Unpacking grammatical errors in EFL descriptive texts: A multi-dimensional analysis of types, taxonomy, and underlying causes

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Abstract

Grammatical accuracy remains a persistent challenge for EFL learners, particularly in descriptive writing, which demands precise language and structural control. This study investigated grammatical errors in a corpus of thirty descriptive texts produced by Indonesian high-school EFL learners, aiming to identify their types, classification, and underlying causes. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, errors were first identified through Azar's coding system and classified using Bialystok et al.'s Surface Structure Taxonomy. Their causes were then interpreted through Corder's and Ellis' theoretical models, distinguishing intralingual from interlingual sources. Quantitative analysis showed singular-plural errors as the most frequent, followed by word choice, word form, and punctuation errors. Omission dominated misformation, addition and misordering, suggesting cognitive constraints or negative L1 transfer. Qualitative interpretation indicated that intralingual errors, comprising overgeneralization and simplification, significantly outweighed interlingual ones, highlighting the developmental nature of learners' interlanguage at the intermediate level. The study underscores the need for clarification of complex grammatical structures, focused vocabulary development, the promotion of proofreading skills, and systematic feedback to address learners' persistent difficulties in morphology, lexis, and mechanics. The insights gained from this analysis offer practical implications for improving writing curriculum design and instructional strategies.

Keywords: errors; writing; EFL; grammar; interlanguage

INTRODUCTION

Writing has become a crucial skill for academic success, career advancement, and cross-cultural interaction in the globalized age of education and communication. Writing proficiently in English is not just a classroom prerequisite for EFL students; it is a means of gaining access to global

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knowledge, engaging in global discourse, and achieving success in both academic and real-world settings. Indeed, the ability to write well is not merely a matter of linguistic competence; it reflects one's capacity for critical thinking and effective communication. Despite its significance, research indicates that writing poses a greater challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners compared to other language skills (Palanisamy & Aziz, 2021). Unlike oral communication, which allows for real-time adjustments and non-verbal cues, writing demands a structured approach to convey ideas effectively. During the writing process, EFL learners must navigate the complexities of vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph organization to produce coherent and compelling written texts (Ampa & Basri, 2019). Among these, grammatical accuracy is a fundamental component that serves as the bedrock of effective writing of EFL instruction and assessment since it provides the structural framework for constructing sentences, ensuring clarity, and accuracy (Hadi et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, the acquisition of grammatical competence is often a stumbling block as many EFL learners struggle to translate their theoretical knowledge of grammar into practical writing skills, resulting in a persistent gap between their understanding of grammatical rules and their application in writing (Tan & Manochphinyo, 2017). This disconnect manifests in various forms of errors, ranging from basic verb tense and subject-verb agreement errors to more complex issues pertaining sentence structure and word order. Such errors can significantly detract from the overall quality of the learners' writing, hindering their ability to communicate their ideas effectively. The challenge is further compounded by the multifaceted process involved in writing, involving generating ideas, organizing thoughts, drafting, to editing and revising (Dokchandra, 2018). Managing all these aspects simultaneously can be overwhelming, particularly when the learners lack a solid foundation in grammatical principles. The pressure to produce grammatical and wellorganized writing can lead to anxiety and frustration, further inhibiting their ability to express themselves successfully (Sun et al., 2024). The result is often a demoralizing and time-consuming cycle of errors, corrections, and revisions.

Descriptive writing, a genre that aims to create a vivid portrayal of an object in engaging the readers' senses and emotions (Sari et al., 2020), forms a foundational element of EFL writing curricula at high schools by enabling students to articulate their observations, express ideas, and develop their overall communicative competence. As a groundwork for more complex writing genres, it plays a crucial role in developing EFL learners' overall writing skills and communicative competence (Robillos & Bustos, 2023). By describing people, places, and objects, learners are compelled to use a wide range of vocabulary related to sensory experiences, spatial relationships, and physical attributes (Purnamasari et al., 2021). They also need to apply grammatical concepts effectively to create detailed and accurate descriptions. In fact, the ability to write effective descriptive texts is essential for not only academic assignments but also various real-world applications.

Descriptive texts, nonetheless, present a unique set of grammatical challenges for EFL learners. Unlike other forms of writing that may prioritize

argumentation or narration, it places a strong emphasis on not only sensory details and precise vocabulary, but also accurate grammatical structures to create a clear and compelling image in the readers' mind (Ismayanti & Kholiq, 2020). EFL learners must master the art of using adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases effectively to convey the degrees of their observations and experiences. They must also pay close attention to verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, and sentence structure to ensure that their descriptions are grammatically sound and comprehensible. Moreover, descriptive writing requires learners to organize their ideas logically, use transitions to connect sentences and paragraphs, and maintain a consistent point of view (Atmowardoyo & Sakkir, 2023). Their failure in these areas may result in disjointed and confusing descriptions that lack of coherence and cohesion.

These challenges highlight the need for effective error analysis to help EFL learners improve their descriptive writing skills. By systematically and rigorously examining the patterns of the errors and their underlying causes, researchers and educators can gain insights into the specific areas where EFL learners struggle most and subsequently develop targeted pedagogical interventions that address the root causes of the errors and promote more effective learning strategies. In fact, error analysis goes beyond simply identifying mistakes; it seeks to understand the cognitive processes and linguistic factors that contribute to their occurrence (Saeed et al., 2022). This involves examining the learners' interlanguage, which is the evolving system of rules and patterns that they develop as they progress in their learning, to gain a deeper understanding of how learners are internalizing and processing L2.

Grammatical errors in EFL writing have been the subject of extensive research, with an emphasis on common error types their frequency, and their pedagogical implications (e.g., Almusharraf & Alotaibi, 2023; Karabacak & Duygun, 2022; Khan, 2022). In Indonesian EFL context, several studies have identified common issues such as pluralization, verb tenses, article usage, and subject-verb agreement (e.g., Ramzan et al., 2023; Sunandar, 2022; Trisnaningrum et al., 2019). Several investigations have also applied Corder's (1975) model to classify and interpret the errors (e.g., Fitriani, 2020; Raissah & Aziz, 2020; Rofik, 2018), while others employed Bialystok's et al. (1983) surface structure taxonomies to explore how learners manipulate language forms and to differentiate errors based on operations (e.g., Kamlasi, 2019; Setyaji et al., 2023; Supriadi et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, while existing literature highlights the importance of grammatical accuracy in writing and the challenges faced by EFL learners in acquiring this skill, few have combined a multi-dimensional analysis that not only measures the frequency of grammatical errors but also probes into their underlying causes. Rarely have studies compared and contrasted the different analytical dimensions, such as error type classification, categorization, and causal analysis, within a single framework to reveal how each dimension complements or diverges from the others in explaining learner errors. Moreover, much of the research tends to concentrate on university-level or adult learners, overlooking the unique developmental, cognitive, and linguistic characteristics of high-schoolers when in fact the ability to write effectively and grammatically

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at this educational stage is crucial for success in college-level work and at work. As a result, there is limited empirical evidence on the errors produced by EFL learners at this critical level, especially in Indonesian context. To address this gap, the present study adopted a multi-dimensional analysis to investigate the grammatical errors found in descriptive texts written by intermediate-level Indonesian high school EFL students. It aimed to *unpack* the errors; thoroughly and systematically examining them by identifying their types, categorizing them through referred taxonomies, and analyzing their underlying linguistic causes using established theoretical frameworks. This comprehensive approach sought to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of learner difficulties and to inform the development of effective EFL writing instruction and refinement of EFL learners' writing skills.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE The nature of errors

A critical component in understanding the challenges faced by EFL learners in writing, error analysis in EFL writing is rooted in linguistic and cognitive theories that examine learners' interlanguage development. Its foundation in EFL writing can be traced back to Corder's (1975) seminal work, which drew distinction between errors and mistakes and emphasized the importance of errors as an indicator of learners' developing linguistic competence. Ellis (1982) expanded on this by categorizing errors broadly into *interlingual* errors, which stem from the learners' L1 influence, and *intralingual* errors, which are caused by insufficient knowledge of L2 usage. These theoretical frameworks continue to underpin much of the contemporary research on error analysis in EFL writing.

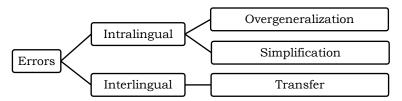


Figure 1. Causes of error according to Corder and Ellis

In addition to L1 *transfer*, *overgeneralization*, and *simplification*, studies have also pointed out that errors also stem from various interrelated factors, including developmental stages (Kornev & Balčiūnienė, 2021; Vakili & Ebadi, 2022), cognitive (Saeed et al., 2022; Zulfikar, 2023) and sociocultural factors (Matsumoto, 2021; Mubarok & Budiono, 2022). This suggests that errors in EFL writing is not solely a reflection of linguistic deficiency but rather a complex outcome of learners' developmental, cognitive, and sociocultural contexts.

Taxonomy of errors

Several studies have identified common types of errors made by students, categorizing them into various types such as *grammatical*, *lexical*, and *discourse errors* (Kornev & Balčiūnienė, 2021). Grammatical errors are particularly prevalent among beginner and intermediate learners (Wulandari & Harida,

2021), and their frequency and types often correlate with learners' proficiency (Ruminar, 2018). Lexical errors, including word choice and collocational mistakes, are often attributed to negative transfer from L1 or limited exposure to L2 vocabulary (Dissington, 2018). Beyond grammar and vocabulary, discourse errors have received increasing attention, with several studies (e.g., Alfalagg, 2020; Bui, 2022) highlighting the persistent challenges EFL learners face in organizing ideas logically and using cohesive devices effectively

Most distinguished of all is the Surface Structure Taxonomy introduced by Bialystok et al. (1983) as a framework for categorizing linguistic errors in L2. This taxonomy delineates four primary types of errors as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

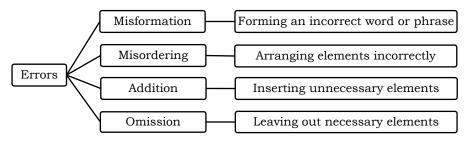


Figure 2. The Surface Structure Taxonomy by Bialystok et al.

Misformation refers to the use of an incorrect form or structure, while misordering involves the inappropriate sequencing of morphemes or groups of morphemes within an utterance. Addition denotes the insertion of linguistic elements that are not required or appropriate in a grammatically well-formed utterance. Conversely, omission pertains to the absence of elements that are essential for the grammatical completeness. This classification provides a systematic approach to analyzing learner errors and contributes to the understanding of the developmental patterns in second language acquisition.

Furthermore, researchers (e.g., Afdaliah, 2022; Haris, 2023; Kiose, 2021) have identified additional layers of error types that can significantly impact the meaning and intelligibility of L2 production. Broadly, these errors can be classified into four major linguistic domains as shown in Figure 3 below.

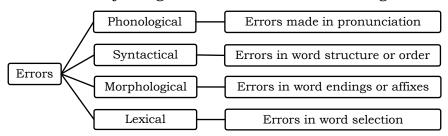


Figure 3. Errors based on their linguistic domains

Syntactic errors involve violations of sentence structure rules, while morphological errors pertain to the incorrect use or formation of morphemes. Phonological errors affect the sound system, potentially altering the intended message due to mispronunciation. Lexical errors involve inappropriate or incorrect word choices, which may lead to semantic inaccuracies.

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METHOD

This study adopted a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design (Creswell & Cresswell, 2017) to analyze the types and causes of errors found in a corpus of EFL learners' descriptive texts. In the quantitative phase, various error types were identified and their frequencies calculated, with results presented in percentages to determine the most common errors among participants. In the qualitative phase, the analysis was guided by the Surface Structure Taxonomy to categorize the types of errors, while the underlying causes were examined using both Corder's and Ellis' frameworks. This threefold approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of both nature of the errors as well as their potential sources.

The participants of this study consisted of thirty purposively selected third-year EFL students, drawn from a total population of ninety-seven students currently enrolled in the final-year classes at SMA Plus Panyabungan, located in North Sumatra, Indonesia. The selection criteria included: (1) enrollment as third-year students; (2) ranking among the top ten students in their respective classes; and (3) completion of required English courses in the first and second years. These criteria were established to ensure a sample with adequate language proficiency for the purposes of this study.

The data were collected by assigning the participants a writing task based on a specific prompt, designed to elicit the use of descriptive language. Their completed texts were collected and examined for errors, which were subsequently classified using Azar's framework. The frequency of each error type was afterward calculated, and the nature and causes of the errors were interpreted. Finally possible pedagogical remedies were proposed in accordance with relevant literature to address the most frequent and problematic errors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION RESULTS

Types and frequency of the errors

As shown in Table 1 below, the error analysis of the students' corpus reveals a total of 137 errors identified across different linguistic categories.

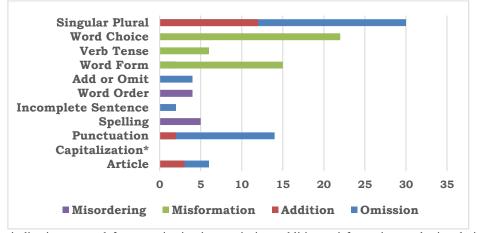
Table 1. Distribution of error based on Azar's coding

Types	Sub-total	%
Singular-plural	42	30.66
Word Choice	22	16.06
Verb Tense	6	4.38
Word Form	19	13.87
Add-or-omit	4	2.92
Word Order	4	2.92
Incomplete Sentence	2	1.46
Spelling	5	4.38
Punctuation	16	11.68
Capitalization	8	5.84
Article	9	6.57
Run-on Sentence	0	O
Total	137	

Singular-plural errors represent the highest proportion of errors, making up 30.66% of the total errors, with word choice (16.06%), word form (13.87%), and punctuation errors (11.68%) respectively being the next most frequent types. In contrast, errors in capitalization (5.84%), and article usage (6.57%) emerged as the least frequent. No run-on sentences were encountered.

Taxonomy of the errors

The following figure depicts the classification of the errors based on the Surface Structure Taxonomy:



 ${}^*\text{Capitalization errors defy categorization into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.}$

Figure 4. Distribution of errors based on the Surface Structure Taxonomy

The most prevalent error type was omission, accounting for fifty-two errors (37.96%). Misformation, representing forty-three errors (31.4%), constituted the next most frequent error type. Furthermore, addition and misordering were relatively infrequent, amounting to only sixteen (11.7%) and nine (6.57%) errors respectively.

Causes of the errors

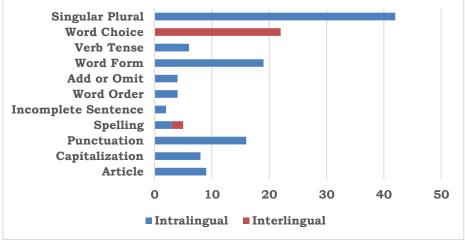


Figure 5. Causes of the errors based on Corder's classification

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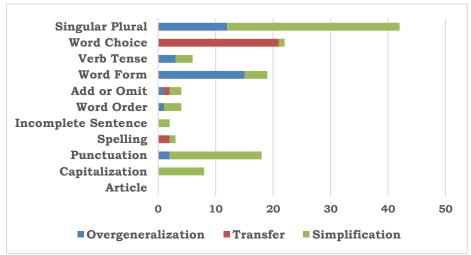


Figure 6. Causes of the errors based on Ellis' classification

The analysis of error causes revealed that intralingual errors were considerably more common than interlingual ones, with the former amounting to 113 occurrences (82.5%) and the latter twenty-four occurrences (17.5%). Among the intralingual errors, overgeneralization was prominent, accounting for thirty-five occurrences (25.5%). Simplification, comprising seventy-eight occurrences (56.94%), contributed primarily to intralingual errors. Finally, transfer, making up twenty-four occurrences (17.5%), appeared to be a less frequent than intralingual errors.

Instances of the errors

This section provides selected instances of errors, annotated with the initials of the students responsible for the errors. Their typology, classification, and causal factors are indicated in parentheses.

Errors in singular-plural fall either into omission or addition category; all of which are morphological. While all these errors can be attributed to intralingual interference, a more detailed analysis reveals that simplification accounts for thirty instances (71.4%), which is more than twice the errors caused by overgeneralization, totaling twelve instances (28.6%). The following are some examples of the errors:

The walls of the house are painted white they look very clean and bright, and there are big <u>window</u> in every room, allowing plenty of sunlight to come in (AY). (Omission-morphological-intralingual-simplification)

This beach is also a favorite place for <u>peoples</u> who want to enjoy natural beauty and feel tranquility (FWL). (Addition-morphological-intralingual-overgeneralization)

Errors in word form falls into misformation category, which makes up fifteen (78.9%) out of nineteen identified errors, with the remaining 21.05% made up equally by addition and omission. Like singular-plural errors, all of these errors are morphological. The cause of these errors is intralingual, consisting of fifteen overgeneralization (78.9%) and four simplification (21.05%). Some of these errors are as follows:

Vol. 10, No. 2, August 2025, pp.339-357

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My school is located in a quiet neighborhood. It is a large $\underline{\text{build}}$ and a large field behind it (AS). (Misformation-morphology-intralingual-overgeneralization)

Sopotinjak Peaks is one of the natural tourist destination located in the highlands of North Sumatra. From this peak, we can <u>seeing</u> a vast and stunning view. (IMH) (Addition-morphological-intralingual-overgeneralization)

He always <u>check</u> in on his students' well-being and <u>encourage</u> us to balance academic work with personal life (MS). (Omission-morphological-intralingual-simplification)

Word choice amounts to twenty-two errors, of which all are due to addition and of lexical type. Almost all (94.5%) of these errors are associated mainly with interlingual interference, more specifically overgeneralization, with only one error (4.5%) with intralingual interference, in this case simplification. Some examples of word choice errors are as follows:

From my window, <u>my</u> can see the rice fields stretching far into the distance, with farmers beginning their daily work (ASY). (Misformation-lexical-intralingual-simplification)

 \underline{He} was always there to lend a helping hand or offer support when someone was feeling down (ASY). (Misformation-lexical-interlingual-transfer)

Verb tense amounts to six errors, all of which are of misformation category and morphological type. All these errors resulted from intralingual interference, with both overgeneralization and simplification sharing equal number of errors. The subsequent examples show verb tense errors encountered in the analysis:

His calm and friendly attitude also <u>make</u> us comfortable asking questions when there was something we didn't understood (MS). (Misformation-morphological-intralingual-simplification)

Her big green eyes always sparkle when she <u>was</u> happy, and her tiny pink nose adds to her cuteness (KA). (Misformation-morphological-intralingual-overgeneralization)

Add-or-omit amounts to four errors, of which all are of omission category and syntactical type. The analysis also revealed that all these errors are intralingual, with one error (25%) associated with overgeneralization and two (50%) with simplification. The other 25% was identified to be caused by transfer, in which the student literally translated a phrase into L2 from L1, resulting in an expression that is not colloquial. Some examples of these errors are as follows:

The classrooms are large and have large windows, so they are always get sunlight (AH). (Addition-syntactical-intralingual-overgeneralization)

It is located in a quiet neighborhoods, surrounded by green field and tall trees, which creates a calm and peaceful environments for students to study (IN). (Omission-syntactical-intralingual-simplification)

SMA Negeri 1 Rantobaek, is a dynamic and inspiring place where students come together to learn and grow (SN). (Omission-syntactical-intralingual-transfer)

Errors in word order in the corpus are attributed to misordering, and all of them are syntactical. In addition, these errors are caused by intralingual interference, comprising three cases of simplification and one overgeneralization. The sentences below exemplify the errors:

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Despite the traffic jams and pollution, Jakarta have a lot to offer, such as cultural attractions, various restaurants, and center entertainments (AS). (Misordering-syntactical-intralingual-overgeneralization)

The novels offers the library I really enjoy reading (A). (Misordering-syntactical-intralingual-simplification)

Incomplete sentence errors fall into omission category; all of which are syntactical. All these four errors are caused by intralingual interference, specifically simplification. The following as several cases of these errors:

My water bottle are one of my favorite things to carry every day. Made from stainless steel so it is durable and keeps the water cold for a long time (NH). (Omission-syntactical-intralingual-simplification)

She always gentle and rarely scratch or bite (KA). (Omission-syntactical-intralingual-simplification)

All instances of spelling errors fall into misformation category; and all of them are morphological. Three (60%) of these errors are caused by intralingual interference, the remaining two (40%) are interlingual, in that the students confused the L2 word their L1 cognates. The examples are presented below:

The park also has a small pond in the center, where ducks and geese often <u>swime</u> peacefully (ASA). (Misformation-morphological-intralingual) This beach is also a favorit place for peoples who want to enjoy natural beauty (FWL). (Misformation-morphological-interlingual-transfer)

Of the identified punctuation errors, fourteen instances were attributed to omission and two to addition. All of these errors are syntactical, and all are caused by intralingual interference; the omission errors are specifically caused simplification, while the addition errors by overgeneralization. The following instances represent the identified punctuation errors:

The walls of the house are painted white they look very clean and bright, and there are big window in every room, allowing plenty of sunlight to come in (AY). (Omission-syntactical-intralingual-simplification)

Conversations are never boring, because he always has a funny story or interesting fact to share. she makes everyone laugh all the time (DR). (Addition-syntactical-intralingual-overgeneralization)

While errors in capitalization are not part of the taxonomy and types of errors, their causes can be traced to intralingual, more specifically simplification. The examples below highlight recurrent capitalization errors identified:

This is the perfect place to relax and clear your mind. even though the garden is small, it always makes me feel fresh and happy (ASA). (Intralingual-simplification)

This is the perfect place to relax and clear your mind. even though the garden is small, it always makes me feel fresh and happy (ASA). (Intralingual-simplification)

Six instances of article errors were classified under the omission category, while three were categorized as addition. The omission errors are syntactical in nature, while addition ones are lexical. All these errors can be attributed to students' lack of understanding of not only article usage in L2, but also the concept of article in their L1, negatively transferring to L2. Thus, errors of this type can be categorized as both intralingual and interlingual. The following examples serve to illustrate the article errors:

Vol. 10, No. 2, August 2025, pp.339-357

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Many visitor like swimming in the pool at the base of the waterfall or just sitting by the water to relax and enjoy beauty of nature (MYN). (Omission-syntactical-intralingual/interlingual-simplification/transfer)

The walls are painted in bright colors that make the room funny and cheerful and there are lots of trees and plants around a school which makes it feel fresh (AH). (Addition-lexical-intralingual/interlingual-simplification/transfer)

DISCUSSION

The dominance of omission in the students' corpus indicates that they frequently left out necessary elements in their writing. This might be explained by learners' limited processing capacity, leading them to prioritize conveying the main idea over grammatical accuracy, or a lack of conscious attention to specific grammatical features. Furthermore, omissions might stem from the learners' L1 if certain grammatical elements (e.g., articles) are not obligatory in their native language. This aligns the finding reported by Astri et al. (2023), who identified omission as a common error in L2 writing, particularly at lower proficiency levels. The relative prevalence of misformation suggests that some of the learners have an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of certain English grammatical rules. This echoes findings in studies by Setyaji et al. (2023) and Susanthi et al. (2022), who note that misformation errors often reflect learners' attempts to apply simplified or overgeneralized rules. Nevertheless, in contrast to the present study, different finding was reported by Rahmi (2022) and Fitria (2021), who identified misformation as the most common error in EFL learners' descriptive texts. This variation might reflect differences in not only in learners' proficiency levels, but also their linguistic backgrounds or educational contexts, with learners from different L1 backgrounds possibly struggling more with omitting elements than misforming them, or vice versa. Nonetheless, the high frequency of omission and misformation, according to Alruwani et al. (2025), underscores the need for a strong focus on explicit grammar instruction which address common error patterns and provide ample opportunities for practice.

While less common than other error types, according to Alruwani et al. (2025), addition errors suggest that some learners may be hypercorrecting or overcompensating in an attempt to sound more fluent. Misordering, even though equally infrequent can significantly impact clarity and comprehensibility (Ayu et al., 2024), and their relatively low frequency may indicate that learners generally have a good grasp of basic English word order (Rahmi, 2022), or that they are avoiding more complex sentence structures. The fact that misordering errors emerged as the least frequent error type identified in the students' corpus corroborates the results of several other studies conducted on different types of writing corpora (e.g., Dewi et al., 2021; Harefa et al., 2021; Ullah et al., 2025), where addition errors were found to demonstrate less consistency, appearing as either the most or the least frequent depending on the context.

Simplification, making up the most of the intralingual errors, possibly occurred due to the learners' attempt to avoid complexity or their limited linguistic resources (Raissah & Aziz, 2020). In addition, overgeneralization, also relatively common occurrence in the corpus, occurs when learners apply a specific rule too broadly, leading to incorrect forms. This tendency to simplify

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and overgeneralize, however, is a natural part of learning process, as learners attempt to streamline and systematize the L2 rules (Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

The frequent occurrence of morphological and lexical errors in student writing underscores the necessity for targeted pedagogical interventions aimed at enhancing grammatical and lexical competence. To address morphological difficulties, explicit instruction in structures such as verb inflections, pluralization, and tense marking, integrated with meaning-focused activities, is essential for promoting deeper cognitive processing and long-term retention (Anwar & Rosa, 2020; Martinez et al., 2025). In the domain of vocabulary development, some studies (e.g. Little, 2022; Rahmani et al., 2022; Rosell-Aguilar, 2018) advocate for a balanced approach that combines explicit instruction of high-frequency vocabulary, word formation processes, and strategies fostering learner autonomy. Complementary practices, including the use of lexical notebooks (Naderifar, 2018), collocation exercises (Nagy, 2019), and corpus-based activities (Li et al., 2025), further support learners in developing sensitivity to authentic language use. The incorporation of technological tools, such as corpus analysis software and online concordancers, offers valuable opportunities for learners to observe authentic linguistic patterns and enhance their understanding of morphological forms and lexical collocations (Cheng, 2021; Golabi, 2022). Moreover, collaborative learning through peer interaction and workshops focusing on specific grammatical and lexical challenges provides a supportive context for practice and refinement (Villarreal & Gil-Sarratea, 2019). Collectively, these strategies constitute a comprehensive pedagogical approach that integrates explicit instruction, feedback, communicative tasks, and digital resources systematically address and mitigate morphological and lexical errors, as suggested by Hyland (2019).

On a final note, regular, constructive feedback plays a pivotal role in language learners' development by helping them identify, understand, and correct their errors, particularly when it is specific, focused, and delivered in a timely manner that allows meaningful connections to ongoing language production (Ahmed, 2020; Ruegg, 2018). Beyond corrective input, it is crucial for teachers to actively engage learners in the feedback process by encouraging reflection on errors and analysis of their underlying causes, which fosters metacognitive awareness and empowers students to develop strategies for avoiding similar mistakes (Farahian et al., 2021). One classroom activity that integrates these principles effectively is a guided error correction workshop, where the teacher first models how to identify and analyze grammatical errors in a text, providing explicit explanations and guided examples, and students afterwards work collaboratively in small groups to analyze anonymized samples of their own writing, identify common grammatical errors, discuss the underlying rules, and propose their revisions with justifications. This peer-led analysis not only enhances grammatical awareness but also reinforces learning through collaboration. To deepen reflection and complement this activity, the teacher can encourage the learners to also maintain individual error logs (Lau et al., 2024), and complete self-assessment checklists (Ebrahimi et al., 2021). This activity promotes a feedback-rich environment, fosters learner autonomy, and addresses common error types in a structured, engaging, and pedagogically

grounded manner, thus facilitating long-term accuracy. Ultimately, through such activity, feedback functions not merely as a corrective mechanism but as a dialogic and formative tool that empowers learners to take ownership of their development, supporting their continuous improvement, linguistic competence, and independence within their language learning process.

CONCLUSION

This study identified and analyzed common grammatical errors in descriptive texts written by intermediate-level Indonesian EFL learners, with a focus on error types, their taxonomic classification, and underlying causes. The results showed that omission was the most frequent error type, followed by misformation, while addition and misordering were comparatively rare. These findings suggest that learners often struggle with accurately applying grammatical rules, especially in morphological forms, due to intralingual factors such as overgeneralization and simplification. The predominance of intralingual over interlingual errors highlights the developmental nature of interlanguage at this stage, as learners are still internalizing complex L2 grammar systems.

This study contributes to the existing literature by shifting the focus from tertiary-level learners to high school EFL students in the Indonesian context—an underrepresented group in current error analysis research. Furthermore, its integration of multiple theoretical frameworks offers a more layered understanding of learner errors. In addition, a discrepancy with previous studies (e.g., Fitria, 2021; Rahmi, 2022), which reported misformation as the most frequent error, may be attributed to differences in learners' proficiency levels, L1 backgrounds, or instructional practices, suggesting the importance of contextual factors in shaping EFL learners' error patterns.

Pedagogically, these findings underscore the need for targeted grammar instruction that focuses on clarifying problematic structures and reinforcing rule application through sustained practice. Furthermore, the integration of vocabulary development and greater emphasis on mechanical accuracy—particularly spelling, punctuation, and capitalization—should be prioritized. Encouraging learners to engage in systematic proofreading and self-monitoring strategies can also support greater accuracy in written production. Importantly, instructional approaches should be designed to incorporate corrective input and reflective activities to foster learners' metalinguistic awareness and promote autonomous learning. By addressing these key areas through informed pedagogical practices, teachers can nurture greater metalinguistic awareness, reduce fossilized errors, and promote sustained improvement in EFL writing proficiency.

Future research should consider expanding the scope to include learners from different regions, proficiency levels, and writing genres to validate and refine the present findings. Longitudinal studies may also help track the development of grammatical accuracy over time and assess the long-term impact of specific pedagogical interventions.

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AUTHOR STATEMENTS

Zulfikar and **Apriyanti Hasibuan** were responsible for data collection and analysis. The former also composed the findings and discussion sections, while the latter wrote the introduction and performed comprehensive proofreading of the manuscript. **Nurhajjah Pulungan**, **Teuku Zulfikar** and **Mohamad Syafri** contributed to data analysis and the findings section, and collaboratively ensured the accuracy and validity of the data and the conclusions derived therefrom.

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Vol. 10, No. 2, August 2025, pp.339-357

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