

## **Error Analysis In The Post Test Of Writing Post Basic Written By The First Semester Of English Department**

**Theresia Budi Sucihati<sup>1</sup>, Asmara Nengke Anggiamurni<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>English Department Universitas PGRI Madiun

Corresponding author: [theresia.bs@unipma.ac.id](mailto:theresia.bs@unipma.ac.id)

### **Abstract**

*The objective of this study is to analyze the grammatical errors in students' writing. The researcher is doing this research because most English Department students still make mistakes when writing a composition in English. The type of study was descriptive qualitative research. This study is done by classifying and analyzing the students' written texts, their interviews, and the teacher's interviews. The grammar categories to be analyzed were subject-verb agreement errors, verb-tense errors, verb-form errors (singular and plural errors), and word-form errors. The data analysis revealed that word-form errors were the most common, and singular/plural noun forms were the least frequent. The students' problems stemmed from the influence of their first language, their habit of speaking English, and their lack of care in rereading their compositions.*

**Keywords:** Grammar, Error analysis, Writing.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Syarif et al. (2009:5) state that writing is an activity that expresses ideas, opinions, thoughts, and feelings. It has been noted that writing is the most difficult of the language abilities to learn. In writing, a person produces a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together. It involves manipulating, structuring, and communicating the ideas in some impressive ways. Therefore, students need to be assisted in getting started and in organizing their ideas while writing, even in academic.



Writing is a complex process in the first language and the target language. In this study, the researcher found several problems with writing in English. The problems in students' writing are interesting and should be investigated further. Some of these problems occur because of the gaps between the understanding of the first language (L1) and the target language (L2). It demonstrates that students make mistakes when composing their writing.

The ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill. Writing was viewed as a series of activities, ranging from the more mechanical or formal aspects to the more complex act of composing. It implies that writing activities cannot be mastered in a short period of time. The students need a continuum of exercises to become good writers in their target language. In writing exercises, the teacher or lecturer should simultaneously remind students of their mistakes and explain how to avoid them in order to produce better writing in the future. Nevertheless, the result is not always satisfying.

In preliminary studies, the researcher observed the class, interviewed the lecturer, and interviewed some students. It is found that some students have difficulties with grammar. Actually, grammar is not the only aspect on which the teacher focuses, but basic grammar is the first thing to be checked before other aspects such as diction and others. The researcher tested them after they studied some basic grammar such as using the article, possessive adjective, question tag, word order, adjective clause and phrase, etc. They have also studied the use of the period, comma, capital letter, and some other basic punctuation. However, their writing contains errors in basic grammar and punctuation.

## **THEORY AND PRACTICES**

### **Writing**

Writing in English has been perceived as the most difficult skill among the four skills of English. This argument is supported by Richard and Willy (2002:203), who say that writing is the most difficult skill for a second language learner to master. The teacher needs to prepare the approach in order to make the students enjoy the class. It means the teacher needs to combine objectives, motivation, and effective learning in the classroom.

In doing written activities, students frequently have more time to think than they do in oral activities. They can go through what they want in their minds and even open a dictionary, grammar books, or other material to help them. Writing encourages students to use accurate language. They also think that as they write, it will provoke language development as they



resolve problems that the writing puts into their minds. Creating a comfortable writing atmosphere will encourage someone to become more active, creative, and intelligent. It is possible because, in order to have good writing, a number of components must be mastered, ranging from the simple, such as choosing words, assembling sentences, and creating paragraphs, to the more difficult, such as conveying ideas into good writing or story, combining some tenses, and creating a coherent relationship between a sentence or paragraph. Through this process, it is possible for students to make errors in their writing.

The most important aspect of writing is that students must be personally involved in the lesson in order for the learning process to affect their skill. The teacher should be clear on what skills he or she is trying to develop.

### **Error Analysis**

Children learning their first language (L1), adult native speakers, and second language learners—they all make errors. Making errors is a natural thing in the world, and it is evidently attached to every human being. Learning the second language is a process unlike learning the first. In this new system of language, learners will connect with such new vocabulary, new grammatical patterns, and a strange pronunciation that differs from their L1. Despite their best efforts, it is unavoidable that they will make numerous mistakes.

"The purpose of error analysis is, in fact, to find out what the learner knows and does not know and to enable the teacher to supply him or her not just with the information that his or her hypothesis is wrong but also with the right sort of information or data for him or her to form a more adequate concept of a rule in the target language" (Corder, 1974: 170). The study and analysis of the errors made by second language learners, either in their speech or writing or both, have been brought under consideration by many educators, EFL teachers, linguists, and researchers around the world.

EFL learners, including university students, make errors in their spoken and written English. It is caused by the language transfer from the L1 (native language) into the L2 (target language). It is a common source of errors among learners of a second or foreign language. Error analysis is also the study of errors made by second- and foreign-language learners. Corder (1967) defined EA as a procedure used by both researchers and teachers that involves collecting samples of learner language, identifying the errors in the sample, describing these errors, classifying them according to their nature and causes, and evaluating their seriousness.



Error analysis may be carried out in order to (a) find out how well someone knows a language, (b) find out how a person learns a language, and (c) obtain information on common difficulties in language learning. According to Norrish (1983: 7), error is a systematic deviation from the accepted system of the target language. It means that errors in mastering the target language may occur due to human factors such as memory limitations, psychological issues, and a lack of understanding of the subject's material. On the other hand, the learners never recognize their errors or know that they have made them.

By classifying the errors that learners made, researchers could learn a great deal about the second language acquisition process by inferring the strategies that second language learners were adopting. For learners themselves, errors are "indispensable," since the making of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. In this research, the errors are categorized into five categories based on Azzar (1989: A29).

### 1. Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

Occur when the subject does not agree with the verb in person or number.

Example: He **walk** every morning.

Correction: He **walks** every morning.

### 2. Verb Tense Errors

Occur when an incorrect time marker is used.

Example I **go** to the store and I **bought** milk.

Correction: I **go** to the store and I **buy** milk.

### 3. Verb Form Errors

Occur when a verb is incorrectly formed.

Example: I will **driven** to the airport next week.

Correction: I will **drive** to the airport next week.

### 4. Singular/Plural Noun Ending Errors

Often occur when there is confusion about which nouns are countable and which aren't.

Example: I have turned in all my **homeworks** this week.

Correction: I have turned in all my **homework** this week.

### 5. Word Form Errors

Occur when the wrong part of speech is chosen.

Example: Until recently, the Hudson's river contained **danger** levels of pollutants.

Correction: Until recently, the Hudson's river contained **dangerous** levels of pollutants.



## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Based on the problems of the study, the researcher needs to identify the types of errors made by the first-year students of the English Department of Universitas PGRI Madiun in their writing and find out the causes why the students make errors in their writing. To answer problems, the writer has designed instruments of research, namely:

### **1) The students' writing paper**

The primary data came from student written products documents. The writer collected the students' writing task as the product of writing. In this case, the writer collected students' writing papers in the classroom as the results of assignments given by their lecturers. Then the writing sheets were read, identified, labeled, and categorized based on the errors in the writing product. The data were categorized based on the kinds of errors made by the students. The same data was also used to count how often the students make certain errors and what factor causes the errors to be done repeatedly. This technique has been used during the research, which was conducted after the primary data were collected twice.

After collecting the students' writing, the researcher identified the errors that had been categorized into five types of errors. The classifications or categories are:

1. Subject-verb agreement errors
2. Errors in Verb Tenses
3. Errors in Verb Form
4. Ending Singular/Plural Noun Errors
5. Word-Form Errors

To ease the researcher's task of counting the errors in the students' writing, the researcher gives a number as the code for each category. The researcher put the number "1" for the first error category, the number "2" for the second error category, the number "3" for the third error category, the number "4" for the fourth error category, and the number "5" for the fifth error category.

### **2) Interview Questionnaire**

After identifying some errors and classifying them into specific error tables, the researcher explains the findings. The researcher needs to interview the students and lecturer based on her analysis's findings. The researcher prepared some questions based on her findings so that she could get the specific results' answers. The lists of interview questions are designed





to develop her findings. The researcher conducted the interview using a tape recorder so that the data from the interview could be used as an important research tool.

## DISCUSSION

Obtaining information about the students' English writing ability reveals that they continue to struggle with exploring ideas, so the content of their writings is too narrow to develop details in a supporting paragraph. Lack of ideas also hindered their ability to organize the paragraphs. The things that the lecturer needs to consider are the simple but repeated errors, such as the word form error.

Before checking for errors in the five categories, the researcher counted the number of words in each writing to determine how long it is. This step is necessary because the students were asked to write a composition of around 200 words and not more than 250 words. As a result, the researcher wanted to know whether or not they could follow the instructions. If you judge the length of the composition at a glance, some compositions seem too short. The researcher then counted them and discovered that the longest composition was 242 words long and the shortest was only 130 words long. The average length of their compositions is 167 words. However, the length is not the focus of this research.

The important thing is that the researcher checks those compositions for the occurrences of every category and the errors in them. The researcher divides the errors into five categories. Subject-Verb Agreement Errors (the relation between subject and verb), Verb Tense Errors (the use of verb or auxiliary based on the time), Verb Form Errors (the form of verb, parallelism, etc.), Singular/plural noun ending errors (countable words, -es/s end words, etc.), word form errors (the form of word classes).

Here are some analysis in each category:

### Analyze in Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

#### Example 1:

Sentence: But she *speak* Indonesian.

Correction: But she *speaks* Indonesian.

Explanation: The subject in the form of pronoun **she** and the verb is **speak**. They are not in agreement. They are not in agreement. It should change the verb in the sentence. As the



subject of the sentence is third personal person (**she**), it should be followed by verb+s/es (**speaks**) in the present tense.

**Example 2:**

Sentence: She **love** sewing.

Correction: She **loves** sewing.

Explanation: The subject in the form of pronoun **she** and the verb is **love**. They are not in agreement. It should change the verb in the sentence. As the subject of the sentence is third personal person (**she**), it should be followed by verb+s/es (**loves**) in the present tense.

**Example 3:**

Sentence: Mother just **want** her daughter...

Correction: Mother just **wants** her daughter...

Explanation: The subject in the form of pronoun **she** and the verb is **sweep**. They are not in agreement. It should change the verb in the sentence. As the subject of the sentence is third personal person (**she**), it should be followed by verb+s/es (**wants**) in the present tense.

**Example 4:**

Sentence: Her sister **live** in Lampung...

Correction: Her sister **lives** in Lampung...

Explanation: The subject in the form of pronoun **her sister** and the verb is **lives**. The sentence is not in an agreement. It should change the verb in the sentence. As the subject of the sentence is third personal person (**her sister**), it should be followed by verb+s/es (**lives**) in the present tense.

Those are some examples of errors in subject-verb agreement that happened in students' compositions. The researcher had already read all the compositions and made notes of each error, but only wrote some sentences. In line, some students had not made an error in this category.

According to the interview, the students who made errors in this category did so due to their habitual daily use of English. They usually enjoy speaking English without thinking about subject-verb agreement. Some students who did not have the error in this category explained that they are accustomed to speaking and writing in the correct form, and some students said that they had recited his or her writing before submitting it.

### Analyzing Verb Tense Errors

#### Example 1:

Sentence : But now she **had lived** in Katingan in Kalimantan.

Correction : But now she **is living** in Katingan in Kalimantan.

Explanation : The text written in the form of descriptive text. The role of descriptive text is using simple present tense. This sentence had an error in the verb related to the time signal. The sentence should be written in present continuous tense. It has the time signal word (**now**), so the verb/auxiliary should be the form present progressive or continuous (**is living**).

#### Example 2:

Sentence : My mother **has been** a tailor when she was young.

Correction : My mother **was** a tailor when she was young.

Explanation : The writer wanted to write a sentence in the form of past activity. The verb form should be V<sub>2</sub>. So the form **has been** needed to be replaced by **was**.

#### Example 3:

Sentence : And now my mother **works** as a farmer.

Correction : And now my mother **is working** as a farmer.

Explanation : The sentence is in the form of present continuous tense because the sentence had the word **now** as the time signal. The verb of this sentence should be in the form of auxiliary (be)+verb<sub>ing</sub>. The word **works** should be replaced by **is working**.

#### Example 4:

Sentence : ... she usually **use** it to read al qur'an...



Correction : ... she usually **uses** it to read al qur'an...

Explanation: The sentence was simple present tense because it had **usually** as the time signal. The verb of simple present tense should be verb root or verb<sub>+s/es</sub>. Because of the subject of this simple present tense is **she**, it should be followed by s/es (**uses**.)

Those are some examples of errors in verb tense that happened in students' compositions. The researcher had already read and taken notes on all of the compositions, but had only recorded a few errors in this category. The error in this category happened a lot (in rank two of five).

From the interview, it can be found that the students who made errors in this category did so because of their lack of awareness of tenses. Almost all of them said that they ignored the verb form when they were speaking English. Sometimes they corrected each other when they made conversation, but sometimes they did not care. In this category, only one student did not have the error. She explained that she reread her writing carefully before submitting it.

### Analyzing Verb Form Errors

#### Example 1:

Sentence : Because her cuisine **is** always **taste** good.

Correction : Because her cuisine always **tastes** good.

Explanation : The use of linking verb in the sentence does not need auxiliary. In this sentence the writer used auxiliary and linking verb. Linking verb has the same function as auxiliary. The auxiliary **is** should be omitted and the word **taste** must be replaced by **tastes**.

#### Example 2:

Sentence : I **was** called her and...

Correction : I **called** her and...

Explanation : The writer of this sentence wrote an active sentence but she made an error in forming the verb. The verb form was error and should be replaced from **was called** became **called**.

**Example 3:**

Sentence : My mother **have** a siblings...

Correction : My mother **has** a siblings...

Explanation : The subject **my mother** (third single person) should be followed by verb<sub>+s/es</sub>. The verb form in this sentence was error. The word **have** should be replaced by **has**.

**Example 4:**

Sentence : She **gets** up early in the morning and **complete** her...

Correction : She **gets** up early in the morning and **completes** her...

Explanation : The error happened in this sentence was about the parallelism. The sentence had conjunction **and** which function was to combine two or more parallel word. The verb **complete** should be parallel with the verb in the previous clause. In the first clause it can be seen **gets** so the word **complete** should be replaced by **completes**.

These are a few instances of verb tense mistakes that students made in their writings. All of the compositions had already been read and examined by the researcher, who only highlighted a few faults in this category. This category has a relatively small amount of inaccuracy.

The interview revealed that the students who made mistakes in this category did so because they were unaware of how to form the verb.

They sought to avoid using complex grammar since, according to some of them, verb form is tied to verb tense and other grammar rules.

**Analyzing Singular/ Plural Noun Ending Errors**

**Example 1:**

Sentence : She was a vegetable **sellers**.

Correction : She was a vegetable **seller**.

Explanation : The word **sellers** in this sentence was error because it referred to someone in singular form. So this word had to be replaced by **seller**.

**Example 2:**

Sentence : ...they will work and grow **rices**.



Correction : ...they will work and **grow rice**.  
Explanation : The word **rice** is uncountable noun. So it is not necessary using **s/es**.

**Example 3:**

Sentence : My mother **have a siblings**...  
Correction : My mother **have siblings**...  
Explanation : this sentence had two errorness. The word **have** should be **has** because the subject was singular person. The second error was the word **a siblings, It was** error because the word **a** referred to singular person. So the correct form was **a sibling** or **siblings**.

These are a few instances of singular- or plural-noun ending mistakes that students made in their writings. All of the compositions had already been read and examined by the researcher, who only discovered a few mistakes. The mistake was the smallest in this group. In this area, very few students made mistakes. And among the five categories, this one had the lowest error rate.

According to the interview, the students who made mistakes in this area did so because they rushed through writing and didn't have enough time to proofread their work before turning it in.

**Analyzing Word Form Errors**

**Example 1:**

Sentence : **She** hobby is raising....  
Correction : **Her** hobby is raising....  
Explanation : This sentence had an error in the form of possessive pronoun. The word **she** should write in the form of possessive pronoun (**her**) instead of subject pronoun.

**Example 2:**

Sentence : She shall practice **new recipe it**.  
Correction : She shall practice **a new recipe**.



Explanation : This sentence seems less in understanding. By reading the previous and following sentences, it could be found that he/ she should wrote a **new recipe** or only wrote the pronoun **it** (to substituted that noun phrase) instead of **new recipe it**.

**Example 3:**

Sentence : The time has gone so fast, I **hope may** Allah bless her...

Correction : The time has gone so fast, I **hope** Allah bless her...

Explanation : This sentence had error in the use of a word should not wrotten. This sentence was more understood by omit the word **may**.

**Example 4:**

Sentence : **She** father name is Sukiran...

Correction : **Her** father name is Sukiran...

Explanation : This sentence had an error in the form of possessive pronoun. The word **she** should write in the form of possessive pronoun (**her**) instead of subject pronoun.

**Example 5:**

Sentence : ...**me** and my mom usually **spending** the time together...

Correction : ...**I** and my mom usually **spend** the time together...

Explanation : This sentence had two errors. The first is the use of the me. In this sentence, the writer tended to wrote **she and her mother** so the word **me** should be replaced by **I**. The second error was about the form of verb. The word **spending** should be replaced by **spend**.

These are a few illustrations of writing mistakes that students made in their writings. All of the compositions had already been read and examined by the researcher, who only highlighted a few faults in this category. The majority of errors were in this group. All of the students made a few mistakes when creating morphological words.

According to the interview, the students that made mistakes in this category typically translated from Bahasa Indonesia into English. Their spoken and written English had an effect



on their native tongue. They frequently converse freely in English. Despite having a sizable amount of terms in their vocabularies, individuals occasionally had trouble forming new words from their roots. So it was a little challenging for them to create new words from their roots. Some of them saw how poor it was and continued to practice to improve it going forward.

To know who made the most errors in all categories, the researcher first counted the frequency of errors in each category. Then it is summarized. For example, student 1 had a 5.8% error in her composition compared to all the errors in the class. The student made some mistakes while writing her composition. The error happened in categories 2, 3, and 5. She had not had an error in categories 1 and 4. She made many errors in the last category (the fifth). All students (subjects) went through the same counting procedures.

The table below is a summary of students' errors in each category.

**Table 1 The summary of the percentage of all students' error in each category**

category 1 (%)	category 2 (%)	category 3 (%)	category 4 (%)	category 5 (%)
<b>12.24</b>	<b>30.61</b>	<b>13.61</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>40.14</b>

Note:

Category 1: Subject-verb Agreement Errors

Category 2: Verb Tense Errors

Category 3: Verb Form Errors

Category 4: Singular/ Plural Noun Ending Errors

Category 5: Word Form Errors

After counting the errors in the students' writing in all categories, the researcher recapitulated them as they are written in Table 1 to find the error proportion for each. The data in the table shows that the most errors made by the students were in the fifth category. The fifth category is about word-form errors. It included pronoun errors, parts of speech, and morphological processes. The second position was the second category, which is about the use of the verb in relation to the tenses. The third category occupied the third position in error. This category was a verb-form error. It was including the verb incorrectly. Category 1 and category 4 were in the fourth and fifth positions, respectively.





Knowing that word form is the main issue for the students, the researcher concluded that the majority of the students have been influenced by their speaking habits. The researcher expects to see influences from their mother tongue. This is an interlingual error, in which the first language affects the target language, and this is the result of language transfer.

Based on the interview with the students, the researcher found that most students have some common behaviors that influence their writing product, such as composing a text in the way they produce English when they speak, seldom reading English texts, thinking of ideas spontaneously, having difficulties creating new words from root words, and not re-reading after they write.

From the interview with the teacher, the researcher found that the teacher was communicative in teaching. The method used in her class was mostly direct with a communicative approach. The teacher usually asks the students to compose with a classical theme. The class usually found their theme, but there was no specific instruction to write in a specific type of text, such as narrative, descriptive, or recount.

In the interview, it was found that the errors they made were due to the influence of their first language. Some students often wrote the text in Bahasa and then translated it into English. The error happened in the process of translating the text. Then, students' speaking habits also influenced their writing. They usually mix and switch the codes. Their interest in reading English text made them capable of creating written text. If they can pay much more attention to the written product and reread the text before submitting it, they can actually minimize their writing error.

When the researcher interviewed the students to know what they thought about the process of teaching and learning English writing, they found it a little bit hard to write a composition in a short time. They like English, but they prefer to speak it rather than write it. Students' difficulties in writing are not only because of their lack of knowledge about constructing good sentences but also because of their difficulty collecting ideas in order to put them in a composition. Some people who like to write and express their ideas also make errors in their writing. Students have to realize that writing is not an easy process.

The students also stated that they need a dictionary when they write a composition. Some students need to prepare at least a bilingual dictionary. It is usually an Indonesian-English dictionary because the sentence(s) are first composed in Bahasa and then translated into English. That is because most of them do not know the words needed to express their ideas. But



some students do not like to use conventional dictionaries. A digital dictionary is more helpful for them because it can translate a full sentence or some sentences. But the teacher always reminds them to create their own English sentences.

The other problem faced by the students in writing their text is carelessness in writing. If they had finished their writing, they did not want to recheck it. After finishing the last sentence, some students handed in their papers to the teacher, while others talked with their classmates.

In addition, the researcher would like to emphasize the second category, which is about verb tense. This category came in second place. Some students said that tenses were difficult when they were asked to complete a text. They actually knew that grammar had so many rules, but tense was one of their biggest fears. The most valuable thing in teaching writing is that the students know the techniques or approaches that will help them develop, discover, and engage a topic. Students learn how to write a good essay by gathering information, creating an outline, writing a draft, learning grammar and vocabulary simultaneously, and finally presenting the essay.

## **CONCLUSION**

The researcher concluded some points after doing the research about the error analysis of students' writing, as follows:

1. The research was done by analyzing the data from the students' compositions, the teacher interview, and the student interview.
2. The type of errors frequently made by the students involved errors in forming the word. It related to their morphological ability and their habit of mixing and switching codes when they speak English.
3. There were also less errors after analyzing the five categories. The category was singular or plural noun endings. This kind of grammar was easy for the students to understand.
4. In order to analyze the error in writing, the teacher should remind their students to be more careful and do the checking before submitting the task. Some students said that the error in their writing happened because they did not re-read their composition before submitting it.
5. The teacher had the responsibility to make the students enjoy the writing class, but the students need to increase their motivation, skill, knowledge, and skill in writing.



The errors were made by the students because of the influence of the first language. The students usually think in Indonesia and write in English, then write it or translate it into English. The process of transferring the language has an impact on the errors. This is also influenced by the students' habits; they speak English in a free way. Another thing that influenced me was their carelessness after they wrote it. Actually, such errors can be minimized if the students pay much more attention to their writing product.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Azzar, Betty Schampfer. 1989. Understanding and Using English Grammar. New York: Pearson.
- Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of learners' errors. *IRAL*, 5, 161-170.
- Corder, S. P. (1974). Error Analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition. London: Longman.
- Norrish, J. 1987. Language Learning and their Errors. London: Macmillan Publisher Ltd.
- Raymond. James. (1980). Writing is Unnatural Act. (New York: The morray Printing Company
- Richard, Jack C. and Willy, A. Renandya. 2004. Methodology in Language Teaching. Cambridge: University Press.
- Rogers. H. (2005) Writing Systems: A Linguistics Approach. Oxford Blackwell
- Syarif, Elina dkk. 2009. Pembelajaran Menulis. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan Nasional.

