



## SYNTACTICAL ERROR ANALYSIS OF ABSTRACT THESIS BY UNDER GRADUATE STUDENTS OF SEKOLAH TINGGI BAHASA ASING (STIBA)-IEC BEKASI

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**Abstract:** This study is motivated by observation data, which shows that the majority of students believe writing is difficult. To address this issue, the author conducts research to determine the types of syntactical errors, the dominant type of syntactical errors, and the factors that influence the students' syntactical errors. The descriptive qualitative research method is used in this study. The data are drawn from abstract theses written by undergraduate students at Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing (STIBA)-IEC Bekasi from 2017 to 2019. The research results have been categorized according to James' (1998) classification of syntactical errors proposed in *Error in Language Learning and Use*. The analysis reveals the existence of five distinct types of syntactical errors, namely omission, addition, misformation, misordering, and blend. Among these, misformation emerges as the predominant type of syntactical error committed by the students. Furthermore, the occurrence of these syntactical errors is found to be influenced by both inter-lingual and intra-lingual factors.

**Keywords:** *syntactical errors, omission, addition, misformation, misordering, blend, intra-lingual, inter-lingual*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Under graduate students of Language and Literature program study in all higher education institutions are very familiar with all subjects of four main language skills which writing skills includes there. They learnt the-four-language-skill from very beginning of semester, listening, reading, speaking and writing, or called the four main language skills. Many discussions of language skills by linguists such as Brown, Harmer, Dianne and Wall in previous research such as cited in Kusri et al, 2021 and many others. Brown (2000) identified that those four main skills are the fundamental ones for studying language. Then Harmer classified the four language skills into receptive and productive skill. Some sub-language skills like vocabulary and grammar have the same fundamental function in learning language. Dianne added two supported skills, they are grammar and vocabulary (Wall, 2011). Other called these skills as supported skills or sub-language skills.

In the real world, learners apply both four main and sub skills of languages together, either in writing or speaking task. In writing they apply it both in formal and informal writing letters, writing paragraph of certain discourse, social and business proposal, formal and informal documents and thesis writing as well. That goes without saying that writing skill is quite critical and urgent for under graduate students for their scientific paper or thesis, and writing a thesis is a crucial aspect of obtaining their degree. While various studies contribute to completing the thesis, incorporating theoretical foundations from literature studies enhances the accuracy of the research. However, the quality of a thesis heavily relies on a well-structured and error-free writing. Hence, writing skills play a significant role for students.

Mastering writing skills is essential not only for thesis writing but also for composing papers, journals, reports, activity proposals, research papers, and other academic tasks. Additionally, it helps students organize their thoughts coherently and articulately. Moreover, after graduating, these writing skills are valuable for tasks like composing emails, drafting letters, writing reports, and creating resumes, as most professions demand some form of writing. Throughout the learning

process, students commonly encounter problems and make errors while writing. These errors often stem from their familiarity with their first language and may include issues with grammar or sentence structure, which are noticeable to readers. Heaton (1988:135) states, "The writing skills are complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgemental elements". Kate Kiefer (1983: preface) also says, "Writing can be a most frustrating task for everyone, particularly when circumstances interfere with it". Based on this idea, it can be inferred that writing is difficult because it integrates visual, motor, and conceptual abilities.

Throughout the learning process, students commonly encounter problems and make errors while writing. These errors often stem from their familiarity with their first language and may include issues with grammar or sentence structure, which are noticeable to readers. Regarding syntax, Noam Chomsky (2002:1) (as cited in Yusuf and Jumriana, 2017) defines it as the study of the principles and processes governing sentence construction in specific languages. Syntax is a branch of linguistics that examines the rules and patterned relations governing word and phrase combinations to form sentences.

Prior research on syntactical error analysis, such as the study by Sinaga and Sihombing (2014), focused on investigating graduate students' syntactical errors in writing their theses. Their findings showed that omission was the most dominant type of syntactical error, followed by misformation, addition, and misordering. Similar research on syntactical error analysis by Dinamika,SG (2019) special on report text investigation, investigation on grammatical errors made English Department of UGM on writing text assignment by Hasan, I (2018).

Given the significance of writing in academic settings, especially for theses, the writer intends to analyze the abstracts of undergraduate students from Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing (STIBA) - IEC Bekasi, covering the period from 2017 to 2019. This research aims to assist undergraduate students in improving their abstract writing skills for their theses.

To investigate the types of syntactical errors made by students of STIBA IEC Bekasi in



abstracts of their theses, determine the dominant type of errors, and identify the factors influencing the occurrence of syntactical errors in abstract theses.

Several definitions of writing have been presented by experts. White (1986:10) (as cited in Khasanah, 2015) characterizes writing as the process of expressing ideas, information, knowledge, or experiences, with the aim of acquiring knowledge, sharing information, and facilitating learning. Nunan (2003: 88) defines writing as the mental work of generating ideas, contemplating how to articulate them, and organizing them into coherent statements and paragraphs for the reader's understanding. Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that writing involves the transfer of ideas into written form.

Writing is a critical and fundamental skill in English teaching and learning. It encompasses various elements of language, such as vocabulary, grammar, critical thinking, planning, editing, and revising. Many students encounter difficulties in organizing their thoughts and transforming them into written content. Bauer (2007) emphasizes that good English writing requires consideration of different aspects of language, including morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Learners must comprehend these language components to master writing skills effectively.

Teaching writing skills can be complex and challenging, as pointed out by Heaton (1990: 135). To excel in writing, students need specific abilities: language use, which involves writing correct and appropriate sentences; mechanical skills, encompassing conventions like punctuation and spelling; content treatment, which entails creative thinking and excluding irrelevant information; stylistic skills, involving sentence and paragraph manipulation and effective language use; and judgment skills, enabling students to write in an appropriate manner for a specific purpose and audience, along with the ability to select, organize, and arrange relevant information.

Strong writing skills are essential for success in various endeavors, such as writing reports, proposals, or assignments. To develop writing proficiency, students must focus on key language components, namely structure, vocabulary, content, organization, and mechanics. These

elements are crucial in the learning process of English writing skills.

Error Analysis, a field within Applied Linguistics, demonstrates that learner errors do not solely result from their native language influence but also reflect some universal language learning strategies. It involves the study of error types and their underlying causes. Emphasizing the importance of learners' errors in second language acquisition, it is essential to note that errors in the target language cannot be solely attributed to interference from the learners' mother tongue (Brown, 1980:166). James (2013) classifies grammar errors into five main groups: morphology errors, syntax errors, discourse errors, pragmatic errors, and receptive errors. In this study, the writer focuses on syntactical errors, utilizing James (2013) as a reference for surface syntactical errors analysis.

Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982: 150) propose a surface strategy taxonomy that highlights how surface structures are altered by learners, leading to four error categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Additionally, James (1998) expands on this taxonomy, proposing a viable classification system with four of the original categories, plus a fifth category called "blends." Hence, the categories in the surface strategy taxonomy, according to James (1998), are omission, addition, misformation, misordering, and blends.

#### **Omission**

An omission refers to a type of error where an essential item that should be present in a well-formed sentence is missing (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, 1982:154). In simpler terms, omissions occur when necessary elements are left out in a sentence. Language learners tend to omit grammatical morphemes more frequently than content words. For instance:

"She sing a traditional song." (Instead of "sings")

"He always preparing the meal." (Instead of "is preparing")

#### **Addition**

An addition is an error type distinguished by the inclusion of an item that should not be present in a well-formed utterance (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, 1982: 156). In contrast to omission, an addition occurs when unnecessary elements are introduced into a sentence. For example:

“She sings a traditional songs.”

“He visits to Indonesia.”

### **Misformation**

Mis-formation, which is also referred to as a misformation error, occurs when a sentence contains an incorrect form of a morpheme or structure (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982:158). In simpler terms, it means using linguistic elements in the target language incorrectly or in a way that deviates from the standard rules. For example:

"The broken window should be fix." (Instead of "fixed")

"She do not cook the meal." (Instead of "does not")

### **Misordering**

Misordering refers to a category of errors where a morpheme or group of morphemes is placed incorrectly within an utterance (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, 1982: 162). This type of error occurs when elements within a sentence are arranged in an incorrect order. For example:

Original Sentence: "I saw yesterday the movie."

Corrected Sentence: "Yesterday, I saw the movie."

Original Sentence: "On the table the book is."

Corrected Sentence: "The book is on the table."

### **Blend**

As per James (1998: 111), blend errors are also known as contamination, cross-association, or hybridization errors. They involve the combination or mixing of two alternative grammatical forms, resulting in an ungrammatical blend where the component parts become indistinguishable from one another. For example:

According to my opinion writing is the most difficult skill in learning language. (Blending ‘according to me’ and ‘In my opinion’)

In thesis abstract writing, students commonly make four types of errors: inter-lingual, intra-lingual, communication-strategy, and induced errors. However, this research focuses only on inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors.

According to Richards (1974: 6), inter-lingual errors occur due to the influence of the learners' mother tongue, and they are common irrespective of the learners' language background. Thus, these errors result from the interference of the learners' native language in the target language they are learning.

Inter-lingual errors result from interference from the learners' mother tongue, regardless of their language background. Learners may struggle with target language forms that differ significantly from their native language, leading to specific types of errors (James, 1998). For example:

Original English Sentence: "She drinks the medicine three times a day."

Inter-lingual Error: "She drink medicine three times a day."

Original English Sentence: "I am eating my lunch."

Inter-lingual Error: "I am eat my lunch."

On the other hand, intra-lingual errors, as mentioned by Richard (1974: 6), occur when learners produce items that do not stem from their mother tongue's structure but rather from generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language.

According to James (1998), learners who lack knowledge of a particular target language form at any level and in any class can respond in two ways: they can either engage in learning strategies to acquire the necessary knowledge or resort to communication strategies to compensate for the gap in their language proficiency. For example:

He is a good looking, smart, and comes from a high class family.

He and his father is going to watch the football match.

### **METHOD**

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyse syntactical errors in writing abstract theses among undergraduate students. The

data is categorized using the surface strategy taxonomy to examine how surface structures are altered. This involves identifying whether necessary elements were omitted, unnecessary elements were added, elements were mis-formed or mis-ordered, or if there were instances of blending components together.

To conduct this research, the writer selects several theses from undergraduate students at Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing (STIBA) - IEC Bekasi and proceeds to read and analyse their abstracts. Among the 244 English abstract theses available at STIBA - IEC Bekasi, a sample of 15 theses is used for analysis.

Data collection was conducted using the documentary technique, where the source of data was the writing form from undergraduate students' thesis abstracts. The collected data was analysed using the error analysis method proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982: 150-163). The writer followed these steps for the analysis:

The thesis abstracts of undergraduate students were examined to identify errors in the categories

of omission, addition, mis-formed, mis-ordered, and blends.

The classified errors were further analysed using a comparative taxonomy, and the frequency of each error type was calculated.

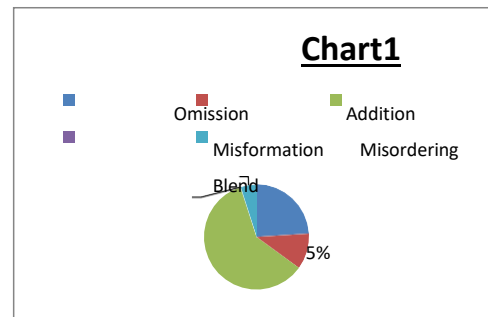
The errors found were then categorized based on the causes, distinguishing between inter-lingual errors (influenced by the learners' mother tongue) and intra-lingual errors (resulting from generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research involved the analysis of 15 data points concerning the research problem. It primarily examines syntactical errors in relation to the theories proposed by Dulay and Burt (1982) and James (1998). According to these theories, syntactical errors fall into categories such as omission, addition, misformation, misordering, and blends. The distribution of these errors is presented in Table 1.

**Table1. Type of errors made by students**

Linguistic Level	Kind of Errors	Quantity of Errors	Percentage
Syntactical Error	Omission	13	24
	Addition	6	11
	Misformation	33	60



	Misordering	0	0
	Blends	3	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

During the analysis process, five types of errors were identified. The most prevalent error among students was misformation errors, accounting for 33 occurrences (60%). Following this, omission errors were found in 13 instances (24%), while addition errors were present in 6 cases (11%). Blends were observed in 3 occurrences (5%). Interestingly, misordering errors were not detected

in the abstract theses of students from the English Language and Literature Department at Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing (STIBA) IEC - Bekasi.

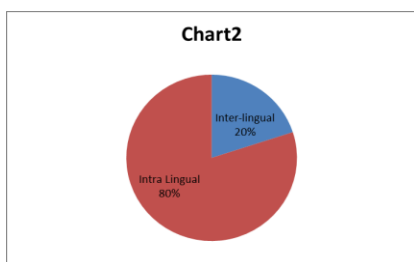
Various aspects led to the occurrence of errors. In his research, James (1998) explored two potential factors contributing to errors, namely, inter-lingual and intra-lingual interferences. The table below (Table 2) presents the identified causes

of error in the English abstract theses of the students.

**Table2. Research Finding Cause of Errors**

No.	Cause of Errors	Quantity of Errors	Percentage
1	Inter-lingual	11	20
2	Intra-lingual	44	80
	Total	55	100

According to the data presented in the table, the primary factor affecting students' errors is intra-lingual, accounting for 44 instances (80%). Meanwhile, inter-lingual interference contributes to 11 instances (20%).



**Types of Syntactical Errors**

**Omission**

Omission errors happen when a required item is missing in a correctly formed sentence of the target language. For instance, this could involve leaving out articles like "a," "an," or "the," which help identify nouns in English. Prepositions may also be omitted, leading to errors. Additionally, students might make mistakes in present or past progressive tense when the auxiliary verb is missing.

The examples provided illustrate the omission errors made by the students:

**Table 3. Omission errors**

No	Phrase/ Sentence of Errors	Construction
1.	This is descriptive qualitativestudy	This is <i>a</i> descriptivequalitative study
2	Based on the result the students enjoy and give a good impact for the students in studying English.	Based on the result, the students enjoy <i>studying</i> and <i>it</i> gives a good impact for the students in studying English.
3	Then, some simple dialogue and activities can be used in Audio Lingual Method especially Dialogue Memorization and RepetitionDrill to teach speaking to employees in hotel.	Then, some simple dialoguesand activities can be used in Audio Lingual Method especially Dialogue Memorization and RepetitionDrill to teach speaking to <i>the</i> employees in hotel.
4	The sample of this research is students grade three	The sample of this research isstudents of grade three

**Addition**

The addition error is when something is included in a sentence that should not be there in proper grammar. It is the opposite of omission error, where something necessary is left out. For example, students may make errors in past tense

when they use the wrong auxiliary verb (e.g., "was" or "were") in a sentence. They may also incorrectly add the suffix "-s/-es" to singular nouns. Here are some examples of addition errors made by students:

**Table 4. Addition Errors**

No	Phrase/ Sentence of Errors	Construction
1.	It <i>is</i> discovered that Old English and Present-day English have their own symbols.	It discovered that Old English and Present-day English have their own symbols.
2.	As we know in Hotel the employees must speak English, Because many tourists visit <i>to</i> Indonesia and stay in hotel.	As we know, in Hotel the employees must speak English because many tourists visit <i>to</i> Indonesia and stay in hotel.
3..	It tells the life of a sissy and veiled woman who is involved in a conversation.....	It tells the life of a sissy and veiled woman who involved in a conversation.....

### Misformation

Misformation refers to the incorrect use of morphemes or sentence structures. Based on the research, it is the most frequent error found in abstract theses written by undergraduate students.

The students commonly make errors in subject-verb agreement, the misuse of prepositions, and word forms, as illustrated in the following examples:

**Table 5. Misformation errors**

No	Phrase/ Sentence of Errors	Construction
1.	To analyze the meaning <i>on</i> the lyrics	To analyze the meaning <i>of</i> the lyrics
2.	Grade three <i>are</i> divided into two classes	Grade three <i>is</i> divided into two classes
3.	Repetition drill and role play techniques <i>should apply</i> in teaching vocabulary <i>to</i> third grade students.	Repetition drill and role play techniques <i>should be applied</i> in teaching vocabulary <i>to the</i> third-grade students.
4.	It also reminds <i>us to being trust and loyalty among friendship.</i>	It also reminds us <i>to trust and to be loyal among friends.</i>

### Misordering

Misordering errors occur when a morpheme or group of morphemes is placed incorrectly in a sentence. In this research, the writer did not identify any misordering errors made by the students.

Blends happen when two or more morphemes with the same function are used together in a sentence. For instance, the phrase "according to Erica's opinion" is a blend, created by combining two alternative grammatical forms, resulting in an ungrammatical construction (James, 1998).

### Blends

**Table 6. Blends**

No	Phrase/ Sentence of Errors	Construction
1.	It <i>is proves</i> that teaching by using visual media...	It <i>proves</i> that teaching by using visual media...

### Causes of Syntactical Error

#### Inter-lingual Errors

The following examples illustrate errors made by students due to inter-lingual transfer:

**Table 7. Inter-lingual Errors**

No	Phrase/ Sentence of Errors	Construction
1.	The sample of this research is students grade three	The sample of this research is students <i>of</i> grade three

2.	Picture is useful media in teaching	Picture is <i>a</i> useful media in teaching
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In sentence number 1 is categorized as an omission type of syntactical error. The student employed an Indonesian language pattern where the use of a preposition is not required. The correct sentence should be: "The sample of this research is students of grade three."

In sentence number 2, an omission type of syntactical error is present. The student used an

Indonesian language pattern where the use of an article is not necessary. The recommended correct sentence is: "A picture is a useful media in teaching."

**Intra-lingual Errors**

The following examples are the errors caused by intra-lingual transfer made by the students:

**Table 8. Intra-lingual**

No	Phrase/ Sentence of Errors	Construction
1.	Grade three are divided intotwo classes	Grade three is divided into two classes
2.	Repetition drill and role playtechniques should apply in teaching vocabulary to third grade students	Repetition drill and role play techniques should be applied in teaching vocabulary to the third grade students

Sentence number one, the subject is in singular form. Therefore, to maintain subject-verb agreement, the verb should also be in singular form. The incorrect sentence reads: "Grade three are divided into two classes." The learners' mistake results from misanalysing the target language. The writer assumes that the students misinterpreted the phrase "grade three" as a plural form because of the word "three." The suggested correction is: "Grade three is divided into two classes."

Sentence number two is in the passive voice with a modal. The general pattern is S + modal + be + past participle. The researcher assumes that the students made an undergeneralization by omitting the auxiliary and failing to change the verb into the past participle form. The suggested correction is: "Repetition drill and role play techniques should be applied in teaching vocabulary to the third-grade students."

**CONCLUSION**

Students in the English Language and Literature Department of Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing (STIBA) IEC - Bekasi make four types of errors in their abstract theses. Misformation errors constitute 60% (33 cases), omission errors account for 24% (13 cases), addition errors make up 11% (6 cases), and blends are found in 5% (3 cases). Notably, misordering errors are not present in their work.

The most prevalent error type in students' abstract theses is misformation, with 60% (33 cases) of occurrences. Generally, errors related to

subject-verb agreement are frequent in their writing.

The primary factor influencing students' syntactical errors is intra-lingual interference, accounting for 80% (44 cases), followed by inter-lingual interference at 20% (11 cases).

Students should take learning linguistic rules seriously and practice analysing syntactical errors more often.

Teachers should adopt engaging teaching methods to stimulate students' interest in learning, as many students give up easily when faced with difficulties.

Designing syntactical error analysis as a syllabus and lesson plan can help identify students' needs.

Institutions should establish a credible unit with experts in the field to assist students in the process of writing abstracts.

The research focuses on discussing one syntactical error in each category, providing a reference for future studies with similar subjects.

In general, It can be concluded that research dealing with error analysis is always still relevant with the needs of learners, teachers or lecturers, and institutions. By doing this research students can ovoid learning language from mistakes, lecturers can anticipate the errors, and Institution can design the syllabus that can help the students learning language much more better.



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