

## **SYNTACTICAL ERROR MADE BY EFL LEARNERS' IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to know the syntactical errors in the descriptive text writing of 10 elementary-level students at Al-Ikhlâs Boarding School. This study applied qualitative-descriptive approach. The source of data taken from the students writing. Those descriptive text were analyzed by classifying the error from types of syntactical errors. From this study, the researcher found the syntactical errors namely error in pronoun, Be, plurals, and the use verb tense. This finding shows that EFL learners cannot completely master and apply the grammar of English in terms of syntactical function to their writing. It is influenced by factors such as interlingual and intralingual transfer. But the dominant factor in these results is interlanguage transfer. This study is supposed to be a reference for another researcher, linguist, and educator for their further study on error analysis.

**Keywords:** *Error Analysis, Syntactical, Descriptive Text*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) sometimes have difficulty understanding the intricacies of English grammar and syntax, which results in a variety of writing errors. One prevalent issue observed in their writing is "syntactical errors." Syntactical errors refer to mistakes related to the arrangement of words, phrases, and clauses in a sentence that affect the overall structure and coherence of their writing. A typical writing assignment in language learning programs is to create descriptive writings, which require students to use descriptive language to clearly depict a person, location, item, or event. The capacity to compose logical and well-organized descriptive texts is essential for efficient English communication and has a big influence on students' general language skills.

Several factors contribute to the occurrence of syntactical errors among EFL learners when writing descriptive texts. First, native Language Interference: EFL learners' native language often has different grammar rules and sentence structures, which may influence their English writing. Transferring the syntax of their native language to English can lead to erroneous sentence constructions. Second, lack of Exposure: Many EFL learners do not have enough exposure to English outside the classroom, limiting their chances to interact with

native speakers or authentic language materials. This lack of exposure may hinder their ability to grasp the natural flow of English sentences. Third, insufficient Grammar Instruction: In some cases, EFL learners may not receive adequate grammar instruction tailored to their language proficiency level. This can result in an incomplete understanding and misapplication of English grammar rules. Fourth, over-reliance on Translation: When attempting to write descriptive texts, EFL learners may compose sentences in their native language first and then attempt to translate them into English. This approach can lead to awkward and ungrammatical sentence structures. Fifth, Limited Vocabulary: EFL learners may have a limited vocabulary, which can hinder their ability to express complex ideas fluently. As a result, they may resort to simple sentence structures, leading to repetitive or incomplete descriptions. Lack of Editing and Revision Skills: EFL learners may not have developed effective editing and revision strategies, leading to overlooked syntactical errors in their writing.

This research is necessary because it analyzes the syntactical errors made by students at Al-Ikhlâs Boarding School in their English descriptive text writing. Addressing syntactical errors in descriptive text writing can help EFL learners improve their language proficiency, communicate more effectively, and gain greater confidence in their English language abilities. Thus, the purpose of this study is to find out if any syntactical errors are made by learners. In this case, the researcher will categorize the mistake kind and describe what caused it. Moreover, the mistakes committed by the learners will be defined by drawing comparisons between L1 and L2 grammar. Finding syntactical faults made by learners in their descriptive papers is one of the study's goals.

## **METHOD**

The method used for the research is qualitative-descriptive. EFL Learners whose L2 is English and L1 is Indonesian serve as the research's data source. The researcher used research design approach the by Gass & Selinker (2008) to analyse the source of errors in English students' descriptive text writings. This method includes detailed procedures for error analysis, including data collection, error identification, classification, quantification, and analysis. Additionally, it presents an analysis of the inter- and intra-language error-causing factors.

### **Participants**

There are 10 elementary students at Al-Ikhlâs Boarding School in the academic year 2023-2024 involved in this research. It is assumed that they are the majority in junior high level in formal school. Moreover, these students write more simple sentences in the form of descriptive text. Thus, the researcher will consider them as the participants.

### **Instruments**

The students will be asked to write a descriptive text about a tourist destination. The researcher will specify that the text should be between 70 and 150 words long. The writing sheets will be distributed to the students, and then the writing sheets will be collected as the data source for this study.

### **Procedures**

The steps involved in the procedures analysis of this study data are as follows:

1. The detection phase involves identifying students' syntax errors.
2. The explanation phase includes activities that characterize the students previously identified syntactic errors.
3. The explanation phase includes activities that explain students' writing.
4. The evaluation stage involves evaluating student written work for syntactic errors.
5. The revision phase involves correcting syntactic errors in students' explanatory texts.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Ten students' writing sheets were each analysed using six EA procedures. After a thorough analysis of all the data, several findings emerged. Typical syntactic errors found in students' writing sheets were mainly the use of relative pronouns, be, plural forms, and use of verb forms. The analysis results are displayed as follows.

### **a. Pronoun**

A pronoun is a grammatical component of speech. A pronoun can take the place of another pronoun or a noun. The researcher discovers ten errors. The researcher divides people into two categories. For a possessive adjective, the first is subjective. As an illustration: *\*I clothe is red*. Given that the pronoun *I* serves as the sentence's subject in the example above, using the incorrect pronoun becomes incorrect. In the sentences above, using *my* as a possessive adjective is correct. For an objective, the

second is subjective. For instance: \**Me* have long hair. It is inappropriate as *Me* make reference to the subject. Since it should be subjective, "I" is the appropriate pronoun to use.

b. BE

A verb must always be present in a well-written sentence. In the composition, a linking verb can be used if there isn't a complete verb. BE functions as a connecting verb. The two categories of errors are: Omission of BE as Predicate, and Addition of BE in Subject. In addition, the researcher discovers six errors in omission of BE. As an illustration, \**His hobby* play football. The wrong sentence is omission to be "is". Additin to be "is" the proper sentence construction. The researcher discovers four errors in addition of BE in subject.

c. Plural

In English, noun plurals are typically marked by the suffix -s or -es. To contain, involve, or compose more than one person or thing is to use the plural form. In English, noun plurals are typically denoted by the suffix -s or -es. To contain, involve, or compose more than one person or thing is to use the plural form. The researcher discovers ten errors. For instance: \* *I have three animal*. The students missed by leaving out the term (-S) as a plural marker in their phrase. *I have three animals*, is the proper sentence.

d. The Use of Verb Tense

In writing sentences, students frequently make errors, especially when using the word "have/has". This occurs as a result of the words' related meanings. Two categories of verb tense errors exist. In this finding is found 20 errors. The first involves misusing the adverb "has," as in \**I has* new car. The language suggests that "I" should be followed by auxiliary "have". The sentence "*I have a new car*" is accurate. Second, "*She have a new bag*", it is misused. Subject *She* should be followed *has*, based on the sentence. The sentence "*She has a new bag*" is correct.

## **DISCUSSION**

Numerous factors could have contributed to the mistakes discovered in this investigation. The most reasonable explanation is that the students speak Indonesian as their

native language and English as their foreign language. The following discussion section details these results.

There were ten errors in the use of relative pronouns. Two intra-language faults and eight inter-language errors account for the majority of the errors. Because the students produced fewer relative clauses than other clauses, there were the fewest syntactical errors in this passage. However, given that English has three usages “*I, my, and mine*” and Indonesian has only one relative pronoun unit “*Saya*” students were asked to practice constructing English relative clauses more. The use of the relative pronoun relator requires pupils to have a deeper grasp of the faults associated with it. Because each relative pronoun relator has a unique function in a particular clause context, they must learn how to employ the relative pronoun in a variety of sentence types. The use of BE errors was Omission of BE as Predicate, and Addition of BE in Subject. The omission of Be as predicate occurs for 6 times, which entirely caused by the intra-language error. The Adding of Be in subject occurs for 4 times, which entirely caused by the intra-language errors. These results showed that the students hadn’t completely mastered using the to be. In plural form, there are ten errors. It is influencing errors caused by the intra-language source (L2 interference). Thus, some pedagogical to syntactical and English grammatical needed to be carried out. And the last in the use of verb tense, the errors made by EFL learners occur for 20 times. The number errors caused by 3 inter-language errors and 17 intra-language errors. Therefore, it was obviously a huge number of errors found in 10 students’ writing results. Therefore, clearly a large number of errors were found in the essay results of the 10 students. Differences in structure between Indonesian and English may be the cause of tense errors. There is no tense change in the language structure of Indonesian, so there is no change in verbs or predicates. Furthermore, the number of subjects does not affect verb inflection.

Based on the data, researchers divided the sources of error into two categories. These errors are called intralingual and interlingual transfer and are explained and discussed below. Interlanguage transfer refers to the influence of a learner's native language (L1) on their second language (L2). Intralingual transfer, on the other hand, refers to the influence of a learner's L2 knowledge on his or her own L2 production. There are many aspects that cause writing problems for learners of English as a foreign language. According to Brown (1980), the learners’ errors in

the second language result from the learner's assumption that the second language forms are similar to the native language (interlingual errors) and the negative transfer of items within the target language (intralingual errors). Kaweera (2013) stated that interlingual problem is a negative transfer of learners' mother tongue/first language (Indonesian) to target language (English). The intralingual transfer is the source of errors that is produced by the learners who do not reflect the structure of mother tongue but a generation based on the partial exposure to the target language, (Effendy 2014).

### **CONCLUSION**

It can be concluded that the 10 elementary students at Al-Ikhlâs Boarding School in the academic year 2023-2024 have syntactic errors in their grades when writing explanatory texts. Researchers found syntactic errors, namely errors in the use of pronouns, be, plurals, and verb forms. The following were results about them: the use of pronouns got 10 errors; the use of BE errors consisted of 6 errors in the omission of BE and 4 errors in the addition of BE in the subject; the use of plurals found 10 errors; and the use of verb tense found 20 errors. This result indicates that EFL learners are unable to fully master English grammar from the perspective of syntactic functions and are unable to apply it to writing. It is influenced by factors such as interlingual and intralingual transfer. But the dominant factor in these results is interlanguage transfer. Therefore, Error analysis can go beyond morphological aspects and even beyond textual and discourse aspects. This study is intended to serve as a reference for other researchers, linguists, and educators to further study error analysis.

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