

INVESTIGATING PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING: DULAY'S SURFACE STRATEGY TAXONOMY

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Abstract: This study was carried out to identify different types of grammatical errors made by primary school students since some previous studies only conducted the same research with high school students as the participants. This study used a descriptive qualitative research design. The participants were 40 fourth-grade students from SD Muslim Cendekia Batu. Students' writing products were used as the instrument. The data were analyzed, identified and classified based on Dulay's (1982) surface strategy taxonomy. The data show that the students made 79 grammatical errors, with errors of *omission* accounting for 25 items (31.6%), 21 (26.5%) errors in *addition*, 26 errors (32.7%) in *misformation*, and 7 (9.2%) errors in *misordering*. The findings reveal that students lack grammar mastery; therefore, they frequently create their own rules in writing a text. To summarize, the student's understanding of the use of English structure remained low. The researcher's recommendations for future researchers are to focus more on the sources of the students' errors and to identify and determine the appropriate strategies to overcome students' grammatical errors.

Keywords: Grammatical Error; Surface Strategy Taxonomy; Writing Text

INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to investigate students' grammatical errors in writing a text. This research is conducted to analyze grammatical errors made by young learners since some previous studies have carried out the research by recruiting high school students as the participants, such as Andansari et al. (2018), Manik & Suwastini (2020), and also Agustina (2016). Grammar is a set of rules that we use to structure sentences. According to Gerot and Wignell (1994), grammar is the theory of language that explains how language works by forming meaning from a collection of words. Bleske-Rechek et al., (2019) proposed another definition of grammar, which is the technique for placing an order of a sentence and developing good language. Due to English grammar being complex, many students struggle to understand and apply it. When it comes to language learning, many students struggle with grammar. As learners develop their language learning, they will face more difficulties with grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and other aspects of the language (Misbah et al., 2017). Grammar has become one factors that contributes to students' difficulty in learning a language.

In learning English, a grammatical error occurs, such as using the be verb "was/were" in a nominal sentence in the past tense, such as "she was played last night.". However, it cannot be applied to some verbal sentences, such as "he played football." There is an exception when it

comes to forming sentences in English. This phenomenon commonly causes difficulties and errors for English language learners, especially young learners. They frequently assume that indicates past events; for instance, the verb "was/were" must be used. Prior knowledge and subsumers are applied to subsequent language learning in the target language (negative intralingual transfer).

An error is a common occurrence in student writing. Writing errors are unavoidable for English Foreign Learner (EFL) students because writing is a tough challenge for EFL students. Because a student has to generate ideas, arrange the structure of a text, compose words, phrases, and paragraphs, and use adequate mechanics such as punctuation and connections all at the same time. In their study, Dulay et al. (1982) defined "errors" as a part of a conversation or composition that differs from the advanced language outcome of a selected norm. People cannot acquire language without making mistakes regularly. According to Dulay et al. (1982) theory, There are four error sentences: omission, addition, misordering, and misformation. This type of error can be categorized according to intralingual and interlingual errors. Then, Al-Khresheh (2016) describes errors clearly and unambiguously as mistakes in applying particular structures or rules that students make on a continuously and cannot correct on their own. In other words, a student has made errors if he is unable to correct his deviant speech. It is known as overgeneralization. Generalizing is to indicate or derive a law, rule, or conclusion, commonly from the observation of specific instances (Matiini, 2016). When a second language learner performs in the target language, he or she is overgeneralizing a specific rule or item in the second language.

Discussing errors made by students is inextricably linked to the discussion of error analysis. Theoretically, error analysis is a process in which researchers and teachers collect samples, determine errors, describe those errors, organize them based on their features and error causes, and assess their importance (Rahimi & Tafazoli, 2014). Then, Brown(1980) provides another error analysis concept. He describes errors as recording, analyzing, and categorizing deviations from the rules of a second language and then revealing the learner's systems. In addition, this implies that error analysis is required in order to gain a better understanding of students' English competence profiles.

Regarding analyzing the students' errors in the use of grammar, Andansari et al. (2019) analyzed the students' errors in writing recount texts for millennial students. Manik and Suwastini (2020) conducted the previous study, which examined the significant grammatical error and the primary sources of grammatical errors in eighth-grade students' recount text writing during 2019/2020. Agustina (2016) conducted another study at Islamic junior high school and identified the types of morphological, syntactic, and discourse errors in writing recount text to determine the frequency of each type of error, and the most common type of error and its sources.

Previous studies covered the types of grammatical errors high school students solely make when writing recount texts. Those previous studies found that high school students made the most errors in the omission error which are 41.10% (Andansari et al., 2019), 37.33% (Manik & Suwastini, 2020), and 32.22% (Agustina, 2016); thus, this research will concentrate on grammatical errors made by young learners based on Dulay's theory. This study tried to find out what types of errors are mostly made by elementary school students. In addition, the researcher wants to know whether primary school students also commit similar errors as found in previous studies or if this current study might show different results. Furthermore, this study might offer new landscape on errors made by young learners since age of exposure to grammatical knowledge affect the degree of errors (Qureshi, 2021).

METHOD

This study is a case study of fourth-grade students at an Islamic primary school and uses a descriptive qualitative research design. This study will discuss the various types of grammatical errors made by students. Furthermore, the collected data is in text or words rather than numbers. It is in line with Sugiyono (2014), who say that qualitative data is typically in the form of words instead of numbers. Qualitative research explores and comprehends the significance that groups or individuals place on a social or human issue (Creswell, 2016). The participants are 40 students from SD (Elementary school) *Muslim Cendekia* Kota Batu in grade 4.

The data in this study come from the students' text, which results from the writing tasks completed by the participants. The instrument used to collect data is a writing task, precisely a task to tell about their daily activities during Ramadhan. The researcher collected the students' texts in May 2022. Moreover, the researcher got the students' writing text that was done by the students from the teacher of the fourth grade of SD Muslim Cendekia. The researcher then analyzes the students' grammatical errors, attempting to identify, describe, and discuss the errors (calculate the errors). The students' writing products were analyzed to answer the first research problem. The researcher will analyze the data by first identifying the students' text and then classifying the errors made by the students using Dulay's (1982) surface strategy taxonomy covering an omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The method section contains research designs, research subjects, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis presented in paragraph form.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Identification and Classification of Grammatical Errors

To address the research question, the classification of errors based on Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy is summarized in the following table.

Table 1. The Summary of All Types of Errors Made by the Students

Types of Errors	Number of Errors
Omission	25
Addition	21
Misformation	26
Missordering	7
Total	79

Table 1 displayed the number of grammatical errors in the students' text. The total errors were 79 errors. They are 25 omission, 21 addition, 26 misformation, and seven misordering errors. According to the percentages above, omission errors were the most common errors made by students.

Table 2. The Percentage of Errors in Each Category Made by the Students

Types of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage
Omission	25	31.6%
Addition	21	26.5%
Misformation	26	32.7%
Misordering	7	9.2%
Total	79	100%

It can be inferred that the highest frequency of errors was omissions. There are 31.6% of omission errors. The second type was addition errors by an accumulation of 26.5%. The third was misformation errors, which amounted to 32.7% of errors. The last was misordering, which consisted of 9.2% errors.

Omission Errors

The students' texts were analyzed, highlighted, and grammatical errors were identified. There were 79 grammatical errors discovered in 40 students' texts. According to Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy, the researcher discovered that the students made grammatical errors, such as omission, addition, misformation, and misordering (1982). The researcher found 25 or 31.6% errors in omission, of which errors were missing in adding **suffix-s or es**, and **suffix-ed**, using a **preposition**, missing **to be is/am/are**. Some examples of errors are listed in the table below:

Table 3. Errors of Omission

Type of Errors	Identified Sentences
Suffix-s,es, ed	She make me happy
Preposition	I prepare go toschool I listen adzan

	I always play games with my friend and listen music
To be: am/is/are Verb	I never late I don't want late I often to school I often play game because I bored

An omission is the absence of something that should be present in a well-performed utterance. There were 25 grammatical errors or 31.6% of the total showing of omission, and these errors are the main errors made by students. It is consistent with Vera et al. (2019), who discovered that the most popular type of student error was an omission. Many omission errors were omitting **suffix-s, es, or ed**. Most of the students omitted the suffix in the verb. This statement is supported by the results found in the study by Gulo and Rahmawelly (2018) that the most common problem faced by the students related to an omission is about singular verb marker **-s/-es**. Based on the facts above, the researcher could explain that the students lacked grammatical mastery, so they applied their own rules for expressing their ideas. In this section, the researcher discusses the findings with the theories that are related to the research.

Addition Errors

The researcher found 21 errors in errors of addition, which are 8 errors in **double-marking** and 11 errors in **simple addition**. In the table below, the addition errors can be seen. The students made a total of 21 addition errors in their writing. These errors are classified into two types of errors. The first is double marking with eight errors, and the next is simple addition with 13 errors. "Addition" is defined as the presence of something that shouldn't be in a well-formed utterance. In the sentences, they are indicated by the presence of an unnecessary letter, word, or morpheme. The total errors of addition showed 21 items, or 26.5%. Mostly, the students added simple additions such as the letter **s/es** and **ing** in a verb, which was not needed in a word. The researcher discovered that students add suffix-s to a word with a plural subject based on the data. It was because the students may ignore the rule of subject-verb agreement; therefore, they used their pattern to express their ideas. The following were some example of addition errors.

Table 4. Errors of Addition

Type of Errors	Identified sentences
Double Marking	I am read books with my sister I am take a bath at 7 o'clock
Simple addition	I watch ing tv I go to the school I start to pray ing subuh I go to the home and take a nap

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The presence of a non-essential item in a well-formed utterance is defined as the addition error. The sentence is indicated by the presence of an unnecessary letter, word, or morpheme. There were 21 items, or 26.5% showing in the total addition errors. These errors became the second-highest errors after errors of omission made by the students. This finding was in line with Andansari et al. (2019), unveiling that addition was the second most common error made by students, accounting for 14.90% of all errors. The students mostly added simple addition such as the letter *s/es* in a verb that was not needed in a word. Based on the data, the researcher discovered that students added suffix-*s* to a word with a plural subject. Because students might disregard the subject-verb agreement rule, they used their pattern to express their idea. As a result, the researcher could explain that the students' addition errors were caused by a lack of understanding of sentence structure, particularly subject-verb agreement. The majority of them attempted to express their ideas using their own rules. They forgot that each tense has its own rules. It could occur during the process of learning a new language. According to Suzanne (2017), errors and mistakes are natural when learning a new language because they can significantly impact the improvement of a learner's language skills.

MisformationErrors

There were 26 misformation errors, which consisted of regulation errors. The incorrect presence of an item in an utterance was known as a misformation error. The researcher could see the weaknesses of some students using the grammatical rules correctly. Some example were shown on the table below.

Table 5. Errors of Misformation

Types of Errors	Identified Sentences
Errors of Misformation	She don't want to play with me. We usually watched television. I met my friend in class and we tell a story about anime. I always cleaned my room and watered my flowers After played with my friends, I take a shower.

The sentence may appear correct at first glance, but the researcher discovered a grammatical error in the sentence, which is an error in the use of to be. For example, the Indonesian word for "don't" was *tidak*. However, in the English context, every tense had its own rules. If the subject was singular, it must be followed by *doesn't* to show *tidak* in the simple present tense. Then, they

still use past tense in writing a text about daily activities such as *we usually watched television*. A misformation error occurred when an item appeared incorrectly in an utterance. There were 26 grammatical errors (32.7%) in showing misformation. The researcher observed some students' inability to apply grammatical rules in this case correctly. The research finding indicates that misformation errors are the second-lowest error performed by students. In previous studies conducted by Anggraeni (2016), misformation errors were the most common errors made by students.

Misordering Errors

The researcher discovered seven misordering errors. The table below displays the examples of those errors:

Table 6. Errors of Misordering

Types of Errors	Identified Sentences
Errors of misordering	I never late wake up The name game is Roblox We go to steak and milk is rarely

From the table above, the incorrect placement of morphemes or a group of morphemes in an utterance is classified as a "misordering error.". The researcher found seven items or 9.2% of errors of misordering made by fourth-grade students of SD Muslim Cendekia Batu. It indicated that the student was still struggling and did not yet understand the structure or pattern of constructing a sentence using proper grammar. The researcher found just seven items, but the researcher only showed three error sentences because students wrote the same error sentences, such as *I late wake up*. A misordering error was defined as the incorrect placement of morphemes or groups of morphemes in an utterance. The researcher discovered seven items or 9.2% of the misordering errors made by SD Muslim Cendekia Batu fourth grade students. This type of error belongs among the minor errors committed by the research participants of his study. This finding is similar to Asni et al. (2018) who reveal that the least common error done by students when writing descriptive text is misordering, accounting for 6.13% of the total errors. In addition, since the topic of text is same, students frequently made the same sentences; therefore, their grammatical errors was mostly same. Then, primary school students made many grammatical errors in their writing, but the researcher found that students made more errors in term of misformation error.

CONCLUSION

The students were still confused about how to use appropriate grammar rules. It was proved by the students' grammatical errors, which met the definition of all types of errors in the surface strategy taxonomy theory. The errors existed because the students still lacked English grammar knowledge. This findings can help teachers to know the students' grammatical errors and difficulties so teachers can teach and improve students' grammar understanding. Besides, the researcher suggested that teachers also motivate their students to learn English, especially by reading a lot to become familiar with the target language rules. Teachers were expected to maximize the use of strategies in learning to reduce the error rate in grammar.

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