An error analysis on EFL students' writing

Yasir Mubarok[*]
Universitas Pamulang, Indonesia
dosen02264@unpam.ac.id

Taat Budiono
Universitas Pamulang, Indonesia
dosen02143@unpam.ac.id

Recommended APA Citation
Mubarok, Y., & Budiono, T. (2022). An error analysis on EFL students' writing. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities, 9*(2), 187-203. https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v9i2.11386

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to analyze the grammatical errors in the writings of Indonesian EFL students through the Error Analysis (EA) approach. The subject of this research included the theses which are written by the university students of English Letters Department at one of the State University, Jakarta. The data sources were taken from chapter four, the conclusion, and the suggestion section from six students' theses. In this study, the data collection was carried out through several steps: the authors collected data from students, identified grammatical errors, classified errors in students' thesis to determine the frequency of errors, and calculated the data into percentages. The results indicate that there are eleven types of errors commonly found in students' writing. They are 5% errors of subject-verb and agreement, 2% errors in word order, 13% errors in preposition, 20% errors in article, 2% errors in plurality form, 19% errors in punctuation, 5% errors in auxiliary, 21% errors in unnecessary words, 5% errors in word choice, 5% errors in parallel structure, and 2% errors in redundancy. The writer observed 125 total errors. The errors are dominated in the form of punctuation, article, and unnecessary words types. The research unveils that students make common grammatical errors encouraged by the incapability to accomplish, recognize and understand the rules of the foreign language and its limitations, a little mastery of grammar and vocabulary.

Keywords: *Error analysis; Thesis writing; EFL students*

---

[*] Corresponding author

1. Introduction

In this day and age, English skills are needed for academic purposes (Gunantar, 2016; Lauder, 2008; Mappiasse & Sihes, 2014). Crystal (2003) stated that the sum of people in the world who converse in English continues to increase. His survey resulted that people who have studied English as a second language (L2) are estimated at 430 million, but that did not give the whole picture. This fact has proven that English is now used globally. The increasingly widespread use of English is promoted through economics, politics, scientific cooperation, technology and culture, mass media, multinational corporations (Clyne, 1984, as cited in Coleman, 2006; Lo & Lin, 2015).

Crystal (2003) also believed that the strong British colonialism specifies the success of the English language as the most dominant language. This factor has pushed English into a medium of communication in most regions of the world as a mother tongue or second (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2009). This tendency is being accommodated by the increasing number of schools that use English as a teaching medium (Fenton-Smith, Humphreys, & Walkinshaw, 2017; Kirkpatrick, 2014; Lauder, 2008; Manh, 2012; Toh, 2016). In addition, Jenkins (2014) found that English is now seen as an academic language of instruction. Even in Europe, there is a growing trend towards English, assuming the dominant language status in higher education (Vila, 2015, as cited in Toh, 2016). Likewise, in Indonesia, the phenomenon of English as an international or a second language causes English to become compulsory material in junior high schools to the university level.

Unlike Singapore and Malaysia, the two countries are the most proficient in English (Yuliandi, 2018). Most Indonesian students tend to use Indonesian or their local language than English. A situation like that directly affects the mastery of the English language. In the view of many scholars, teaching English in Indonesia has been labelled as far from successful or less satisfactory (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017; Ariyanti, 2016; Nur & Madkur, 2014; Pudiyono, 2012; Suryanto, 2015). This can be seen from the fact that most Indonesian students cannot use English well (Gunantar, 2016). It happens because learners dominantly use the Indonesian language in all aspects of life (Irmalia, 2016).

English contains four skills, reading, speaking, listening and writing. From these skills, writing is considered the most complex skill, especially for non-native speakers (Ananda, Gani, & Sahardin, 2014; Ariyanti, 2016; Muhsin, 2016; Wahyuni, 2017). Muhsin (2016) and Norrish (1983) as cited in Sattayatham & Ratanapinyowong (2008) claimed that writing is not easy and more complex than speaking in some ways.

Research conducted by Floranti and Adiantika (2019) has shown that writing receives the least amount of attention and priority from teachers and students. This negative attitude arises because of several possible problems. Besides, writing well is

not a skill that is acquired naturally (Andrian, 2015). Writing is also not an innate ability but is obtained through years of learning and training. It involves a socio-cognitive process with mastery of specific competencies to produce understandable and reasonable texts such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax, style, and knowledge writing system (Floranti & Adiantika, 2019). EFL students' writing is influenced by their first language (L1) and the educational context in which they learn to write. This culturally and socially marked context gives knowledge about writing (i.e. audience views and writing goals) and textual knowledge and linguistic, which influences the way students to produce and process writing (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2009). Likewise, Ariyanti (2016) discovered several differences between English and Indonesian such as structural and grammatical terms and styles.

Raimes (1983) as cited in Sattayatham and Ratanapinyowong (2008) argued a close relationship between writing and thinking; punctuation, logical content, and correct language are considered necessary in writing. As a result, a student needs to write not only coherently but also correctly. Besides, writing also requires more skills and time, especially when writing in a second/foreign language (Liu & Braine, 2005).

Generally, the errors made by students when writing are caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, ideas, reading and writing practice, interference from the learner's first language, overgeneralization, translation from the first language, incomplete application of rules, or some other aspect of performance (Andrian, 2015; Fareed, Ashraf, & Bilal, 2016; Norrish, 1983, as cited in Sattayatham & Ratanapinyowong, 2008). Furthermore, low ability in grammar can hinder writers from writing effectively (Fatemi, 2008, as cited in Ananda, Gani, Sahardin, 2014). This study was designed to identify the essential features of students' errors, the causes of their errors, and to categorize the errors.

2. Literature review

In the 1960s, error analysis was developed as a branch of applied linguistics and began to show that many student errors were not due to the students' mother tongue but reflected a universal learning strategy (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) stated that Error Analysis (EA) consists of a series of procedures to identify, describe, explain student errors. In contrast, James (2013) argued that Error Analysis is the process of determining the events, causes, nature, and consequences of language that does not work. In other words, errors can be significant in three ways: (1) they serve pedagogical purposes by showing teachers what students have learned and what students have not mastered; (2) they serve the purpose of research by providing evidence of how language is learned; and (3) they serve the purpose of learning by

acting as a device where learners can find the rules of the target language (Corder, 1967, as cited in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005).

The most important contribution of Error Analysis lies in its fruitfulness in raising the error status from the undesired into a guideline. Therefore, errors are no longer seen as "undesirable forms" but as evidence of students' active contributions to second language acquisition (Ellis, 1995, as cited in Sattayatham & Ratanapinyowong, 2008). Furthermore, in the view of many scholars, there are two forms of errors, namely, performance and competence, which second language learners generally carry out (Ellis, 1994; Dulay, Burt, & Stephen Krashen, 1982). Performance errors include inattention and fatigue, while competence errors are from a lack of knowledge of language rules. Human learning is a way that involves making errors. Making errors is an important aspect of the learning process for almost all skills. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) defined errors that cannot be avoided in the learning process. Besides that, making errors is one part of learning; people cannot learn the language without first making systematic errors. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982, p.138) also stated that "the majority of the grammatical errors second language learners make do not reflect the learner's mother tongue. In some second language literature, performance errors have been called "mistakes"." In contrast, the term "errors" is reserved for systematic deviations because students are still growing knowledge of the L2 rule system (Corder, 1967, as cited in Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982). Hubbard et al. (1983) as cited in Andrian (2015) stated that errors are caused by temporary memory lapses, lack of knowledge of the target language, confusion, a slip of the tongue and so on.

Brown (1980) as cited in Sari (2016) argued that the student's errors in the second language result from the student's assumption. They assume that the second/foreign language forms are alike the native language (interlingual errors) and the negative transfer of items within the target language (intralingual errors). Furthermore, Richards (1974) as cited in Muhsin (2016) confirmed that interlingual errors are caused by interference in native language learners. Then, interlingual errors are caused by interference from the first language to the target language being studied. Before students master the target language concept, they will constantly use their native language concepts. This type of error is called the inter-language error. Another error is an intra-language error. James (1998) as cited in Muhsin (2016) argues that the fewer students know about the target language, the more they are forced to utilise their prior knowledge. It happens because students do not know much about the target language.

Intralingual errors can be grouped into four types (Richards, 1974, as cited in Muhsin, 2016, p. 2).

1) Overgeneralization

Richards (2015, p. 174) stated "overgeneralization generally involves the creation of one deviant structure in place of two regular structures". Overgeneralization happens when the learner creates a distorted structure based on his experience of other structures in the target language. It will be misleading and inapplicable in second language learning. For instance, "he is walks quickly" instead of "he walks quickly."

2) Ignorance of rule restriction

In this case, the learner is unsuccessful to recognize the boundaries of the existing structure. For instance, "I enjoy to learn about English language." It is preferable to substitute 'to learn about' with the 'learning' word.

3) Incomplete application of rules

In this kind of intra-lingual error, we might note the occurrence of structures whose deviancy represents the development degree of the rules required to result appropriate utterances. For instance, "he opening the door". The Verb ending "-ing" cannot arise by itself. It requires to be substituted to make the sentence suitable.

4) False concept hypothesized

This intra-lingual error is known as semantic error. This is a wrong understanding of the differences in the target language. These particular errors are normally the output of poor teaching grading.

On language learning processes, there are three general terms to be explained: transfer, interference, and overgeneralization (Brown, 2007). A transfer is a broad term that describes the accumulation of previous knowledge or performance for further learning (Brown, 2007). Moreover, Odlin (1989) as cited in Wang (2015) stated that transfer is the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired.

The transfer is shared into two transfers. They are negative and positive transfers. Positive transfer occurs when the prior knowledge (L1) benefits the learning task. For example, when a previous item is applied to the present subject matter (L2). Negative transfer happens when the final performance (L1) interferes with the second (L2) performance and is also known as interference.

Based on previous studies, Error Analysis (EA) is a procedure utilized by the researchers. This entangles collecting samples of language learners, identifying, describing, and classifying sample errors according to their nature and causes, and evaluating their seriousness (Corder, 1967, as cited in Muhsin, 2016). The EA purpose is to discover what learners know and does not know and find matters that learners face. Second language learners are not alone in making errors; the first language (L1) also lead errors.

In brief, the studies cited above demonstrated that writing problems could occur in some situations. Thus, it is interesting to verify the writing errors of university students whose English proficiency is high. The results of this study are supposed to contribute either to EFL learners and be reference guides neither in theoretical nor practical. The results can be the evaluation and reflection to improve English proficiency. Cook (1989) as cited in Hasan and Marzuki (2017) argued that students' writing difficulties stem from the complexity of grammatical structures or inadequate lexical items at the sentence level. Another problem faced by learners in writing is the convenience and ease of expressing ideas related to cohesion and coherence.

3. Method

The present study emphasized the learner errors in writing through the Error Analysis approach (EA). In this research, the writers used the qualitative descriptive method. The method employed by the writers is through four steps. They identified the errors, classified the errors, quantified the errors, and analysed the source of the error (Gay, 1987, as cited in Muhsin, 2016). In this study, the number of samples selected was six theses. The method used is the simple random sampling method, which is choosing a sample randomly based on existing data. The data sources are the conclusion and suggestions on the thesis. Then, the data were investigated using descriptive methods. Participants in the research are students of the English Letters Department at one of the State University, Jakarta, who made errors in their theses.

In this study, the data collection was through several steps. First, the writers started by reading all theses in analysing students' writing. The writers found grammatical errors, especially in the conclusion and suggestion on the thesis. Second, the writers made a table of errors to identify what errors the students performed. Third, the writers classified the students' errors to determine the kinds of errors. The last, the writers calculated the percentage of every error by using the formula:

$$X = \frac{\sum Er}{\sum W}$$

Which: X = the errors percentage
Er = various kinds of errors
W = words and
$\sum$ = the total number

After gathering the students' and counting the mean, the writers determined the percentage of every kind of error (Arikunto, 2002).

4. Findings and discussion

Based on the analysis, the total of errors were 125 occurrences. The distribution grammatical errors showed in Chart 1 below.
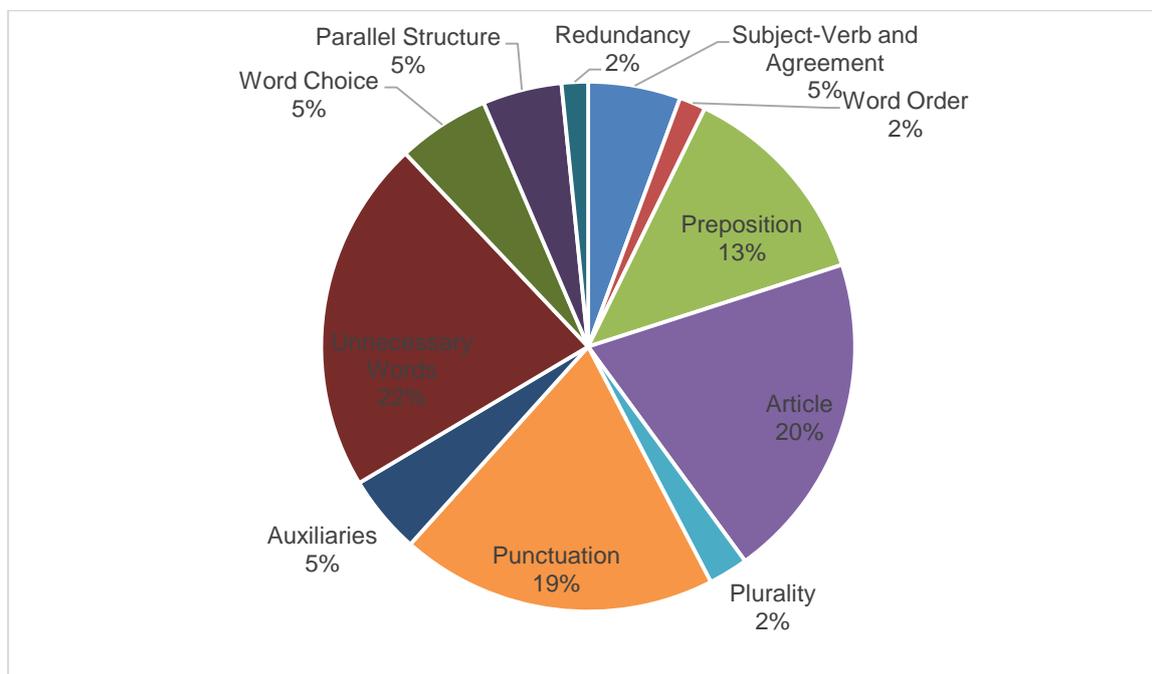
Figure 1. The error distributions

From the Chart 1 above, it can be known the result of grammatical errors in writing chapter four; conclusion and suggestion section from six theses made by the authors in percentage value. There were seven errors (5%) in the subject-verb and agreement, two errors (2%) in the word order, sixteen errors (13%) in the using preposition, twenty-five errors (20%) in the using article, three errors (2%) in the plurality form, twenty-four errors (19%) in punctuation, six errors (5%) in the auxiliary, twenty-seven errors (21%) in the using unnecessary words, seven errors (5%) in the word choice, six errors (5%) in the parallel structure, and two errors (2%) in the redundancy. These results may indicate that the article, punctuation, preposition, verb tense are the most challenging for the learners due to several reasons.

In linguistic strategy, the errors are classified based on the morphological syntactic (Keshavarz, 2012), and every category can be described through descriptive grammar in the target language (English). The error distributions demonstrated as follows

4.1. Subject-verb and agreement

In subject-verb and agreement errors, the researchers found seven errors (5%) from all the theses. Some examples are given below.

Table 1
Subject-verb and agreement errors.

No	Error	Correction
1.	*"The title in this film was "Snow White and the Huntsman" it is represents a different film with short story from Brother Grimm and Walt Disney film".*	*"The title in this film was "Snow White and the Huntsman" it represents a different film with short story from Brother Grimm and Walt Disney film".*
2.	*"...she fulfill her needs".*	*"...she fulfills her needs".*
3.	*"Translating movies or subtitling is not the same as intertextual translation".*	*"Translating movies or subtitling are not the same as intertextual translation".*

4. 2. Word order

In word order errors, the researchers found two errors (2%) from all the theses. Some examples are given below.

Table 2
Word order errors.

No	Error	Correction
1.	*"Talking about translation procedures related to a smaller level of a text are sentence, clause, phrase and word".*	*"Talking about translation procedures related to a smaller text level are sentence, clause, phrase and word".*
2.	*"The theme for the next research can be about marriage, female characters or the point of view of this novel".*	*"The theme for the next research can be about marriage, female characters, or this novel's point of view".*

4.3. Preposition

In preposition errors, the researchers found sixteen errors (13%) from all the theses. Some examples are given below.

Table 3
Preposition errors.

No	Error	Correction
1.	*"She lets Rachel live in her flat and constantly caring to Rachel".*	*"She lets Rachel live in her flat and constantly caring for Rachel".*
2.	*"The story is different with short story from Walt Disney film".*	*"The story is different from short story from Walt Disney film".*

| 3. | *"Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language".* | *"Translating consists of reproducing in the receptor language".* |
| 4. | *"The object of this research is focused on sentences containing modulation in found in the novel".* | *"The object of this research is focused on sentences containing modulation found in the novel".* |

4.4. Article

In article errors, the researchers found twenty-five errors (20%) from all the theses. Some examples are given below.

Table 4
Article errors.

No	Error	Correction
1.	*"The comparison between the novel and movie version can also be used as the research".*	*"The comparison between the novel and the movie version can also be used as the research".*
2.	*that was represented if snow white has brave character.*	*that was represented if snow white has a brave character.*
3.	*"In process of translating, a translator has to focus on the translation procedure".*	*"In the process of translating, a translator has to focus on the translation procedure".*
4.	*"Life is interesting discourse for Poe to interpret into his works, either intellectually, imaginatively, and emotionally".*	*"Life is an interesting discourse for Poe to interpret into his works, either intellectually, imaginatively, and emotionally".*

4.5. Plurality

The fifth type is plurality form errors. The errors of this type are found in about three errors (2%). Here are the errors listed in table 5.

Table 5
Plurality errors.

No	Error	Correction
1.	*"This is due to the fact there are many act of removal, addition, and neutralizing in the translation".*	*"This is due to the fact there are many acts of removal, addition, and neutralizing in the translation".*

4.6. Punctuation

The sixth type is punctuation errors. There are twenty-four errors (19%). Here are the errors listed in table 6.

Table 6
Punctuation errors.

No	Error	Correction
1.	*"In this case my suggestion to the next research is analyze about Revenna's character, she has masculine too".*	*"In this case, my suggestion to the next research is analyze about Revenna's character, she has masculine too".*
2.	*"In the Snow White and the Huntsman film there is a new person…".*	*"In the Snow White and the Huntsman film, there is a new person…".*
3.	*"The ending story in this film, had a different story".*	*"The ending story in this film (without comma) had a different story".*
4.	*"After analyzing Snow white and The Huntsman,"*	*"After analyzing Snow White and The Huntsman,"*
5.	*"Talking about translation procedures, related to a smaller level of a text are sentence, clause, phrase and word".*	*"Talking about translation procedures, related to a smaller level of a text are sentence, clause, phrase, and word".*

4.7. Auxiliary

The seventh type is auxiliary's errors. There are six errors (5%) that can be found. Here are the errors listed in table 7.

Table 7
Auxiliary errors.

No	Error	Correction
1.	*"She does not easy to choose the person who will companies her live until she died".*	*"She does not easy to choose the person who will company her live until she died".*
2.	*"...the result of the translation is not misunderstanding".*	*"...that the result of the translation does not misunderstand".*
3.	*"...the text in target language easy to understand".*	*"...the text in target language is easy to understand".*

4.8. Unnecessary words

The eighth type is unnecessary words errors. There are twenty-seven errors (21%) that can be found. Here are the errors listed in table 8.

Table 8
Unnecessary words errors.

No	Error	Correction
1.	*"In Walt Disney a prince becomes as her love".*	*"In Walt Disney a prince becomes ~~as~~ her love".*
2.	*"The equivalence translation of the commissive utterances in this novel uses communicative translation because its translation focuses on target language or the reader".*	*"The equivalence translation of the commissive utterances in this novel uses communicative translation to focus on the target language or the reader".*
3.	*"Rachel fails to get fulfill the love".*	*"Rachel fails to ~~get~~ fulfill the love".*
4.	*"She never gives up, and she shows to the people about her power".*	*"She never gives up, and she shows ~~to~~ the people about her power".*

4.9. Word choice

The nineth type is word choice errors. There are seven errors (5%) that can be found. Here are the errors listed in table 9.

Table 9
Word choice errors.

No	Error	Correction
1.	*"In Walt Disney a prince becomes as her love"*	*"In Walt Disney a prince becomes as her lover"*
2.	*"She does not easy to choose the person who will companies her live until she died".*	*"She does not easy to choose the person who will companies her life until she died".*
3.	*"In order to analyze the character, the writer uses character and characterization theory".*	*"To analyze the character, the writer uses character and characterization theory".*

4.10. Parallel structure

The tenth type is parallel structure errors. There are six errors (5%) that can be found. Here are the errors listed in table 10.

Table 10
Parallel structure errors.

No	Error	Correction
1.	*"She lets Rachel live in her flat and constantly caring to Rachel".*	*"She lets Rachel live in her flat and constantly cares to Rachel".*
2.	*"This novel tells a story about a woman named Rachel Watson who always looking at a couple in their house from the train window to fulfill her*	*"This novel tells a story about a woman named Rachel Watson who always looks at a couple in their house from the train window to fulfill her safety*

safety needs and her love and belonging needs".   *needs and her love and belonging needs".*

3.   *"When the translator translates the novel that*   *"When the translator translates the novel that*
     include some Islamic terms".   *includes some Islamic terms".*

4.11. Redundancy

The eleventh type is redundancy errors. The errors of this type are found in about two errors (2%). Here are the errors listed in table 11.

Table 11
Redundancy errors.

No	Error	Correction
1.	*"Not only in film Walt Disney film,…".*	*"Not only in ~~film~~ Walt Disney film,…".*

Besides the results above, the errors were dominated by the punctuation, article, and unnecessary words. The students might be confused to select proper constituents. There were many inconsistent used of the article in the theses such as *life is **interesting** (it should be **an interesting**) discourse …".* This indicates that students might still be confused in using articles. Moreover, the students failed to recognise the restriction of existing structures. Irmalia (2016) stated that it happens because learners dominantly use the Indonesian language in all aspects of life.

Another set of errors belong to the preposition forms. This shows that students might not know the complete application of rules, particularly the preposition forms. This shows that writing is considered the most complex skill, especially for non-native speakers (Ananda, Gani, & Sahardin, 2014; Ariyanti, 2016; Muhsin, 2016; Wahyuni, 2017). Norrish (1983) even as cited in Sattayatham and Ratanapinyowong (2008) claimed that in some way, writing is not easy. Writing is more complex than speaking. In this case, the teacher or lecturer must understand that writing includes practical activities, has guidance, and provides feedback from the teacher (Ariyanti, 2016).

Then, another error is the auxiliary. The students might be confused to select proper constituents in the verb areas, especially in the auxiliary verb. There were many inconsistent uses of auxiliary verbs such as "*...the result of the translation **is not** (it should be **does not**) misunderstanding*". The students might be confused to pick the auxiliary verb properly. Because they were transferring the grammar rules of their mother tongue into the English language. It happened since they did not understand the target language.

On the other hand, there are found out incorrect forms of subject-verb and agreement. Students are confused in determining the predicate of a subject such as *"The title in this film was "Snow White and the Huntsman" it **is represents** (it should only*

represents) a different film". This indicates that the most apparent difference is verbs in English are determined by tenses while the Indonesian language does not have. Moreover, Floranti & Adiantika (2019) had shown that writing receives the least attention and priority from teachers and students. Besides that, writing well is not a naturally acquired skill (Andrian, 2015).

In another case, there are found out incorrect forms of the punctuation such as *"Talking about translation procedures, related to a smaller level of a text are sentence, clause, phrase (**there is the omission of a comma**) and word"*. Although this case did not affect the overall meaning and interpretation of the sentence, it could harm the entire value of the thesis itself. In addition, students tended to be ignorant because the nature of punctuation has no meaningful impact on the reader's mind. This indicates that writing involves a socio-cognitive process with mastery of certain competencies to produce understandable and reasonable texts such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax, style and knowledge writing system (Floranti & Adiantika, 2019). Rinnert and Kobayashi (2009) argued that EFL students' writing is influenced by their first language (L1) and the educational context in which they learn to write. Writing experience (L1) plays a prominent role in students' writing development in EFL situations.

The other errors found is the word choice. The problem is related to the lack of understanding of the incomplete application of rules. Most of the errors are in the form of word choice, such as *"In Walt Disney a prince becomes as her **love** (it should be **lover**)"*. This indicates that low ability in grammar can hinder writers from writing effectively (Fatemi, 2008, as cited in Ananda, Gani, & Sahardin, 2014). Rahmatunisa (2014) as cited in Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017) found three main problems EFL students face in writing, precisely, linguistic, cognitive, and psychological issues. She suggested that teachers are required to push students' motivation to write and serve supportive writing activities such as opening the dictionary and providing peer correction.

Additionally, there were found many errors in parallel structure. This indicates that English parallel structure forms are quite complicated because they must be parallel structures in a sentence such as verb, noun, phrase, or clause. By using this parallelism or parallel structure, we will show that the elements in the sentence are equivalent to one another. Most of their errors are in the form of parallel structures such as verb. *"She lets Rachel live in her flat and constantly **caring** (must be **cares**) to Rachel"*. Ariyanti (2016) found several distinctions between English and Indonesian such as structural and grammatical terms and styles. Besides that, students need to translate meaning from the Indonesian context into English so that a text makes sense when it is read by people, mainly native speakers.

The other error was found is redundancy. The students might not know about this requirement and might have lack knowledge of the word order itself. Raimes (1983) as cited in Sattayatham and Ratanapinyowong (2008) argued a close relationship between writing and thinking; logical content, punctuation, and correct language are considered necessary in writing. Consequently, a student requires to write both

coherently and correctly. Furthermore, James (1989) as cited in Muhsin, (2016) argued that the fewer students know about the target language, the more they are forced to utilise their prior knowledge. It happens because students do not find out much about the target language.

The results imply that the students' grammatical difficulties must be solved, and the errors were varied, it can emphasise that subject-verb and agreement, word order, preposition, article, plurality form, unnecessary words, punctuation, and parallel structure are the biggest challenges for students. In brief, the errors made by students when writing were caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, ideas, reading and writing practice, interference from the learner's first language, overgeneralization, translation from the first language, incomplete application of rules, or some other aspect of performance (Andrian, 2015; Fareed, Ashraf, & Bilal, 2016; Norrish (1983) as cited in Sattayatham and Ratanapinyowong (2008). Nur and Madkur (2014) showed that most high school students can barely use English in the real world, even for simple purposes. This is also well below the nationally set English Language Competency standard, and it shows in the university's theses. It might be induced by several matters such as norms and beliefs, teacher factors, student characteristics, and aspects of English (Fenton-Smith, Humphreys, & Walkinshaw, 2017). As a foreign language, English is infrequently used outside the context of the classroom. Outside of class, Indonesian students speak Indonesian or their local language instead. Its condition influences the English mastership of Indonesian students (Suryanto, 2015). Exley (2005) as cited in Suryanto, (2015) stated that Indonesian students are shy in class, quiet, and culturally passive. They did not join in class activities even though the teacher asked them to participate.

Regarding language acquisition, the student's errors in the second language came from the student's assumption. They assumed that the second/foreign language forms are similar to the native language (interlingual errors). In addition, the negative transfer of items within the target language (intralingual errors) makes the student's errors (Brown, 1980, as cited in Sari, 2016). Moreover, the transfer was the effect that results from the similarities and differences between the target language and other languages that have been obtained previously (Odlin, 1989, as cited in Wang, 2015). The transfer was shared into two transfers. They are negative and positive transfer. Positive transfer occurred when the prior knowledge (L1) benefits the learning task. For example, when a prior item is absolutely applied to the present subject matter (L2). Negative transfer happened when the final performance (L1) interfered with the second (L2) performance and is also known as interference. Richards (1974) as cited in Muhsin (2016) confirmed interlingua errors induced by interference native language learners. Then, interlingual errors were induced by interference from the first language to the target language they learn. Before students mastered the target language concept, they would constantly utilize their native language concepts. This type of error is called the inter-language error. Another error was an intra-language error. Then, it is sub-divided into four

categories: (1) incomplete application of rules; (2) false concepts hypothesised; (3) ignorance of rule restriction; (4) overgeneralization.

5. Conclusion

The study results found that of 125 total errors, the dominant errors were in the punctuation, article, and unnecessary words area. The students' errors can be categorised into eleven kinds of errors which include 5% errors of subject-verb and agreement, 2% errors in word order, 13% errors in preposition, 20% errors in article, 2% errors in plurality form, 19% errors in punctuation, 5% errors in auxiliaries, 21% errors in unnecessary words, 5% errors in word choice, 5% errors in parallel structure, and 2% errors in redundancy. This indicated that the source of error involves the learner's inability to use and understand a foreign language system. The errors made by students when writing a thesis were caused by lack of attention, carelessness, fatigue, ideas, reading and writing practice, interference from the learner's first language, overgeneralization, translation from the first language, incomplete application of rules, or some other aspect of performance. On the other hand, the source of error involves the students' inability to use and understand a foreign language system.

Therefore, this study may put forward a few corresponding suggestions. Writing is not easy and, in some ways, more complex than speaking. In this case, the teacher or lecturer must understand that writing includes practical activities and provides teacher feedback. Writing receives the least amount of attention and priority from teachers and students. Besides, the capability to write well is not a naturally got skill. It needs to be trained. Teachers need to encourage students' motivation to write and provide supportive writing activities such as peer correction.

References

Ananda, R., Gani, S. A., & Sahardin, R. (2014). A study of error analysis from students' sentences in writing. *Studies in English Language and Education*, *1*(2), 81–95. https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v1i2.1828

Andrian. (2015). An error analysis of EFL students' English writing. *English Education Journal*, *6*(4), 511–523.

Arikunto, S. (2002). *Prosedur suatu penelitian: pendekatan praktek*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.

Ariyanti, A., & Fitriana, R. (2017). EFL students' difficulties and needs in essay writing. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Teacher Training and Education 2017*, *158*, 111–121. https://doi.org/10.2991/ictte-17.2017.4

Ariyanti, Ariyanti. (2016). The teaching of EFL writing in Indonesia. *Dinamika Ilmu*, *16*(2), 263. https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v16i2.274

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed.). New York: Longman.

Coleman, J. A. (2006). English-medium teaching in European higher education. *Language Teaching*, *39*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480600320X

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dulay, H., Burt, M., & Krashen, S. (1982). *Language two*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R., & Barkhuizen, G. (2005). *Analysing learner language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fareed, M., Ashraf, A., & Bilal, M. (2016). ESL learners' writing skills: Problems, factors and suggestions. *Journal of Education & Social Sciences*, *4*(2), 83–94. https://doi.org/10.20547/jess0421604201

Fenton-Smith, B., Humphreys, P., & Walkinshaw, I. (Eds.). (2017). *English medium instruction in higher education in Asia-Pacific*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Floranti, A. D. & H. N. A. (2019). Grammatical error performances in Indonesia EFL learners' writing. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, *3*(2), 277-295.

Gunantar, D. A. (2016). The impact of English as an international language on English Language Teaching in Indonesia. *The Impact of English As an International Language on English Language Teaching in Indonesia*, *10*(2), 141–151. https://doi.org/10.15294/lc.v10i2.5621

Hasan, J., & Marzuki, M. (2017). An analysis of student's ability in writing at Riau University Pekanbaru-Indonesia. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *7*(5), 380–388.

Irmalia, M. (2016). Indonesian interference in students' writing. *English Education Journal (EEJ)*, *7*(4), 496–508.

James, C. (2013). *Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis*. New York: Routledge.

Jenkins, J. (2009). *World Englishes: A Resource book for students*. London: Routledge.

Jenkins, J. (2014). *English as a Lingua Franca in the International University: The Politics of Academic English Language Policy*. New York: Routledge.

Keshavarz, M. H. (2012). *Contrastive analysis and error analysis*. Tehran: Rahnama Publications.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2014). The language (s) of HE: EMI and/or ELF and/or multilingualism?. *The Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *1*(1), 4–15.

Lauder, A. (2008). The status and function of English in Indonesia: A review of key factors. *Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia*, *12*(1), 9. https://doi.org/10.7454/mssh.v12i1.128

Liu, M., & Braine, G. (2005). Cohesive features in argumentative writing produced by Chinese undergraduates. *System*, *33*(4), 623–636. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2005.02.002

Lo, Y. Y., & Lin, A. M. Y. (2015). Special issue: Designing multilingual and multimodal CLIL frameworks for EFL students. *International Journal of*

Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, *18*(3), 261–269. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2014.988111

Manh, L. D. (2012). English as a medium of instruction in Asian universities: The case of Vietnam. *Language Education in Asia*, *3*(2), 263–267. https://doi.org/10.5746/leia/12/v3/i2/a14/manh

Mappiasse, S. S., & Bin Sihes, A. J. (2014). Evaluation of English as a Foreign Language and Its Curriculum in Indonesia: A Review. *English Language Teaching*, *7*(10), 113–122. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v7n10p113

Muhsin, M. A. (2016). Analysing the students errors in using simple present (A case study at Junior High School in Makassar). *Pacific Science Review B: Humanities and Social Sciences*, *2*(3), 81–87. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psrb.2016.09.006

Nur, M. R., & Madkur, A. (2014). Teachers' voices on the 2013 curriculum for English instructional activities. *IJEE*, *1*(2), 120–134.

Pudiyono. (2012). Indonesian gramatical interference towards the students' spoken and written English Educare. *International Journal of Educational Studies*, *4*(2), 229–244.

Richards, J. C. (2015). *Error analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition*. London: Routledge.

Richards, Jack C, & Schmidt, R. (2010). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (4th ed.). Edinburgh: Pearson Longman.

Rinnert, C., & Kobayashi, H. (2009). *Writing in foreign language contexts: learning, teaching, and research*. (R. M. Manchon, Ed.). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Sari, E. M. P. (2016). Interlingual errors and intralingual errors found in narrative text written by EFL students in Lampung. *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora*, *17*(2), 87–95. https://doi.org/10.23917/humaniora.v17i2.2501

Sattayatham, A., & Ratanapinyowong, P. (2008). Analysis of errors in paragraph writing in English by first year medical students from the four medical schools at Mahidol University. *Silpakorn University International Journal*, *88*, 17–38.

Suryanto, S. (2015). Issues in teaching English in a cultural context: A case of Indonesia. *The Journal of English Literacy Education (The Teaching and Learning of English as A Foreign Language*, *1*(2), 75–82.

Toh, G. (2016). *English as medium of instruction in Japanese higher education: Presumption, mirage or bluff?*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Wahyuni, S. (2017). Error analysis o f students' free writing (A Descriptive study at the English Department of STKIP Bina Bangsa). *STKIP Bina Bangsa*, *004*(2355).

Wang, Y. (2015). Negative transfer of mother language in English compositions by Jiujiang university students. *SHS Web of Conferences*, *14*, 01008. https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20151401008

Yuliandi, V. F. (2018, November 5). Singapura dan Malaysia jadi 2 negara Asia dengan kemampuan bahasa Inggris tertinggi. Retrieved from https://news.okezone.com/read/2018/11/05/65/1973580/singapura-dan-malaysia-jadi-2-negara-asia-dengan-kemampuan-bahasa-inggris-tertinggi