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Error Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Junior High School Students' Recount Text Writing

Nelu Sahidah¹, Andrian Nuriza Johan², Juita Triana³

¹Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, nelunailu79@gmail.com

²Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, andriannuriza@umpwr.ac.id

³Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, juitatriana8@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: nelunailu79@gmail.com¹

Abstract: Writing in English is a crucial ability in the modern, globalized society. English, one of the most popular languages in the world, is essential for communication, commerce, education, and technology. Writing well in English enables people to communicate with people from another country, share information, and clearly convey ideas. For EFL (English Foreign Language) learners, mastering English grammar is still a major issue, especially in settings where English is not used for daily communication. This study looks at grammatical error and most common grammatical errors in the recount texts written by SMP VIP Asy-Syafi'iyah Purworejo students. This study differs from previous studies by focusing on a pesantren-based school context. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method in analyzing the errors based on Burt, Dulay, and Krashen on Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The data sources of this research are the recount texts created by 18 seventh-grade students of SMP VIP Asy-Syafi'iyah Purworejo. The results of this research found 242 grammatical errors: omission (19%), addition (9%), misformation (69%), and misordering (3%). Misformation was the most dominant error. The finding suggests that English teachers in pesantren-based schools should focus more on verb tense instruction to mitigate misunderstanding in written English communication.

Keyword: grammatical error, surface strategy taxonomy, recount text writing

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language used in many countries. Learning English begins as early as elementary school or kindergarten. Learning English is difficult, because it has many components that must be learned to master English (Kumala, Banjar Putri; Aimah, Siti; Ifadah, 2018). There are four subjects or skills that must be considered in the process of learning English. These language skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Sipayung, R. W., & Benarita, 2023).

According to (Abdurakhmonova, 2023) writing is important because written communication is an essential life skill. She also states that writing skills are particular abilities that enable writers to intellectually interact with the message and convey their ideas

in words in a meaningful way. Thus, writing skills are difficult for students to learn. Writing requires learning and practice in school and other environments. For children to succeed academically, writing is a challenging critical thinking and complex skill that requires mastery (Prihandani, 2023). Writing is difficult for students because the students should select and organize ideas to convey meaning or thought through coherent expressions and structured paragraphs (Yudi Wahyudin et al., 2024). It means writing requires the ability to choose and organize sentences or information into coherent paragraphs. Therefore, students should learn and practice writing in order to produce writing that is easy to read and understand.

In writing, there are several components that must be applied by students such as text models, spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Students should already have some basic writing experience such as vocabulary growth, grammatical correctness, and cognitive engagement (Zhao, 2025). Students must be proficient in English grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation when producing texts (Ochoa, 2025). Students report serious difficulties with the process, which may have an impact on their confidence and academic achievement, despite the fact that it seems crucial. When learning a language, grammar is important. Grammar is frequently described by some as a method of organizing a language (Depraetere, I.; Langford, 2020). Naturally, the rules that govern a language have an impact on its structure. English sentences can be made more succinct and meaningful by following the rules set out by grammar as a language system ((Nurdin et al., 2024). Grammar has an important role in writing, students should not make grammatical mistakes in writing (Wulandari & Harida, 2021). In learning English, students generally make mistakes in writing paragraphs. To master writing well and correctly, the student should learn the correct grammar. By using the correct grammar, a sentence can be clear and meaningful (Huda & Rahadiano, 2021). If students do not have good grammar, then they will not be able to understand how to turn words well in order to become good sentences (Cam et al., 2017). Some mistakes can occur in paragraph writing when students do not understand grammar well, limited exposure to English, and disparities between Indonesian and English language structures (Hanif et al., 2026). Therefore, students should learn grammar better in order to produce clear and meaningful writing.

Because grammar is important in writing, the research was conducted to determine the grammatical errors made when students written recount texts. The authors would like to figure out the grammatical errors made by SMP Asy-Syafi'iyah Purworejo seventh grade students.

METHOD

This section describes how the research was conducted. This research used a descriptive qualitative method to find out and describe the grammatical errors in the recount text produced by Junior High School students VIP Asy-Syafi'iyah Purworejo. To collect the data, the writer used observations, tests, and documentation.

The author requested permission from the principal and English teacher of the school before beginning the study. After that, the author briefed the seventh-grade students about study's goal and got their informed consent. The students were made aware that their involvement was entirely voluntary and their information would be kept private and utilized exclusively for academic purposes.

The data were the recount texts that had been written by 18 students as samples to find out grammatical errors. The authors obtained recount texts from seventh graders by administering tests. To ensure spontaneity and reduce outside assistance or correction, each student was required to write a recount text in English on the subject of "My Experience When Study Tour" during a 60-minute writing session. Eighteen essays, each of 250 to 300 words, made up the data set. After that, the authors analyzed the texts one by one. The

authors used the surface strategy taxonomy by Burt, Dulay, and Krashen (1982) to identify and encode grammatical errors committed by students in the text. Grammatical errors fall into four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Following the analysis of the students' grammatical errors, the author classified them and made a percentage to get the dominant errors and the kinds of grammatical errors that the students committed.

To know the most frequent grammatical errors produced by the students, the authors used the formula:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

N : the total number of samples

F : the frequency of errors

P : the percentage of errors

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The surface strategy taxonomy developed by Burt, Dulay, and Krashen's, which encompasses omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, was employed by the author to analyze data regarding grammatical errors in student writing. The research found four primary categories of grammatical errors: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, with a total of 242 errors. The percentages of each kind of grammatical error that the seventh-grade junior high school students in their recount text writing. All of the data were presented in table 1-2 below.

Table 1. Students' summaries of grammatical errors

Sample	O	A	MF	MO	T
1	1	1	9	0	11
2	2	1	10	3	16
3	1	0	13	0	14
4	2	1	11	0	14
5	1	1	10	0	12
6	2	0	5	1	8
7	2	4	10	0	16
8	8	2	5	0	15
9	0	3	6	1	10
10	3	1	12	0	16
11	3	3	11	0	17
12	4	1	5	0	10
13	2	2	4	0	8
14	2	0	7	1	10
15	4	0	10	0	14
16	2	0	13	0	15
17	4	1	13	1	19
18	3	1	12	1	17
Total	46	22	166	8	242

Table 2. Data results of errors on surface strategy taxonomy

Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage
Omission	46	19%
Addition	22	9%
Misformation	166	69%
Misordering	8	3%
Total	242	100%

Source: Research data

According to the data analysis, the recount texts written by junior high school students in the seventh grade contain four different kinds of grammatical errors. The recount texts submitted by seventh-grade junior high school students. These errors fall into four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering exhibit these four kinds of grammatical errors. There were 242 grammatical errors made by them in total. The total number of each types is 46 (omission), 22 (addition), 166 (misformation), and 8 (misordering). According to the results, misformation errors accounted for 69% of all errors, making them the most common. The second most common errors were omissions. There were 19% of the omission errors. Addition errors represented 9% of the total. The least frequent was misordering errors. There were 3% of the misordering errors. These results showed that students struggled most with employing proper tenses and structures (misformation), which was followed by difficulties incorporating all necessary components into their sentences (omission). Although they are uncommon, errors involving needless additions and incorrect word order do occur.

This study aims to find grammatical errors in recount text written by seventh-grade students of SMP Asy-Syafi'iyah. From the results of the analysis, there are various kinds of errors. The authors found 242 errors in the writing of 18 students. The approach divides errors into four categories namely omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, using the surface strategy taxonomy developed by (Dulay, H., Burt, M., Krashen, 1982).

The first is misformation. It emerged as the most common type, gaining 69%, with 166 from 242 total frequency of errors. This high percentage indicates that students often have difficulty in choosing and applying the correct grammatical form, especially in the use of simple past tense and auxiliary. Details will be shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Misformation of error

Sentence Error	Alternative Sentence
I see a lot of old trains.	I saw a lot of old trains.
I am very happy.	I was very happy.

Source: Research data

Based on table 3, the characteristics of this error were usually misused words. The first sample was shown in Table four above. The sample showed that the student did not use the correct construction; that is, to form the past tense, the student should use irregular or regular verbs. The verb "see" was an irregular verb that cannot be added to any affix to be transformed into the past tense. The verb "see" should be changed to the irregular verb "saw". The correct sentence should be "I saw a lot of old trains". The next statement "I am very happy" was another example of a misformation. The word "is" should be put in the past tense using "was". Because if there was an adjective was used to describe a feeling that had been experienced or passed, the subject should come before the adjective and be was or were. The sentence "I was very happy" to be the proper statement. Kumala asserted that the dominance of misinformation stems from students' poor knowledge of English grammatical rules, especially those relating to past tense verbs (Kumala Syai Anjani & Fauris Zuhri, 2026).

The next error is omission. The errors were found 46 times in the omission errors with the percentage of 19%. This is the second common type of grammatical errors. Students make the error of omitting grammatical morphemes such as nouns and articles. The specifics are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Omission of error

Sentence Error	Alternative Sentence
There were vehicle in the Saloka Park.	There were vehicles in the Saloka Park.
There were four language plaque.	There were four language plaques.

Source: Research data

Based on table 4's example of errors, students' errors were omissions. The first example based on omission errors was "There were vehicle in the Saloka Park". This sentence is incomplete because it removes some of the structure that must appear to form a complete sentence. The underlined word vehicle omits the grammatical morpheme-s that must appear because it is in the plural nouns. The correct sentence should be "There were vehicles in the Saloka Park". The second example was when the adverb "four" was followed by the improper singular form "plaque". The noun that comes after the phrase "four", which indicates the number of more than one, should be distinct from the plural. In order to conform to the subject-verb-noun agreement in English, "plaque" should be changed by "plaques". Rahayu claimed that some essential components were absent from the students' writing (Frihatmawati et al., 2024).

Another error is the addition error. It became less frequent, representing 9% of the total errors, with 22 instances. Students making errors involve unnecessary elements, such as incorrect plurals. This is because the students often added some items which were not needed in the sentences and made the sentences unclear. The information will be shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Addition of error

Sentence Error	Alternative Sentence
My friends likes the water rides at Saloka Park.	My friends like the water rides at Saloka Park.
My favorite place was Saloka the Park.	My favorite place was Saloka Park.

Source: Research data

According to the data, the first sample of an additional error was "My friends likes the water rides at Saloka Park". The word likes should not be added with -s because the subject is plural. The sentence must be written "My friends like the water rides at Saloka Park". The next sample was the addition of the article "the" was inappropriate for location naming. The article "the" was not necessary because the word "Saloka Park" was a proper noun. It should be written "My favorite place was Saloka Park". Muniroh claimed that students still made errors by adding elements that should not be in the sentence (Muniroh et al., 2024).

The last error is misordering and was found to be the lowest frequency error with a percentage of 3%. The error occurred 8 times in the data analysis. The most common error is incorrect order or arrangement of words. These explanations will be shown in Table 7.

Table 6. Misordering of error

Sentence Error	Alternative Sentence
I had a great time on class outing last week.	I had a great time on outing class last week.
It was given by a guide tour.	It was given by a tour guide.

Source: Research data

An example of misordering error was "I had a great time on class outing last week". The sentence is incorrect. It happened because the students were confused about how to put the right order of noun phrases in the sentence. The sentence should be "I had a great time at an outing class last week". The word "tour guide" in sample 2 was misplaced. Since the term "tour" serves as a modifier for the word "guide", "tour guide" was the proper phrase. Fitri defined misordering as the improper arrangement of words or morphemes inside sentence structure (Fitri et al., 2025). Mufidah and Islam state that misordering was the least frequent errors (Mufidah, 2022). Additionally, they claim that students make a misordering error when they put that items in the wrong place.

This result is also relevant to previous research conducted by (Fahira & Arifin, 2024). They also used the surface strategy taxonomy to identify and analyze grammatical errors

made by tenth grade students. From the result, it was found that the most frequent errors were misinformation. The errors were found 85 times in the students' writing, with the percentage of 43.59%. They mentioned the students' understanding of the tense usage, verb forms, and word order. That was the reason why students made misinformation errors.

The same result also happened in (Amelia et al., 2021) that misinformation errors became the most frequent errors in their research. Errors were found 190 times in misinformation errors with a percentage 42.5%. They mentioned that the wrong auxiliary form made misinformation errors.

In contrast with this finding, the researchers conducted by (Hartati et al., 2023) and (Kumala, Banjar Putri; Aimah, Siti; Ifadah, 2018) found that omission errors were the most frequent errors in their research. They mentioned that the errors are mostly about the elimination of correct linguistic words, morphemes, and phrases. (Kumala, Banjar Putri; Aimah, Siti; Ifadah, 2018) found 300 omission errors with a percentage 37%. (Hartati et al., 2023) found 31 omission errors with a percentage 42.46%.

The study also indicates that poor writing techniques and a lack of explanation for original English input are factors in the continuation of these errors. Many students rely primarily on classroom education, which may emphasize theory over real-world application. As a result, while they can comprehend grammatical rules on their own, students find it difficult to use them when writing. These results emphasize the need for more communicative and process-based writing education from an educational standpoint. Teachers should urge students to edit their writing and give targeted criticism on common grammar errors. As a diagnostic tool, error analysis can be used to pinpoint flaws and modify instruction to meet the needs of the students. Additionally, students can improve their language correctness and fluency by incorporating grammar education into relevant writing exercises.

By knowing these types of grammatical errors, it is hoped that teachers can help and guide students to write English with better grammar and reduce these errors. In addition, this research is expected to be useful for other researchers in investigating and analyzing grammatical errors in writing recount texts in the future.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to find the types of grammatical errors in the recount text written by seventh graders. Research conducted at SMP Asy-Syafi'iyah Purworejo with 18 students as a sample using a qualitative method. The results revealed the total 242 frequency of errors which misinformation was the most common, accounting for 69 % of all errors. The second common error is omission with the percentage 19%. The third most common error was addition with the percentage 9%. Then, the lowest error is misordering with the percentage 3%.

It is clear that in writings, the students still make errors. By investigating the percentage of errors, students most often make errors in the misinformation area. It means that misinformation is considered more difficult than others.

It is recommended that teachers pay more attention to the grammar of students. It's good if the students have a weekly journal as a writing exercise. As a result, the students can better understand grammar and use proper grammar when writing.

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