

Research Article

**Syntactic Errors Made by English Department Students in Writing
Undergraduate Thesis Abstract**

Luh Febilla Saswira Pradnyaswari¹, I Nyoman Udayana², Novita Mulyana³

¹English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Udayana University

²English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Udayana University, ³English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Udayana University

febillaswira@gmail.com, nyoman_uyayana@unud.ac.id

Informasi Artikel	ABSTRACT
<p>Submit: 9 – 9 – 2022 Diterima: 20 – 10 – 2022 Dipublikasikan: 31 – 10 – 2022</p>	<p>This study aims at identifying the types of syntactic errors committed in the undergraduate thesis abstracts as well as the factors contributing to the errors. This study applied a descriptive-qualitative approach with observation, documentation method and note-taking technique. The data source was 30 abstracts written by English Department students of Udayana University who graduated in the 2021 period. In identifying the type of errors, this study employed the surface strategy taxonomy theory proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen. Moreover, in identifying the factor of errors, this study applies Brown's theory, supported by a theory about the intralingual error by Richards. The finding shows that 467 errors are found in the students' abstracts. Errors in all syntactic categories were found. However, six out of eight types of error based on surface strategy taxonomy were found. In terms of factor, all factors of error contributing to the errors. According to the discussion, it can be concluded that the major issue in writing abstracts is the student's inability to avoid mother tongue interference as an ESL learner. As a result, the point from the source language had been ambiguously transferred into the target language.</p> <p>Keywords: Syntax, Error Analysis, Syntactic Error, English Department, Abstract</p>
<p>Penerbit Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia IKIP Budi Utomo, Malang, Indonesia</p>	<p>ABSTRAK Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis eror sintaksis yang ditemukan dalam abstrak serta faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan eror-eror tersebut. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif-kualitatif dengan metode observasi, dokumentasi, dan teknik mencatat. Sumber data dari penelitian ini yaitu 30 abstrak yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa jurusan Sastra Inggris, Universitas Udayana yang lulus pada periode 2021. Dalam mengidentifikasi jenis eror, penelitian ini menggunakan teori surface strategy taxonomy yang dikemukakan oleh Dulay, Burt, dan Krashen. Selain itu, dalam mengidentifikasi faktor eror, penelitian ini menggunakan teori Brown yang didukung oleh teori tentang eror intralingual oleh Richards. Temuan menunjukkan 479 eror ditemukan pada abstrak siswa. Semua eror kategori sintaksis ditemukan. Namun,</p>

hanya enam dari delapan tipe eror berdasarkan surface strategy taxonomy yang ditemukan. Dalam hal faktor eror, semua faktor teridentifikasi menjadi penyebab terjadinya eror. Berdasarkan hasil diskusi, dapat disimpulkan bahwa masalah utama dalam menulis abstrak adalah ketidakmampuan mahasiswa untuk menghindari gangguan bahasa pertama sebagai pelajar bahasa asing. Akibatnya, poin dari bahasa sumber telah dialihkan secara ambigu ke dalam bahasa target.

Kata kunci: Sintaksis, Analisis Eror, Sastra Inggris, Abstrak

INTRODUCTION

In learning English, one language skill that required to master is writing. In writing, producing written text as products is required rather than only comprehending the processes. Writing activity is not an easy task since it is not only about writing any text but also producing language systematically as the requirement to make the content or messages are well-delivered to the readers. In addition, it is recognized that ideal writing skill is required in constructing the base in terms of mastering the structure, language elements, and ideas to produce a clear discourse or output. The lack of skill of the writer may cause serious difficulties for the readers to comprehend the writing. As a consequence, the message and context cannot be well-delivered.

English Department students In Indonesia should write their theses in English as a fulfilment to obtain Bachelor Degree. It is a great challenge for them to write their final assessments in English. Generally, they speak Indonesian as their first language but they are required to write English scientific writing on a certain topic. In response, they have to accomplish their linguistic skills in order to produce proper and grammatically correct writings.

An abstract is defined as a summary of a research paper that contains a piece of brief information that helps the readers to recognize the key points of the whole work. In writing an undergraduate thesis or research paper, the abstract is one of the most significant elements to complete the research. An abstract helps the readers to recognize the key points of the whole work. In other words, it is beneficial for the readers who may be interested in a relevant topic to decide whether it is worth to be read or not.

The difficulty in finalizing the final project has been a common issue for the student, particularly for English Department students who must write it in English. As second language learners, elements that are similar to the learners' native language will be simple for them. On the other hand, different elements will be difficult. It makes them face several revisions in order to conduct a study with proper writing. Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of errors made by the English Department students of Udayana University in writing abstracts of their published theses, as well as the factors contributing to the errors.

In conducting this study, the theory about Surface Strategy Taxonomy was applied. It was proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) and it was used to identify the types of error in four major types: (1) omission, (2) addition, (3) misformation, and (4) misordering. In examining the sources of error, this study applies Brown's theory (1980). He divided the sources of errors into two categories: (1) interlingual errors and (2) intralingual errors, and another theory by Richards (1971) who classified intralingual error into: (1) overgeneralization, (2) ignorance of rule restriction, (3) incomplete application of the rule, and (4) false concept hypothesized. Moreover, this study applies the syntactic categories based on the theory by Elly van Gelderen who classified the syntactic categories into lexical

categories (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions), grammatical categories (determiners, auxiliaries, coordinators, complementizers), and pronouns (2010).

Numerous researchers have been conducting studies related to error analysis and writing. The first reviewed study is entitled *An Analysis of Morphological and Syntactical Errors on the English Writing of Junior High School Indonesian Students* written by Hendri Gayo and Pratomo Widodo (Gayo & Widodo, 2018). This study aims to examine the morphological and syntactical errors that occur in students' English writing and the factors. Another reviewed international article is entitled *Linguistic Error Analysis on Students' Thesis Proposals* written by Mary Ann-Malimas Pescante and Sonrisa C. Samson (Ann Pescante-Malimas & Samson, 2017). This study aims to investigate the common linguistics errors encountered by Linguistics, Literature, and Advertising Arts majors in writing their Thesis Proposals in the first semester of 2016-2017. Furthermore, the next reviewed undergraduate thesis is entitled *Students' Syntactical Errors in Writing Descriptive Text at MTsN 8 Muaro Jambi* conducted by Yulinar (Yulinar, 2020). This study aims to discover the types and frequency of syntactical errors made by students of MTsN 8 Muaro Jambi. The fourth reviewed undergraduate thesis is entitled *Analysis of Students Grammatical Errors in Writing* written by Adri Jernih Miko (Miko, 2018). This study aims to identify the grammatical errors committed by second-semester students of the English Department, Ar-Rainy State Islamic University. Lastly is an undergraduate thesis entitled *An Analysis of The Student's Syntax Difficulties in Identify an Adjective on The Sentence at The Fifth Semester of Iain Metro* conducted by Erna Sari (Sari, 2020). This study aims at identifying the types, the reasons, and the solutions to students' difficulties in identifying adjectives by using the descriptive qualitative method.

RESEARCH METHOD

The data were taken from 30 abstract of English Department students' published undergraduate theses. These students had been graduated in the 2021 period. The data collection method applied were the observation method, documentation method and note-taking technique by conducting several steps: proofreading the abstracts, recognizing errors by analyzing the level of the word, the class and function of words in a sentence, how a phrase is structured in a sentence, and how a sentence is structured into a correct syntactic form. The classifications of syntactic category were obtained from a theory by Elly van Gelderen (Gelderen, 2010). In analyzing the data, this study applied 3 theories: the surface strategy taxonomy theory by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (Dulay et al., 1982); the source of error theory by Brown (Brown, 2007); and the intralingual error theory by Richards (Richards, 1973). In presenting the result of the data analysis, this study applied the informal method.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This part reveals two aspects that contribute in answering the problems of the study namely the types of syntactic errors and the factors contributing to the errors. In terms of type, the surface strategy taxonomy was applied. It works on mechanisms in which the surface forms are modified in erroneous utterances. According to the data analysis, the English Department students made various kinds of syntactic errors. The following table shows the findings based on the syntactic categories. The table shows that error in determines is the most error found in the abstracts. Meanwhile, the least error found is the error in adjectives.

Table 1. Finding of the Errors in Syntactic Categories

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Syntactic Category		Quantity	Percentage
Lexical Category	Noun	117	23,78%
	Verb	70	14,23%
	Adjective	1	0,2%
	Adverb	5	1,02%
	Preposition	40	8,13%
Grammatical Category	Determiner	169	34,35%
	Auxiliary	60	12,2%
	Coordinator	5	1,02%
	Complementizer	11	2,24%
Pronoun		14	2,85%
	Total	492	100%

The findings of errors based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy are presented in Table 2 below. Based on the data analysis, six out of eight types of errors were found in the abstracts. It is shown that Omission error is the most dominant type found. Meanwhile, there was no regularization error found, neither under addition nor misformation type. Thus, each error category will be discussed to identify the errors that occur in the abstracts.

Table 2. Finding of the Types of Error

Types of Errors		Quantity	Percentage
Omission		210	44,21%
Addition	Double Marking	9	1.89%
	Regularization	-	-
	Simple Addition	39	8,21%
Misformation	Regularization Error	-	-
	Archi Form	2	0,42%
	Alternating Form	198	41,68%
Misordering		17	3,58%
	Total	475	100%

The Analysis of the Types of Error

In analyzing the types of error, this study applied a theory by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). They suggest that there are four principal ways of modifying target language. They are omission (omitting necessary items), addition (adding unnecessary items), misformation (misformatting items), and misordering (misordering items). This group of error types is called as the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The analysis of the types of error can be exemplified as follows.

The Analysis of Omission Error

Data 1:

- (X) The result shows that there were five **print** media in the movie consist of id cards, posters, photos, and game cards.
- (✓) The result shows that there were five **printed** media in the movie consisting of id cards, posters, photos, and game cards. (Data 19-12)

Omission errors are defined as the absence of a certain item that originally must appear in a well-formed utterance. A finding of omission can be exemplified in data 1. In forming a phrase, a proper pattern must be applied. This finding is an error that occurred because of the absence of the regular past tense *-ed* of the past participle *printed* contained in the noun phrase *print media*. This phrase is in the past participle + noun pattern. The past participle

printed is in charge of describing the nature of the noun *media* in the phrase *printed media*. That is, the past participle *printed* here is used to function an adjective.

The Analysis of Addition Error

An addition error is the presence of an item that originally must not appear in a well-formed utterance. As the opposite of omission, addition occurs when an unnecessary item or more is added to the utterance. In the book *Language Two* (Dulay et al., 1982), three types of addition errors are double marking, regularization error, and simple addition. However, none of regularization error was found in the students' abstracts.

a. Double Marking

Data 2:

- (X) 33 utterances **are found** as the results of the study which indicates the use of directive illocutionary acts **found** in the movie.
- (✓) 33 utterances **are found** as the results of the study which indicates the use of directive illocutionary acts in the movie. (Data 14-21)

Addition errors are more precisely defined as the failure to remove certain items which are required in some linguistic construction, but not in others. Based on the data analysis, there are a number of double markings of the verb found in the students' writings. A finding of double marking can be exemplified in data 2. In data 2, the error is noticed by the existence of the item *found* that appears twice in a sentence. Looking at the context of the sentence, the word *found* that appears before the prepositional phrase *in the movie* is unnecessary.

b. Simple Addition

Data 3:

- (X) **In** every genre of film always has its audience.
- (✓) Every genre of film always has its audience. (Data 26-5)

Practically, any addition error that is categorized neither as double marking nor regularization, is called a simple addition. A finding of simple addition can be exemplified in data 3. Prepositions are function words that indicate how a noun or noun phrase relates to the rest of the sentence. The preposition exemplified in (3-12) is incorrect. The preposition *in* is unnecessarily placed in the sentence since it has no relation to the following utterance.

The Analysis of Misformation Error

Data 4:

- (X) The internal conflicts found in this movie and faced by Zach Zobiech as the main character are including Zach's **sad** and confusion, Zach's regret and sorry and Zach's jealousy.
- (✓) The internal conflicts found in this movie and faced by Zach Zobiech as the main character are including Zach's **sadness** and confusion, Zach's regret and sorry, and Zach's jealousy. (Data 17-30)

A misformation or misselection error is defined as the use of the incorrect form of the morpheme or structure. A finding of misselection can be exemplified in data 4. In data 4, the word *sad* does not seem to fit the context of the sentence. There is a possessive noun mark -'s. It means the adjective word *sad* should be affixed to form the noun *sadness*.

The Analysis of Misordering Error

Data 5:

- (X) This study **entitled is** Translation of Simile in the Little Women Novel.
 (✓) This study **is entitled** Translation of Simile in the Little Women Novel. (Data 29-1)

Misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect pattern or settlement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. The disorder error above is an error in the category of the verb. The sentence above shows a misordering error of the auxiliary verb *is* and the past participle *entitled*. In English, the common pattern is subject + to be + verb. However, the erroneous sentence above flouts the proper pattern. Therefore, the correct order is *is entitled*.

The Analysis of the Factor of Error

In language learning, several factors might impact the learner's errors. According to Brown (1980), the following are the classifications of sources of error frequently committed by ESL learners. Table 3 presents the factors of errors and their quantities. It is shown that interlingual transfer is the major source of students' writing errors. Meanwhile, the least frequent error source is ignorance of rule restriction. Furthermore, the causes of errors and their findings are described as follows.

Table 3. Finding of the Factors of Error

Factors of Errors		Quantity	Percentage
Interlingual Transfer		186	39,91
	Over-Generalization	40	8,58
Intralingual Transfer	Ignorance of Rule Restriction	18	3,86
	Incomplete Application of the Rules	116	24,89
	False Concept Hypothesized	106	22,75
	Total	466	100%

The Analysis of Interlingual Error

Data 6:

- (X) The data were collected using the observation method through interviewing the seller in **the Ubud** area by questionnaire, recording, and note-taking technique.
 (✓) The data were collected using the observation method through interviewing the seller in **Ubud** area by questionnaire, recording, and note-taking technique. (Data 1-4)

Interlingual errors are frequent in second language learning, regardless of the learner's language background. The findings confirm that in learning a foreign language, the learners were influenced by their mother tongue. Most findings in interlingual errors are identified by comparing the students' writings and their first language construction. It is assumed that the students translate their writing literally or word-to-word without paying attention to the whole context or how the words are supposed to be used or constructed in a phrase or sentence. A finding of the interlingual error can be exemplified in data 6. The sentence in data 6 reflects an error in using the definite article *the* in a noun. Generally, the definite article *the* is not applicable before proper nouns. In this case, *Ubud* is a town located on Bali Island. It means that the definite article *the* is unnecessarily added to the proper noun *Ubud*.

The Analysis of Intralingual Error

Intralingual error is known as the opposite of interlingual errors. Intralingual errors are errors within the target language. This error occurs because of the complicated rules of the target language itself. According to Richards (Richards, 1973), intralingual errors reflect the general characteristics of learning rules, such as faulty generalization, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply. Thus, Richard offered four types of intralingual errors as follows.

a. Over-Generalization

Data 7:

- (X) The findings of this study **shows** that there were eight types of directive illocutionary acts found, they are; asking, advising, commanding, demanding, forbidding, ordering, recommending, and requesting action.
- (✓) The findings of this study **show** that there were eight types of directive illocutionary acts found, they are; asking, advising, commanding, demanding, forbidding, ordering, recommending, and requesting action. (Data 14-22)

Generally, overgeneralization occurs when a learner generates an unusual structure of a target language based on his experience of other language structures. A finding of the overgeneralization can be exemplified in data 7. Most English verbs have five forms: the base form, the third-person singular present, the simple past, the present participle, and the past participle. In English, a verb that ends in *-s* is applied when it has a third-person singular subject and is present tense. Meanwhile, in the erroneous sentence above, the subject is in a plural form because it is indicated by the plural marker *-s* in the third-person singular subject *finding*.

b. Ignorance of Rule Restriction

Data 8:

- (X) On the other hand, types of structure namely open and closed simile **that are** found in the novel of little women.
- (✓) On the other hand, types of structure namely open and closed simile **are** found in the Little Women novel. (Data 29-23)

Ignorance of rule restriction means when a particular rule is extended to a context where target language use does not apply. The following error is ignoring the complementizer's rules. A finding of this error can be exemplified in data 8. The erroneous sentence in data 8 is ignoring the use of subordinating conjunction. The complementizer *that* is unnecessarily added to the sentence. This addition causes ambiguity in the sentence. Therefore, eliminating the complementizer *that* is necessary to form a well-constructed sentence.

c. Incomplete Application of The Rules

Data 9:

- (X) The data was collected by downloading and reading the movie script, then watching movie several times in order to note ^ every conversation uttered by the characters ...
- (✓) The data was collected by downloading and reading the movie script, then watching the movie several times in order to note **down** every conversation uttered by the characters ...(Data 7-11)

This factor of error involves a failure to learn the more complex types of structure because the learner finds he can achieve effective communication by using relatively simple rules. A finding of incomplete application can be exemplified in data 9. A phrasal verb is a type of compound verb made up of a verb and a prepositional adverb. The sentence in data 9 is omitting the adverbial particle *down* in forming a phrasal verb *note down*. It is preferable to complete the verb by adding the word *down*.

d. False Concept Hypothesized

Data 10:

- (X) In analyzing the data, descriptive qualitative method is applied using conflict theory by Kenney (1966) to identify the conflict and practical psychology by Bernhard (1953) to analyze the **psychological** of the main characters.
- (✓) In analyzing the data, the descriptive qualitative method is applied using conflict theory by Kenney (1966) to identify the conflict and practical psychology by Bernhard (1953) to analyze the **psychology** of the main characters. (Data 8-9)

False concept hypothesized is a type of developmental error that is defined as errors derived from a faulty understanding of target language distinctions. An example of the false concept can be exemplified in data 10. The sentence above is an error of the word *psychological*. This word is incorrect since it is in a form of an adjective with the *-al* affixation. From the context, it can be concluded that the suitable form is the noun *psychology*.

CONCLUSION

From the finding and discussion, it can be concluded that there are syntactic errors contained in the students' undergraduate thesis abstract. The dominant error found based on the surface strategy taxonomy is omission with a total of 210 data found (44,21%). Most of the omission errors are dominated by the omission of determiners. Misformation errors are following behind with a total of 200 data of errors (42%). Then, addition errors are performed by the students with a quantity of 48 data (10.1%). The least type of error found is misordering with the number of 17 data (3.58%). Moreover, all syntactic category errors are found in the students' writings, with error in determiners as the dominant error (169 or 34,35%) and error in adjectives as the least error found (1 or 0,2%).

In terms of causes of errors, all factors of errors caused the erroneous writing in the abstracts. The interlingual error is the most dominant factor of errors with a number of 186 errors (39,91%), while the least factor of errors found is ignorance of rules restrictions (18 data). From the findings and discussions, it can be assumed that the main problem faced in writing abstracts is the student's inability to ignore the mother tongue interference as ESL learners. As a response, the source language message has been ambiguously transferred to the target language.

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