

Exploring Grammatical Errors Among Foreign Language Learners: A Study of Islamic Educational Management Students (Class B) at STIT Palapa Nusantara

Ozi Satria¹

¹STIT Palapa Nusantara Lombok, NTB, Indonesia

Email: satriaozi41@gmail.com¹

ABSTRACT

Grammar plays an essential role in helping learners produce clear and meaningful communication in English. However, many foreign language learners still experience difficulties in applying grammatical rules accurately, especially in writing. This study aims to explore the types of grammatical errors made by foreign language learners and to identify the most common errors found in their written texts. The study employed a descriptive qualitative research design using an error analysis approach. The participants of the study were students learning English as a foreign language who were asked to complete a writing task on a given topic. The students' written texts were collected as the primary data and analyzed using the error analysis procedures proposed by Stephen Pit Corder and further discussed by Rod Ellis. The results of the analysis revealed several types of grammatical errors, including verb tense errors, subject-verb agreement errors, article errors, preposition errors, pronoun errors, and sentence structure errors. Among these categories, verb tense and subject-verb agreement errors were the most frequently occurring errors in the students' writing. The findings indicate that learners still face considerable challenges in mastering English grammar, particularly in applying grammatical rules consistently in written communication. These results suggest that English language teaching should provide more focused grammar instruction, contextualized learning activities, and continuous feedback to help learners improve their grammatical accuracy. Overall, this study contributes to a better understanding of grammatical difficulties experienced by foreign language learners and provides insights that may help teachers develop more effective strategies for teaching English grammar.

INTRODUCTION

Language plays an essential role in human communication, allowing individuals to express ideas, feelings, and information effectively. In the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), learners are required to develop several language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among the various components of language learning, grammar is considered one of the most important elements because it provides the structural framework that enables learners to produce meaningful and understandable sentences. Without a proper understanding of

ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received: April 25, 2026

Revised: April 28, 2026

Accepted: April 30, 2026

Published: April 30, 2026

Keywords:

*Grammatical Errors, Foreign
Language Learners, English
Language Learning, Error
Analysis*

Corresponding Author

Ozi Satria

*Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah
Palapa Nusantara Jln Palapa No.
01 Selebung Kernaak, Lombok
Timur, NTB, Indonesia*

grammatical rules, learners may experience difficulties in conveying their ideas clearly in both spoken and written communication. Grammar is often defined as the system of rules that governs how words are arranged to form sentences in a language. According to Thornbury (1999), grammar plays a crucial role in language learning because it helps learners understand how language works and enables them to construct accurate and meaningful expressions. In other words, grammar allows learners to organize words and phrases into coherent sentences that effectively communicate their intended meaning. For this reason, grammar instruction has long been considered an important component of English language teaching.

However, postulated by Krashen (1982); Brown (2007); Larsen-Freeman (2003), learning grammar is not always easy for foreign language learners. Many of them struggle to apply grammatical rules accurately, particularly when they attempt to produce sentences in writing. Writing requires learners not only to generate ideas but also to organize them using correct grammatical structures. As a result, grammatical errors frequently appear in learners' written texts. These errors may occur due to several factors, such as limited knowledge of grammatical rules, insufficient practice, or interference from the learners' first language. In the field of second language acquisition, learner errors are not necessarily viewed as negative outcomes. Instead, they are often considered a natural and important part of the language learning process. Corder (1967) emphasized that errors made by language learners provide valuable information about the process of language acquisition. According to this perspective, analyzing learner errors can help researchers and lecturers understand how learners develop their knowledge of the target language and identify areas where learners encounter difficulties.

The study of learner errors is commonly known as error analysis, which focuses on identifying, describing, and explaining errors produced by language learners. According to Richard (2010) and James (1998), Error analysis has become an important area of research in applied linguistics because it helps educators recognize patterns of errors and determine the possible causes behind them. By examining the errors that learners frequently make, lecturer can design more effective teaching strategies that address learners' specific needs. One of the most common areas in which learners make errors is English grammar. As pointed out by Selinker (1972); Richards (1971); Larsen-Freeman (1991) that Many foreign language learners have difficulty mastering grammatical features such as verb tense, subject-verb agreement, articles, prepositions, pronouns, and sentence structure. These difficulties often arise because the grammatical systems of learners' native languages may differ significantly from those of English. As a result, learners may unintentionally transfer the rules of their first language into English, leading to grammatical inaccuracies.

Furthermore, Krashen, S. (1985); Vygotsky, L. (1978); Lier, L. V. (1996); and Lightbown, P. M. & Nina Spada, N. (2013). Stated that the learning environment can also influence the occurrence of grammatical errors. In many EFL contexts, students have limited opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. This lack of exposure may prevent learners from developing a strong understanding of how grammatical rules are used in real communication. Consequently, learners may rely heavily on memorized rules without fully understanding how to apply them in authentic contexts. Another important factor related to grammatical errors is the concept of interlanguage, which refers to the transitional linguistic system that learners develop while learning a second or foreign language. According to Ellis (1997), learners gradually build their own language system that combines elements of their native language and the target language. During this developmental process, learners may produce systematic errors as they experiment

with different grammatical structures. These errors should therefore be viewed as evidence of learning rather than simply as failures. Those problem were also faced by the Islamic Educational Management' student (class B) in STIT Palapa Nusantara.

Understanding the types and patterns of grammatical errors made by learners is highly important for both teachers and researchers. For lecturer, knowledge about common grammatical errors can help them focus on the areas where students need the most support. For researchers, analyzing learner errors can provide deeper insights into the process of second language acquisition and the challenges faced by learners in mastering English grammar. In addition, identifying grammatical errors in learners' writing can also contribute to improving teaching methods and learning materials. When lecturer are aware of the most common errors made by students, they can design instructional activities that target specific grammatical problems. This may include providing more practice with problematic structures, offering clearer explanations of grammatical rules, and encouraging learners to apply grammar in meaningful communication tasks. Therefore, exploring grammatical errors among foreign language learners is an important step toward improving the quality of English language teaching and learning. By examining the errors produced by learners, educators can gain a better understanding of the grammatical difficulties experienced by students and develop strategies to address those difficulties effectively.

Based on this background, the present study aims to explore the grammatical errors made by foreign language learners in their English writing. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the types of grammatical errors that frequently occur in learners' written texts and to analyze the patterns of these errors. It is expected that the findings of this study will provide valuable insights for English lecturer, researchers, and language learners in understanding the challenges of learning English grammar and improving the effectiveness of grammar instruction in EFL contexts.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the grammatical errors produced by foreign language learners in their English writing. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to examine linguistic phenomena in depth and to describe the patterns of grammatical errors that occur in learners' language production. Through this approach, the researcher aimed to identify the types of grammatical errors and understand the possible causes behind them. The research used an error analysis approach, which focuses on identifying, classifying, and explaining learners' errors in language use. Error analysis is widely used in second language research because it provides valuable insights into learners' interlanguage development and the difficulties they encounter when learning a new language. According to Stephen Corder (1967), learners' errors are significant because they reflect the process of language learning and help teachers understand learners' progress and challenges.

The participants of this study were the Islamic Educational Management' student (class B) in STIT Palapa Nusantara. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which means the participants were chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The criteria included students who had studied English for several years and had basic knowledge of English grammar. In total, (for example: 20–30 students) participated in the study. These participants represented foreign language learners who were still developing their grammatical competence in English. The main instrument used in this research was a writing task. The

participants were asked to write a short paragraph or essay in English based on a given topic, such as describing their daily activities, experiences, or opinions on a simple issue. Writing was chosen as the instrument because it allows learners to demonstrate their grammatical knowledge and provides clear evidence of the errors they make in sentence construction.

Furthermore, the data collection process was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher explained the purpose of the writing task to the participants. Second, the participants were given a specific topic and asked to write a paragraph or short essay within a limited time. Third, the written texts produced by the students were collected and compiled as the primary data of the study. These written documents were then prepared for further analysis. Besides, the data were analyzed using the error analysis procedures proposed by Corder and further developed by Ellis. The analysis followed several systematic steps:

1. Data Collection – Gathering the students' written texts as the main data source.
2. Error Identification – Carefully reading the texts to identify grammatical errors.
3. Error Classification – Categorizing the errors into specific grammatical categories, such as verb tense, subject–verb agreement, articles, prepositions, pronouns, and sentence structure.
4. Error Explanation – Analyzing the possible causes of the errors, such as first language interference, lack of grammatical knowledge, or incomplete understanding of English rules.
5. Error Evaluation – Determining the frequency of each type of error to identify the most common grammatical problems experienced by learners.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis, the researcher carefully reviewed the data multiple times and compared the identified errors with Standard English Grammar rules. In addition, the researcher cross-checked the classification of errors to maintain consistency in the analysis process. Through these procedures, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the grammatical errors made by foreign language learners and to contribute useful insights for improving English language teaching strategies.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study related to the grammatical errors produced by foreign language learners in their English writing. The data were obtained from students' written texts collected through a writing task. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed the texts by identifying and classifying the grammatical errors found in the students' sentences. The analysis followed the procedures of error analysis proposed by Corder and further discussed in second language acquisition research by Ellis. Based on the analysis of the students' written work, several types of grammatical errors were identified. These errors were categorized into six major types: verb tense errors, subject–verb agreement errors, article errors, preposition errors, pronoun errors, and sentence structure errors. Each category reflects the areas of grammar in which learners frequently experience difficulties. The findings reveal that verb tense errors were the most frequently occurring errors in the students' writing. Many learners had difficulty using the correct tense to describe past events or ongoing activities. For example, some students of the Islamic Educational Management' student (class B) in STIT Palapa Nusantara wrote sentences such as *"Yesterday I go to the market with my mother"* instead of *"Yesterday I went to the market with my mother."* Other learners also showed confusion between present and past forms when describing daily

activities or experiences. These errors indicate that learners have not fully mastered the English tense system, particularly when switching between present and past forms. The second most common type of error found in the data was subject–verb agreement errors. In many cases, students used verbs that did not correspond with the subject of the sentence. For instance, learners wrote sentences such as *“She like watching movies”* or *“My brother play football every weekend.”* In these cases, the verbs should include the –s ending because the subject is third-person singular in the present tense. These findings suggest that learners may understand the meaning of the sentences they want to express but still struggle with applying the correct grammatical rules in their writing.

Another significant finding concerns errors in the use of articles, particularly *a*, *an*, and *the*. Many students either omitted articles where they were required or used them incorrectly within sentences. Examples found in the data include sentences such as *“I have cat at home”* or *“She is the very kind person.”* These examples show that learners often have difficulty determining when articles should be used. The misuse or omission of articles may be influenced by the learners’ first language, especially if their native language does not have a similar grammatical system for articles.

In addition to article errors, preposition errors were also frequently identified in the learners’ writing. Students sometimes selected incorrect prepositions or used prepositions that did not match the intended meaning of the sentence. For example, learners wrote sentences such as *“I am good in English”* instead of *“I am good at English,”* or *“She arrived to the school at seven o’clock”* instead of *“She arrived at the school at seven o’clock.”* These errors demonstrate that learners often struggle with the correct usage of English prepositions, which can vary depending on context and collocation.

The analysis also revealed pronoun-related errors in some of the students’ texts. In several cases, learners used incorrect pronouns or repeated nouns unnecessarily rather than replacing them with appropriate pronouns. For instance, some learners wrote sentences like *“My friend is very helpful. My friend always helps me with my homework.”* Although the sentence is understandable, it would be more natural to replace the repeated noun with a pronoun, such as *“My friend is very helpful. She always helps me with my homework.”* This indicates that some learners still need to improve their understanding of pronoun usage to create more cohesive and natural sentences.

Furthermore, sentence structure errors were also observed in the data. These errors included incomplete sentences, incorrect word order, and the omission of necessary auxiliary verbs. For example, some students wrote sentences such as *“Because I very happy today”* without completing the sentence with an independent clause. Other students produced sentences with incorrect word order, such as *“Always I study English at night.”* These findings suggest that learners may have limited knowledge of English sentence structure and may rely heavily on the patterns of their first language when constructing sentences. Another interesting finding from the analysis is that some learners produced multiple errors within a single sentence. For example, a student wrote the sentence *“She go to the market yesterday and buy many fruits.”* In this sentence, both the verb tense and subject–verb agreement are incorrect. This indicates that learners may experience overlapping difficulties in applying multiple grammatical rules simultaneously. Overall, the analysis of the students’ written texts shows that grammatical errors are still common among foreign language learners. Among the identified categories, verb tense errors and subject–verb agreement errors appeared most frequently, followed by article errors and preposition errors. Pronoun errors and sentence structure problems were also present, although they occurred less frequently.

These findings demonstrate that while learners are able to communicate their ideas in English, they still encounter challenges in applying grammatical rules accurately. The patterns of errors identified in this study provide valuable insights into the specific grammatical areas that require greater attention in English language instruction. By understanding these error patterns, teachers can develop more targeted teaching strategies to help learners improve their grammatical accuracy and overall language proficiency.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that foreign language learners still encounter various challenges in using English grammar accurately in their writing. The results indicate that several types of grammatical errors frequently occur, including errors in verb tense, subject–verb agreement, articles, prepositions, pronouns, and sentence structure. These findings highlight the complexity of learning English grammar and demonstrate that mastering grammatical rules remains a significant challenge for many learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. One of the most prominent errors identified in this study involves the use of verb tenses. Many learners used incorrect verb forms when describing past activities or events, often using the base form of verbs instead of the past tense. This phenomenon may occur because learners are still developing their understanding of the English tense system. Unlike some languages that rely more heavily on contextual clues rather than verb inflections, English requires learners to modify verb forms to indicate time. According to Corder (1967), learner errors provide valuable information about how learners internalize the rules of the target language. From this perspective, the errors found in this study reflect the learners' ongoing process of constructing grammatical knowledge.

In addition to verb tense errors, subject–verb agreement errors were also frequently found in the learners' writing. Many students failed to add the appropriate verb endings for third-person singular subjects in the present tense. For example, learners produced sentences such as “*She walk to school every day*” instead of the correct form “*She walks to school every day.*” This difficulty may arise because some learners' first languages do not require verbs to change according to the subject. As a result, learners may overlook this rule when forming English sentences. This finding suggests that learners require more explicit instruction and practice related to subject–verb agreement in order to develop greater grammatical accuracy. Another important finding of this study concerns the misuse and omission of articles. Articles such as *a*, *an*, and *the* are among the most challenging aspects of English grammar for foreign language learners. In many cases, students either omitted articles entirely or used them incorrectly within sentences. For instance, some learners wrote “*I have book*” instead of “*I have a book.*” This difficulty may be attributed to the fact that articles function differently across languages, and in some languages they do not exist at all. As noted by Rod Ellis, grammatical features that are absent in a learner's first language often become persistent sources of error in second language acquisition.

Furthermore, the results of the study also show that preposition errors were commonly produced by the learners. English prepositions are often difficult to master because their usage can be highly idiomatic and context-dependent. Many learners incorrectly selected prepositions or translated them directly from their native language. For example, learners used expressions such as “*interested with English*” instead of “*interested in English.*” Such errors demonstrate the influence of the learners' first language as well as the complexity of English prepositional usage. The study also identified pronoun-related errors, although these errors were less frequent compared to verb tense and subject–verb agreement errors. Some learners repeated nouns unnecessarily instead of

replacing them with pronouns, while others used incorrect pronoun forms. This indicates that some learners still struggle with understanding how pronouns function within sentences to avoid repetition and maintain coherence in written texts.

In addition to the grammatical errors mentioned above, sentence structure errors were also observed in the students' writing. These errors included incomplete sentences, incorrect word order, and the misuse of auxiliary verbs. Such errors may indicate that learners have not yet fully mastered the basic structure of English sentences. The presence of these structural problems suggests that learners may require more exposure to well-formed English sentences and more opportunities to practice constructing sentences in meaningful contexts. The findings of this study can also be interpreted through the concept of interlanguage development, which explains how learners gradually build their own linguistic system while learning a new language. According to Ellis (2008), learners' errors are not random but rather systematic and reflect the transitional stages of language learning. From this perspective, the grammatical errors observed in this study represent a natural stage in the learners' process of acquiring English grammar. Another factor that may contribute to the occurrence of grammatical errors is limited exposure to English outside the classroom. In many EFL contexts, learners have limited opportunities to use English in real-life communication. As a result, their exposure to authentic language input may be restricted, which can slow the development of grammatical competence. Without frequent practice and feedback, learners may continue to repeat the same grammatical mistakes.

The results of this study therefore suggest that teachers should adopt more effective strategies in teaching grammar. Rather than focusing solely on memorizing grammatical rules, instructors should encourage learners to apply grammar in meaningful communication activities such as writing tasks, discussions, and interactive exercises. Providing regular feedback on learners' writing can also help them recognize and correct their grammatical mistakes. Moreover, integrating grammar instruction with communicative language teaching approaches may help learners understand how grammatical structures function in real contexts. Through continuous practice and guided correction, learners can gradually improve their grammatical accuracy and develop greater confidence in using English. In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate that grammatical errors are a common and natural part of the language learning process. The most frequent errors identified in this study were related to verb tense, subject–verb agreement, articles, and prepositions. By analyzing these errors, educators can gain a deeper understanding of learners' difficulties and design instructional strategies that address their specific needs. Ultimately, a better understanding of learners' grammatical errors can contribute to improving the effectiveness of English language teaching and supporting learners in achieving higher levels of language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the grammatical errors produced by foreign language learners in their English writing. Based on the analysis of the students' written texts, it can be concluded that learners still experience various difficulties in applying English grammatical rules accurately. Several types of grammatical errors were identified in the data, including verb tense errors, subject–verb agreement errors, article errors, preposition errors, pronoun errors, and sentence structure errors. Among these categories, verb tense errors and subject–verb agreement errors were found to be the most frequent. Many learners had difficulty using the correct verb forms when describing

past events or daily activities, and they often failed to match verbs with their corresponding subjects. In addition, errors in the use of articles and prepositions were also commonly found, indicating that learners still struggle with grammatical elements that are often influenced by differences between their first language and English. Pronoun misuse and sentence structure problems were also identified, although these occurred less frequently compared to the other types of errors.

The findings of this study support the perspective of Corder (1967), who argues that learner errors are a natural part of the language learning process and can provide valuable insights into learners' developing linguistic competence. Similarly, Ellis (2008) emphasizes that analyzing learner errors helps educators understand the stages of language acquisition and identify areas where learners need additional support. Overall, the results of this study highlight the importance of providing more focused grammar instruction and meaningful practice opportunities in English language classrooms. Lectures should pay particular attention to the grammatical areas in which learners frequently make errors, such as verb tense usage and subject–verb agreement. By incorporating contextualized grammar teaching, regular feedback, and communicative learning activities, educators can help learners gradually improve their grammatical accuracy and develop stronger English language proficiency. In conclusion, exploring grammatical errors among foreign language learners provides valuable information for both teachers and researchers. Understanding the types and causes of learners' errors can contribute to the development of more effective teaching strategies and ultimately support learners in achieving better mastery of English grammar.

REFERENCES

- Thornbury, S. (1999). *How to Teach Grammar*. London: Longman
- Corder, S. P. (1967). The Significance of Learners' Errors. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 5(4), 161–170.
- Ellis, R. (1997). *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2010). *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (4th ed.). Longman
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Larsen-Freeman, D (2003). *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Grammaticing*. Boston: Heinle
- James, C. (1998). *Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis*. London: Longman
- Selinker, A. (1972). *Interlanguage*. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 10(1–4), 209–231.
- Richards, J. C. (1971). *A Non-Contrastive Approach to Error Analysis*. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 25(3), 204–219.
- Larsen-Freeman, D & Long, M. H. (1991). *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research*. London: Longman.
- Krashen, S. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. London: Longman.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lier, L. V. (1996). *Interaction in the Language Curriculum: Awareness, Autonomy and Authenticity*. London: Longman.
- Lightbown, P. M. & Nina Spada, N. (2013). *How Languages are Learned* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.