular types of words in the wrong place. b) **archi-forms**: the choice of a class form to represent or describe another class form in a different situation, and c): **alternating forms**: In this case, the learners have mistakenly used some

forms alternatively and finally in producing a wrong word.

The error of misordering is marked by misordering a morpheme or a group of morphemes in sentences. For example: *I don't remember what is her name*" instead of *I don't remember what her name is*".

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This research is designed to use the Descriptive Qualitative Method. The Location of the research is in the English Study Program of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Science, Nusa Cendana University. The source of data is taken from the undergraduate thesis proposals of the last semester students' of the English Study Program. The Population of this research is the whole students who conducting their Proposal Writing during the academic year 2020 – 2021, since the identified number of the population is only 26 undergraduate thesis proposals, then the researchers will take all of them as the sample.

In collecting the data, the researchers will collect copies of all the students' undergraduate

thesis proposals, provide the research sheets that contain a list of students' grammatical errors indicators based on the theory provided before. After collecting the data, the researchers will continue to analyze the data by first. reading the undergraduate thesis proposals, identifying the errors, categorizing the errors by using the provided list, classifying the errors and putting them in a list in order to make it systematic and easy to analyze, and finally reporting the result of the research

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

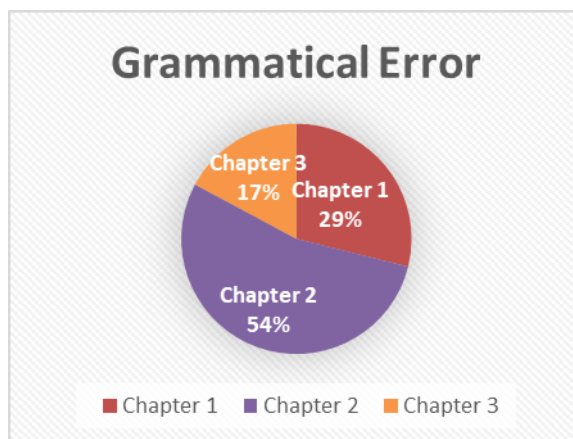
During the academic year 2020 – 2021 within a time limit of three (June – Aug) months as stated before in chapter 3, there are 26 undergraduate thesis proposals that the researchers took all of them as the sample. In order to analyze the error, the researchers used Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (19820 in which the errors were classified into 4 types: *Omission*, *Addition*, *Misformation*, and *Misordering*.

Table 1. Distribution of Error in Students' Undergraduate Thesis Proposal

Num. of Sample	Numbers of Errors	Chapter		
		I	II	III
1	46	16	26	4
2	55	16	33	6
3	27	7	17	3
4	36	4	24	8
5	26	6	12	8
6	20	3	14	3
7	32	8	22	2
8	56	25	26	5
9	14	7	3	4
10	69	18	44	7
11	110	23	71	16
12	16	1	13	2
13	5	1	3	1
14	27	5	19	3
15	49	12	28	9
16	7	2	3	2
17	27	9	12	6
18	13	3	9	1
19	44	19	15	10
20	10	3	6	1
21	35	15	12	8
22	29	12	7	10
23	31	8	19	4
24	60	14	28	18
25	9	3	5	1
26	85	31	35	19
TOTAL	938	271	506	161

Based on the table of grammatical error distribution above, we can see that from 26 undergraduate thesis proposals that the researchers analyzed, there are 938 grammatical errors committed by the students. To make a clear comparison, an undergraduate thesis proposal

consists 3 (three) chapters; Chapter 1 is the Introduction where students will set the background and the issues they would like to propose in their researches. Chapter 2 is the review of related literature and chapter 3 is the Research Method.



Of the 938 grammatical errors, 54% of errors happened when the students deal with chapter 2 or when they had to review some literature and theories to prove their stance. 29% of errors were found in chapter I, errors might happen in this chapter since students were challenged to be able to

express their opinions, provide facts and set arguments using their own sentences. While only 17% of errors were found in chapter 3 since students usually used simple sentences to elaborate the research procedures.

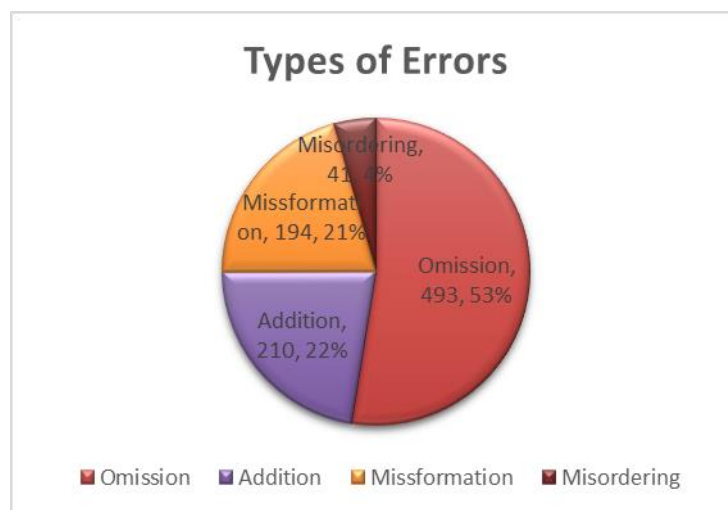
Table 2. Types of Error based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

Num. of Sample	Ommision	Addition	Missformation	Misordering
1	27	8	11	0
2	27	9	13	6
3	17	1	9	0
4	19	4	12	1
5	13	4	8	1
6	5	3	11	1
7	21	7	3	1
8	30	6	19	1
9	8	4	1	1
10	45	9	15	0
11	12	73	25	0
12	6	3	5	2
13	2	0	3	0
14	18	5	3	1
15	35	2	12	0
16	4	1	1	1
17	19	5	3	0
18	5	3	5	0
19	22	9	3	10
20	7	2	0	1
21	26	2	5	2
22	21	3	5	0
23	15	11	4	1
24	42	10	3	5
25	5	0	4	0
26	42	26	11	6

TOTAL	493	210	194	41
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This research proves that from the 26 proposals studied there are approximately 983 errors found in student writing. By using the Surface Taxonomy Strategy, the errors are divided into 4 types: 1) Omission, 2) Addition, 3) Misformation, and 4)

Misordering. The result can be seen in the chart below:



From the 938 data of errors, Omission is the most errors which happened in the students' writing, 53% of omissions committed by the students contributed to the grammatical error in their writing. It means that there are 493 errors related to omission occur in the students' proposals. The next error is Addition, 22% of the data or 210 errors occur in the students' proposals, the third place goes to Misformation which takes 21% of the data, or 194 errors happened in the students' proposals. The last is Misordering, in which this type of error only occurs 4% or 41 items.

Based on this data, an initial conclusion can be drawn that English Language Education Study Program students can write their undergraduate thesis proposals even though they still have to struggle with problems in the form of omission, addition, and misformation elements in sentences that may seem not very important to them but have a lot of impacts. This has a large impact on the level of readability, but what is surprising is the low percentage of errors of the type of misordering which indicates that students of the English Education Study Program at Nusa Cendana University already understand the rules and patterns of English sentences.

Discssion

The grammatical errors made by students in writing their undergraduate thesis proposals are divided into 4, namely omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. omission errors are

divided into 10 types of mission, namely: omission to be, omission article, omission suffix –s as a plural marker, omission 's' ('s) as a possessive marker, omission suffix s/es on the verb of the 3rd singular person of the present tense, omission of prepositions, omission of the suffix –ing, omission of the suffix –ed as a past marker, omission of subject and omission of to in *to-infintive*. Error Addition is divided into 3 types, namely double marking, regularization, and simple addition (addition of the article, addition of the suffix –ing), the addition of plural marker (ed), the addition of preposition, and addition of –es. Misformation errors are divided into 3, namely regularization, archi-form, and alternating. The last error type is Misordering. Misordering is divided into 2, namely misordering that occurs at the sentence level and misordering that occurs at the phrase level. At the sentence level, there are 2 errors, namely the interrogative sentence and exclamatory sentence, while at the phrase level, misordering occurs in the noun phrase.

Writing an undergraduate thesis proposal in English is not easy, especially for EFL students. Besides ideas, organization, vocabulary style, and mechanics, students must deal with English grammar. Although students are prepared from an early semester with various courses, grammar is still the biggest contributor to problems in writing.

According to Stenson (1978:32) and Norrish (1983:21-26), First language interference is one of the causes for learners to make grammatical errors.

In this research, the collected data and the results of the analysis show that students can make more than one mistake even in the same sentence. It is because they tend to ignore the structure of English and apply the structure of their mother tongue to the sentences they form. As the result, they keep constructing complex sentences, neglecting the grammatical rules in English sentences, and starting to misplace the elements of English structure. These problems become uncontrollable since the students do not have adequate knowledge of English grammar, leading them to finally depend on the rules of their native language (Indonesian) to construct the sentences in English.

Besides language interference, the next cause of grammatical error is carelessness. Carelessness, according to Norrish (1983) is related to the low motivation of the students in learning English as a foreign language. Some students admitted that there are too many rules in English grammar, those rules confused them, made them difficult to decide what topic to be studied first. The motivation to produce good writing is also very low, many students rarely do proofreading before submitting the final draft to the thesis supervisor because they think the lecturer will correct any mistakes in their writing. The tendency to make lecturers as proofreading machines shows that their learning motivation is very low. In addition to carelessness, students tend to underestimate simple but important materials such as Parts of Speech or Word Classes so that they do not have a solid foundation in mastering English grammar.

In line with the short explanation above, the researchers would like to give some suggestions for the students and also for the lecturers/teachers.

1) For the English teachers/lecturers/tutors

The level of understanding of the material for each student is different, the learning motivation of each student is also different. Mapping the problem through a simple analysis like this can help teachers to develop a syllabus, determine learning resources, and decide the appropriate teaching strategies for students.

2) For the students

It is necessary to understand well the purpose of taking a major. when choosing to study and majoring in English, at FKIP, prospective students must be able to recognize their own abilities in terms of mastering English and how much they like this language. Being able to sing songs with English lyrics, watching movies in English, is not enough as a basic capital. There are so many aspects that must be learned, if there is no sense of attachment and interest when the skill level being taught increases

and the difficulty increases, the motivation to learn will decrease and it will disappear by itself. What remains is the obligation or obligation to complete education.

From this research, it is very clear that students have problems in mastering English grammar, what needs to be done is to increase learning motivation. Rediscover the goals and reasons why learning English. Enrich knowledge with various reading sources that we can easily find on the internet and do self-study, apply a special schedule to learn English grammar topics, never underestimate certain topics, because the more we learn something, the more we know that we know nothing. No matter how great a teacher is, no matter how much he teaches, no matter how great the method he uses, but if his students have no motivation, no inner desire to learn, then there is only failure.

In addition to self-motivation, students as educated people who live in a very sophisticated era must be able to take advantage of existing technology. There are so many applications, software that can be used for self-development. To avoid plagiarism, we can access a special website to check our writing, or to proofread our writing, grammar check, and others. Everything is available, it's just a matter of how these technological advances are used for good things.

CONCLUSION

Based on this research, the conclusion can be drawn that English Language Education Study Program students can write their undergraduate thesis proposals even though they still have to struggle with problems in the form of omission, addition, and misformation elements in sentences that may seem not very important to them but have a lot of impacts. This has a large impact on the level of readability, but what is surprising is the low percentage of errors of the type of misordering which indicates that students of the English Education Study Program at Nusa Cendana University already understand the rules and patterns of English sentences.

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