

# Error patterns in student translations: A study of grammatical issues in higher education

Muhammad Galuh

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, [mgalluh@gmail.com](mailto:mgalluh@gmail.com)

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT		
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Translation, errors, grammatical issues, higher education</p>	<p><i>The importance of learning English has grown significantly in response to its role as a global means of communication. Mastery of English, particularly its grammatical aspects, is essential for effective communication and is often developed through formal education, such as university programs. This study examines the grammatical competence of undergraduate English Literature students during the 2022/2023 academic year, as reflected in their translation texts. The study analysed 11 translation texts selected from the population using Corder's superficial basis error classification framework, encompassing four types of errors: omission, addition, selection, and ordering. The classified data were further analysed using general English grammar theories. The findings reveal significant grammatical errors in the students' translations: 49 errors of omission (48%), 7 errors of addition (7%), 40 errors of selection (30%), and 5 errors of ordering (5%). These results highlight specific areas of grammatical difficulty faced by students, offering insights into the need for targeted instructional strategies to improve their grammatical proficiency. This research underscores the importance of error analysis in enhancing the quality of English language education in higher learning institutions.</i></p>		
Article History:	Submission 01 August 2022	Accepted 01 September 2022	Published 30 October 2022

## 1. Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in communication, serving as a complex system that enables individuals to express their thoughts and convey meaning. It allows people to communicate effectively and ensures that others clearly understand their messages. Human interaction would be impossible without language, as it serves an interpersonal function that facilitates relationships between individuals.

In a multilingual and globalized world, communication often requires more than one language, especially in broader, diverse contexts. Typically, people first acquire a language naturally, known as their mother tongue. Subsequently, they learn additional languages through formal teaching and learning processes, often referred to as foreign languages. For

instance, English is the mother tongue or national language in countries such as Britain, the United States, and those in the Commonwealth. However, in other nations like Indonesia, English is used as a foreign language. In Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia serves as the national and primary language, while English is commonly regarded as a foreign language and, for some individuals, a second language.

By learning more than one language, it requires understanding and knowledge towards those languages, especially for the second language. It includes all important elements of language such as sounds, symbols, words, structures, and so on. It also includes two ways of delivering, such as spoken and written.

Grammar is very important and more difficult when it is used in writing of foreign language (Bamdev et al., 2023; Zhang & Sun, 2022), especially translation text that delivers the meaning and information from the source language to the target language (Calcagni et al., 2023). It is caused by the differences in structure of source and target language. Many mistakes and errors occur in writing with more than one language. The mistakes and errors occur in the use of one or more linguistic items of the target language (such as word, grammatical item, speech act, etc.) (Samudro & Setyorini, 2021) as at the example of grammatical error below:

Source Language (SL):

*"Jadi, peneliti akan menganalisa refleksi keadilan pada Kirila sebagai tokoh utama dalam cerita pendek 'Darkness'."*

Target Language (TL):

*"So, the researcher going to be analyzed justice reflection of Kirila as the main character in the 'Darkness' short story."*

In this sentence, the expression "the researcher going to be analyzed justice reflection" is wrong. The form is closer to the pattern of present continuous tense which is "Subject + present form of be (am, are, is) + active participle (Verb 1 + ing)". The pattern of going to (do) is used for activities that have already to be decided and intended to do in the future. The sentence must be:

*"So, the researcher is going to analyze justice reflection of Kirila as the main character in the 'Darkness' short story."*

The sentence above was made by a student of sixth semester of English Department who is assumed by the researcher has enough grammatical skill and knowledge in English. Nevertheless, the student still has possibility in making mistakes and errors. Therefore, the researcher is interested in analyzing the grammatical- errors in the translation text of English Department students who have more appropriate grammatical skills and knowledge in English than Non-English Department students.

## **2. Research Methodology**

The method of the research that is used in this research is descriptive qualitative research. This library research aims to translate texts of sixth-semester English Department students in the academic year of 2022/2023. The population of this research is all the abstract

translation text done by sixth-semester English Department students in the academic year of 2022/2023. The samples taken are 5 of all translation texts of sixth semester English Department students in the academic year of 2022/2023 with purposive sampling method. This method is used to get more variety in data analysis presenting. The method of data collection is the basic and crucial step in collecting the data. It is an important process to begin the analysis. The data process has many techniques, which are questionnaires, interviews, observation and documentation (Arikunto et al., 2023).

In this research, the researcher used documentation to collect the data. Arikunto et al. (2023) defines the documentation method as collecting data by using some variables such as a notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, ancient inscriptions, etc. The variables used in this research are book and transcript. The data of translation texts of sixth semester English Department students in the academic year of 2022/2023 were collected as files from source texts given from the researcher which the students then translated

### 3. Findings

After collecting and identifying the translation texts of sixth semester English Department students in the academic year of 2022/2023, the researcher finds 101 errors. The grammatical errors found then be classified into 4 classifications based on superficial basis error classification. The errors are classified as error of omission, error of addition, error of selection, and error of ordering. In presenting the grammatical errors classification, the researcher uses a table which contain of kinds of grammatical error classifications, numbers of grammatical error classifications, and percentages of grammatical error classifications. The researcher uses a standard formula to calculate the percentages of grammatical.

Table 1: Error classification

Grammatical Error Classification	Number of Errors	Percentage
Error of Omission	49	48%
Error of Addition	7	7%
Error of Selection	40	40%
Error of Ordering	5	5%
<b>Total</b>	101	100%

The researcher presents some of the total grammatical errors in the discussion as they represent similar grammatical errors because of the typically same grammatical errors found. The grammatical errors found will be presented in a sentence of each grammatical error classification with the errors followed by "asterisks" (\*) right after them, and will be underlined, while the corrections of grammatical errors will be written in bold and underlined.

### 4. Discussion

#### 1. Error of Omission

Error of omission is where a wrong item has been omitted in place of the right one. This is the most of grammatical error found in the translation texts of sixth semester English Department students in the academic year of 2022/2023. The percentage of this error

classification is 48%. In this error of omission classification, the researcher find two cases, they are error of omission in noun group and error of omission in subject-verb agreement.

## 2. Error of Addition

This second-last percentage of grammatical error classification, which is only 7% of the whole grammatical errors found in translation texts of sixth semester English Department students in the academic year of 2022/2023 describes about unnecessary elements of grammatical structure in a sentence of the translation text. The unnecessary elements are usually added in a sentence, especially in translation text because of the differences of grammatical structure between the source language and target language. Meanwhile, the researcher only finds a few of these grammatical errors in the translation text. Three out of 7 errors are explained below:

Sentence (1) demonstrates an error in subject-verb agreement, which differs from the subject-verb agreement errors discussed under omission error classification. Previously, the discussion centered on the agreement between singular subjects and singular verbs, as well as plural subjects and plural verbs. However, the error in Sentence (1) pertains to the past tense form when combined with modals, introducing a distinct issue in agreement.

Modals are typically used to express ability or possibility in both present and past contexts. In this instance, the writer translated a description of a research method, which inherently implies that the action was conducted in the past. The use of the modal "can" in this context is inappropriate because it denotes present tense. To correctly convey the intended meaning, the writer should have used the past form of the modal, "could," aligning with the past context of the described research.

Furthermore, the researcher interprets Sentence (1) as a statement describing a past action. Therefore, it would be more accurate to employ the simple past tense rather than a modal construction. Consequently, the researcher identifies this error as a dual issue: an unnecessary addition of the modal "can" and an incorrect application of subject-verb agreement within the past tense structure. This classification bridges two categories—errors of addition and errors of selection—which will be further explored under the error of selection classification.

## 3. Error of Selection

The error of selection is a grammatical error classification that classifies the error from a wrong chosen part of the grammatical structure. This error classification is the second largest error found after the error of omission. The percentage is 30% of total grammatical errors found. The grammatical errors found are errors in selecting adjectives, prepositions, pronouns, and subject-verb agreement. An example of the error of selecting an adjective showed that the perception of nurses about supervise\* ability the installation of leader in the implementing column installation General Hospital Semarang 2013, is equal to (76.5%) in both installation categories and the performance of nurse in nursing of document is equal (64.7%) in both categories.

In sentence (1), the writer failed to use an adjective in the noun phrase 'supervise ability'. Adjective is only used for modifying and describing the aspect of noun. In this sentence, the writer used 'supervise' which is a verb to modify noun 'ability'. Instead of using 'supervise', the writer has to use 'supervisory' as an adjective to modify the noun 'ability'.

## 5. Conclusion

According to the research result, it shows that the sixth semester English Department students in the academic year of 2022/2023 made total of grammatical errors as many as 101 errors. The errors consist of 49 numbers or 48% in error of omission classification, 7 numbers or 7% in error of addition classification, 40 numbers or 30% in error of selection classification, and 5 numbers or 5% in error of ordering classification.

Based on the result, it is concluded that the sixth semester English Department students in the academic year of 2022/2023 have appropriate skill and knowledge about grammar in making translation text. It shown on the total of grammatical error made based on the grammatical error classification. Their highest number of error is in error of omission classification, which is only 49 numbers or 48% of all error classifications. Then it is followed by error of selection, error of addition, and error of ordering.

## References

- Arikunto, S., Saputra, W. N. E., Khoirunnisa, D. A., & Sawai, R. P. (2023). Development and validation of teacher competency perception scale in Indonesia: The Rasch analysis. *Journal of Professional Teacher Education*, 1(1), 11-21.
- Bamdev, P., Grover, M. S., Singla, Y. K., Vafae, P., Hama, M., & Shah, R. R. (2023). Automated Speech Scoring System Under The Lens: Evaluating and interpreting the linguistic cues for language proficiency. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education*, 33(1), 119-154. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40593-022-00291-5>
- Calcagni, E., Ahmed, F., Trigo-Clapés, A. L., Kershner, R., & Hennessy, S. (2023). Developing dialogic classroom practices through supporting professional agency: Teachers' experiences of using the T-SEDA practitioner-led inquiry approach. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 126, 17, Article 104067. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104067>
- Samudro, A. F., & Setyorini, A. (2021). Analysis of translation of noun phrase ellipsis in Puzzle movie subtitle. *Linguistics and Education Journal*, 1(1).
- Zhang, L. J., & Sun, Q. (2022). Developing and Validating the English Teachers' Cognitions About Grammar Teaching Questionnaire (TCAGTQ) to Uncover Teacher Thinking. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 880408. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.880408>