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Grammar Gone Astray: Language Structure Evaluation on The IELTS Writing Task One by EFL Students

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study investigates the grammatical errors in the IELTS Writing Task One made by Indonesian EFL students. The research aims to enhance student's comprehension and assist teachers in improving instructional approaches. The data were collected and analyzed qualitatively based on the frameworks by Chuang & Nesi and Vo. Findings revealed that grammatical errors were predominant, accounting for 88% of the total errors, with verb forms, noun errors, and pronoun errors being the most frequent. The study highlights the need for targeted instructional interventions to improve language proficiency and accuracy in the IELTS writing among Indonesian college students. These findings suggest that detailed attention to grammatical instruction and practice can significantly enhance student's writing performance. **Keyword:** EFL students, grammar errors, IELTS, instructional interventions, language proficiency, writing task.

ABSTRAK

Studi ini menyelidiki kesalahan tata bahasa dalam IELTS Writing Task One yang dilakukan oleh mahasiswa EFL Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman mahasiswa dan membantu guru dalam meningkatkan pendekatan pengajaran. Data dikumpulkan dan dianalisis secara kualitatif berdasarkan kerangka kerja oleh Chuang & Nesi dan Vo. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa kesalahan tata bahasa dominan, mencakup 88% dari total kesalahan, dengan bentuk kata kerja, kesalahan kata benda, dan kesalahan kata ganti menjadi yang paling sering terjadi. Studi ini menyoroti perlunya intervensi pengajaran yang ditargetkan untuk meningkatkan kemahiran dan akurasi bahasa dalam penulisan IELTS di kalangan mahasiswa Indonesia. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa perhatian terperinci terhadap instruksi dan praktik tata bahasa dapat secara signifikan meningkatkan kinerja penulisan mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: Siswa EFL, kesalahan tata bahasa, IELTS, intervensi instruksional, kemahiran berbahasa, tugas menulis.

1. Introduction

The IELTS (the International English Language Testing System) is a regularly required exam for admission to universities and colleges in English-speaking nations. It is a generally recognized measure of an individual's ability to communicate effectively in the language. Institutions in UK, Australia, Canada, and numerous nations use it. For Indonesian students, particularly those pursuing higher education, taking the IELTS exam is crucial to determine the higher probability of winning the school admission. Even though English is treated as a foreign language in Indonesia, it is the language of teaching in many higher education institutions worldwide, especially in English-speaking nations. Indonesian students may need to take the IELTS exam as part of the admissions process if they plan to pursue higher education in a country where English is the predominant language of teaching (Rahayu, 2019; Setyowati, 2019).

The IELTS scores assist colleges in determining an applicant's language competency and ensuring their ability to effectively participate in academic activities conducted in English. Students should examine the entrance requirements of the universities or programs they are interested in to see if an IELTS or similar English proficiency test is required. Overall, it seems that English language proficiency, as measured by standardized tests such as the IELTS, is becoming increasingly important in Indonesia.

The IELTS consists of four major sections: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Listening involves participants listening to a series of recordings and answering questions about what they hear. Meanwhile, in the reading test, participants read passages and answer questions to demonstrate their reading comprehension abilities. The next step is to write. This section has two jobs. Task One entails describing or summarizing visual information, whereas Task Two demands composing an essay in response to a specific topic. The last option is to speak. The speaking exam measures an individual's ability to communicate orally. It involves a face-to-face interview with an examiner. Test takers must acquaint themselves with the test structure, practice important abilities, and grasp the unique needs of the institutions or organizations to which they are applying. Therefore, there are also various programs and courses available in Indonesia to help students prepare for the IELTS (Damayanti et al., 2023).

Many students seem to struggle with the IELTS writing module (Nushi & Razdar, 2021). However, it is not true that writing is the most difficult element of the the IELTS for everyone. Other modules, such as reading and listening, may prove problematic for some test takers. It is vital to remember that the precise problems that test takers confront can differ depending on their past knowledge, writing experiences, and language skills (Alavi & Masjedlou, 2017; Jafarigohar & Karami, 2017). In actuality, Indonesian students struggle with writing, especially in English, aside from the IELTS. Large class sizes, a lack of writing experience, and the impact of the first language on writing are some of the factors that lead to these challenges (Hapsari et al., 2022). It is crucial to remember that students from other nations may also encounter these challenges; they are not exclusive to Indonesian students. Several researches have been conducted to address writing difficulties that have come up in different studies. Collaborative writing on wikis has been proposed as one way to deal with the challenges associated with academic writing (Jafarigohar & Karami, 2017). Students may need to strengthen their prior knowledge, generate ideas, work on their grammar and vocabulary, and write more to improve their writing abilities (Nushi & Razdar, 2021).

Writing abilities and grammar knowledge are closely related. Written communication's structural foundation is formed by grammatical ability. One of grammar's main functions is to guarantee expressions are precise and clear, enabling authors to communicate concepts clearly and unequivocally (Hapsari et al., 2022). Grammatical patterns portraying the language structure of a sentence that support the order and flow of ideas, such as transitional phrases and suitable punctuation, are crucial to literary coherence and cohesiveness. Furthermore, using proper grammar makes written work seem more credible and professional, demonstrating the writer's dedication to creating excellent material (Al-Jarf, 2022; María del Mar Sánchez-Pérez, 2023). Effective writing essentially depends on having a solid grasp of grammar, which affects written communication's clarity, coherence, professionalism, and general quality.

Furthermore, there has been a study on the IELTS Writing, which evaluates the impact of task demands on test-takers performance in the IELTS Academic Writing Task One and Task Two. It discovered that Task One, which involved explaining a graph, resulted in much higher accuracy, whereas Task Two, an argumentative essay, was more complex in terms of grammatical subordination and lexical diversity (Ahmadi et al., 2019). Another study focused on the difficulties faced by Indonesian university students in the IELTS writing section, highlighting those students struggled with background knowledge, idea development, vocabulary, grammar, and writing experiences when completing Academic Writing Tasks One and Two. These studies provide useful insights into the specific obstacles and performance variations connected with writing in the IELTS Tasks One and Two (Nartiningrum et al., 2021).

After expanding on the previously stated facts, it is clear that utilizing perfect grammar is critical when writing for the IELTS. Previous research has indicated that grammar difficulties persist when writing in the IELTS. Of course, further study is needed to map the grammar problems that occur when writing the IELTS. This is essential for the future, as it allows for the development of teaching materials that address the issues identified by this research.

As the IELTS writing process significantly captures students' focus on proper grammatical structures and lexical usage, this study aims to address two research questions: 1) What are the common grammatical errors observed in Indonesian college students' the IELTS writing Task One? 2) What types of grammatical errors do Indonesian college students frequently make when completing the IELTS writing Task One? This

research attempts to enhance students' comprehension of grammatical usage and assist teachers in navigating instructional approaches to specific grammatical concepts.

2. Literature Review

This section focuses on the concepts within the realms of the IELTS writing, especially grammar errors in writing Task 1.

2.1. The IELTS

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) has four papers, listening, reading, writing and speaking. These components are crafted to reflect real-life scenarios where English language proficiency is essential, ensuring that candidates are well-equipped to navigate through academic, professional, and social settings for communication.

There are two IELTS modules for the test takers such as academic and general training. These two modules allow test takers to align their preparation and examination with their specific objectives. For higher education and professional registration in English-speaking environments, the Academic Module serves as the requisite part. Conversely, the General Training Module is tailored for those planning to migrate to English-speaking countries for secondary education and work experience to fulfil immigration requirements.

This study focuses on the Academic Module of the IELTS which is meticulously designed to meet the demands of academic institutions. The academic module plays a critical role in assessing whether candidates possess the language proficiency requirement at the university level. Therefore, it serves as a comprehensive measure of English language proficiency with a specific focus on the academic skills necessary for success in higher education.

2.2. Writing in the IELTS

The IELTS writing section is designed to evaluate a candidate's ability to express ideas through text, organize arguments logically, and utilize English grammatically. It is divided into two tasks. The IELTS writing band scores range from 0-9 to show the candidate's writing proficiency. These scores are determined based on four critical criteria: Task Achievement (for Task One) or Task Response (for Task Two), Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy (IELTS.org, 2023). Each criterion is equally measured and contributes to the overall band score in the Writing section.

a) Task Achievement and Task Response
   Task Achievement (Task One) assesses how well a candidate fulfils the requirements of the task, including the appropriate presentation of information, overview of main trends, and accurate data description for the Academic module. In Task Two, Task Response evaluates the candidate's ability to respond to the question effectively, presenting a clear position and supporting it with relevant arguments and examples.
b) Coherence and Cohesion
   This criterion examines the logical flow of ideas and the use of cohesive devices (e.g., conjunctions, pronouns, and connectors) to enhance the reader's understanding. Effective paragraphing and a logical progression of ideas are essential for achieving a high score in Coherence and Cohesion.
c) Lexical Resource
   Lexical Resource refers to the range and accuracy of the candidate's vocabulary. A high score in this area requires the use of varied vocabulary to convey precise meanings and the ability to employ lexical features appropriate to the context, with minimal errors.
d) Grammatical Range and Accuracy
   This aspect evaluates the candidate's command of grammatical structures. To score well, candidates must demonstrate a wide range of grammatical forms with accuracy and flexibility. Frequent errors or the use of only simple sentence forms can lower this score.
   Achieving a high band score in the IELTS Writing demands practice, a deep understanding of the test's requirements, and the ability to apply one's language skills effectively within strict time constraints. The IELTS Writing test plays a pivotal role in determining a candidate's readiness for the demands of academic writing, especially for Writing Task One.

Writing encompasses not only basic skills like correct spelling, appropriate tense usage, and selection of words but also demands sophisticated skills including planning, structuring, idea development, translating

ideas and concepts into language, text evaluation and revision, and strategical transitioning between writing phases (van der Loo et al., 2018). These intricate requirements can often lead to heightened levels of anxiety and concern for language students (Richards & Renadya, 2002), as explored by Muluk et al., (2022) in their investigation on flipping the IELTS Writing course and its influence on student outcomes and perceptions, featured in Studies in English Language and Education.

2.3. Grammar in Writing Task 1

In the IELTS Writing Task One, candidates are required to provide a detailed description of visual data, which may come in the form of graphs, tables, charts, or diagrams. The response should be no fewer than 150 words in length and composed in an academic tone. This part of the test evaluates participants on their capability to structure their writing effectively, depict processes or procedures, describe objects, and elucidate the functioning of mechanisms or systems.

Pell in Ahmadi et al., (2019) highlighted seven crucial aspects of performance for the IELTS Writing Task One:

mentioned that there are at least seven performance importance for writing task One, such as:

1. Candidates taking the academic module are required to compose a report based on given data, a map, or a description of a process.
2. The writing should contain no fewer than 150 words.
3. Approximately 20 minutes should be allocated to this segment of the examination.
4. The score from Task 2 contributes one-third to the overall writing test score.
5. Evaluation will be based on four distinct criteria for writing assessment, with each criterion accounting for 25% of the score.
6. Test takers must demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively in English.
7. Success hinges on understanding precisely the expectations of the IELTS examiners from the candidates.

Ahmadi et al., (2019) further emphasize that many students worry excessively about minor details instead of focusing on the essential aspects of their scores. Grammar in the IELTS Writing Task One is a foundational element that significantly influences a candidate's performance and score. Besides to achieve a high-quality written piece, a strong command of English grammar is necessary. The students need to ensure that the text is precise and appropriately structured.

2.4 Error Analysis and Grammar Mistakes

Error analysis is a crucial approach in evaluating grammar mistakes, particularly for Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Since grammar is a key criterion for achieving a high score in the IELTS writing section, it is essential to identify and understand the grammatical errors made by students. This analytical method serves as a valuable tool for diagnosing specific grammatical challenges faced by these learners. It offers insights into the types of errors that occur when students attempt to describe, summarize, or explain visual data. By systematically analyzing these mistakes, educators can better understand the areas where learners struggle and develop targeted strategies to improve their grammatical accuracy and overall writing performance.

Moreover, Chuang & Nesi, (2006) explained that Chinese students are proficient in spoken and written English, yet the language component needs improvement. The survey conducted in English classes reveals that grammar errors frequently occur during the teaching and learning process. These errors can hinder effective communication and overall language proficiency. To address this issue, the error analysis of grammar mistakes is needed to resolve the mismatch in writing.

Corder in Yılmaz & Demir, (2020) mentions the three important functions of error analysis in the academic field. Firstly, error analysis can reveal the student's effort and journey in achieving their language learning goals and predict what further learning is required. Secondly, it offers evidence regarding the processes of language teaching and acquisition, shedding light on the strategies utilized by learners in navigating the language. Thirdly, errors serve as indispensable learning tools for the learners themselves, as they are evaluated as a means of learning resources about the language they are acquiring.

This perspective acknowledges that making language errors is not only a strategy employed by children acquiring their mother tongue but also by individuals learning a second language. Error analysis is aimed to achieve both theoretical and practical objectives. Theoretically, it seeks to elucidate what is learned and how second language acquisition occurs. Practically, its goal is to enhance pedagogical strategies which allow for more effective learning. This is accomplished by analyzing the students' language errors, which aids in

identifying the issue and assessing the most appropriate teaching methods for each student (Corder, 1974).

3. Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive study that identified the most common grammatical errors made by students in writing Task 1 and how the errors effected the overall writing performance.

3.1. Research Design

This study uses qualitative data and error analysis by Chuang & Nesi, (2006) that involved four stages, such as error identification, classification, quantification and explanation. The initial stage, error identification, involves detecting grammatical errors in the students' writing by carefully reviewing their work to pinpoint specific instances of incorrect grammar usage. Once errors are identified, they are categorized based on the type of grammatical mistake, such as errors related to verb tense, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, articles, and other grammatical elements.

In the quantification stage, the frequency of each type of error is measured, allowing researchers to determine which grammatical issues are most prevalent among the students. The final stage, error explanation, involves analysing the reasons behind the errors, considering factors such as the influence of the student's native language, common misconceptions, and the instructional methods used in teaching grammar. By systematically following these stages, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the grammatical challenges faced by Chinese students, highlighting areas needing improvement and offering insights into developing more effective teaching strategies to enhance grammatical proficiency.

The study analysed the errors by linguistic categorization and surface strategy taxonomy, which were adapted from Chuang & Nesi, (2006) and Vo (2018) approach regarding "comprehensive error tagging systems." This research examined and assessed errors according to the language categories they fell under. To be able to support the coding and indicate how each linguistic category's linguistic unit was committed, the surface structure category was employed.

3.2. Course Design

The course was structured into twelve sessions, delivered through a combination of online and in-person formats. It began by introducing the basics of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), with a special focus on the Writing section, to raise students' awareness of how writing skills differ significantly from other language skills evaluated in the IELTS.

Following this introduction, the instruction provided detailed information on the types of questions and writing styles commonly encountered in the IELTS Writing test. This part of the course was crucial for preparing students to understand and analyse the exam's requirements thoroughly. Additionally, the course covered the band descriptors, which are critical for understanding how writing tasks are graded, highlighting the importance of grammar in achieving a good score in IELTS Writing.

The study aimed to make students fully aware of what the IELTS Writing test involves and to emphasize the critical role of grammar. By delving into the exam format and grading criteria, the course intended to equip the students with the knowledge and skills necessary to approach the IELTS Writing section confidently and competently. Essays were taken after 12 meetings as the final test to identify error patterns. Data were collected over three months, encompassing 7 to 12 classroom meetings. The scores from the students' final IELTS writing test were then compared to their practice performances in the classroom. This comparison aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the course and to identify persistent grammatical challenges.

3.3. Participants

In total, 40 participants from the second semester of computer engineering students joined the class and are beginner level of the IELTS. The class was taught by using the conventional method of teaching where mentors gave the material in the classroom. The IELTS writings test was taken after 16 meetings of lecturing method.

3.4. Data Analyis

This study follows the tentative error tagging system devised by Chuang & Nesi, (2006). Employing the frameworks proposed by Chuang & Nesi, (2006) and Vo (2018), this study utilized a coding system to categorize errors into three linguistic schemes: grammar errors, lexical-grammatical errors, and lexical errors.

Additionally, the surface structure category was adopted to analyse errors at the surface level of the text. This category helps categorize and analyse errors based on their visibility in written texts.

The linguistic category describes errors in terms of the linguistic units they belong to Table 1 presents the types of errors within the three linguistic categories, as adopted from Vo (2018).

Table 1. The coding scheme of Linguistic category

Category	Linguistic units	Codes	Examples
Grammar	Verb	Gv	Spend over 10 hours Gv{using/to use} *to use*
	Noun	Gn	Gn {+s}(un) *knowledges*
	Pronoun	Gpro	Gpr {we/they} *they want*
	Adjective	Gadj	Gadj(ing/ed){embarrassing/ embarrassed}　　　embarrassed situations
	Adverb	Gadv	Gadv (adv for adj) {easy/ easily} *easily* ONLINE booking ticket
	Preposition	Gpre	Gpre{among/between}　　between countries
	Linking words	Gcon	machines, materials, Glink{- and} techniques
	Determiner	Gdet	problem caused by Gdet{- a} car is
	Punctuation	Gpun	Moreover Gpun{-,} animal can feel pain
	Voice	Gvo	A private car is Gvo{considered/ consider} *consider* to
Lexical-grammatical errors	Incorrect association of a preposition with a noun, a verb, or an adjective	LxGpre	*Donate* money LxGv-pre {to/for} *for* poorer
	Subject-verb agreement	LxGeo (S-V)	reading comics LxG(co)(S-V){is /are} *are* use a helpful tool
	Transitivity pattern of verbs	LxGtr	human cannot replace LxGtr {-object}
	Attributive/predicative function of adjective	LxGat	LxGat{impossible/unable} because of the unable replacing of human
Lexical error	Misspelling	LXm	the most LXm (convenient) *covenient*
	Non-existent L2 word	LXnon	LXnon *uncontrolledly*
	Lexical misconceptions	LXmis	LXmis {spiritual/ cultural} *cultural* life as well as material life
	Collocational errors	LXco	{LXco (serious/big)} *big* poisonous

The surface strategy taxonomy includes five categories. An omission error occurs when an item (such as a word or a group of words) that should be present in a well-formed sentence is missing. An overinclusion error happens when there is an unnecessary item (such as a word or a group of words) that should not be in a well-formed sentence. Misformation refers to mechanical errors where the incorrect form of a morpheme is used (for example, an incorrect past tense form of a verb), while misselection involves a more complex error in choosing the correct item, such as the incorrect choice of tense or aspect. A misordering error is the incorrect placement of an item within a sentence. Errors in the surface strategy taxonomy are coded alongside linguistic categories. The symbols for the five categories are listed below.

Table 2. The coding scheme of the Surface structure category.

Surface structure category	Coding
Omission	{-}
Inclusion	{+}
Misformation	{#}
Misselection	{/}
Misordering	{_}

The complete coding system consists of two codes: one for the linguistic unit and the other for the surface structure strategy. These are illustrated in the following examples (Chuang & Nesi, 2006).

Example (1): She lives in UK

This sentence is coded as "She lives in **Gdet{-the}** UK". The coding signifies that in term of linguistic category, this is a grammatical error relating to determine; and in term of surface, it is an omission error of "the". The correct sentence should be: She lives in **the** UK.

*Example (2): We should find a solution **LxG(n-pre) {to/for} for** this problem.*

LxG(n- pre) refers to lexical grammar error of preposition while {/} signifies a misselection of "to". The correct sentence should be with the preposition "to", not "for".

*Example (3): By the early 1960s, most British colonies had acquired independence, but the racism has not **decayed**. LXmis{decreased/decayed}.*

LXmis means that this is a lexical error. The learner encounters a misconception of the word "decay", resulting in a missellection of "decayed" for "decreased".

3.5. Technique of Analysis

To analyse the data, several coding procedures were carried out.

1) Testing the coding scheme

Firstly, 40 writing samples were typed in Microsoft Word, ensuring that all samples were kept in their original versions during the typing process. Next, a pilot study was conducted to test the coding system. In this stage, the researcher coded one essay to evaluate the effectiveness of the coding scheme. Based on the findings, the original coding scheme was revised. New subcategories were added, and unnecessary ones were removed from the coding scheme.

2) Official Coding

Researchers who were also coders found errors in the current study. The coders have a major in Applied Linguistics and have taught English, including the IELTS, for numerous years. They reviewed each other's official codes and talked about any discrepancies. An Excel was used to determine the frequency of each error once all of the codes had been verified and reviewed.

4. Results

This study investigates the frequent errors and error types made by Indonesian college students in the IELTS Writing Task One, specifically focusing on comparing a park between two different times in the present year and 1980. This task requires students to analyse the features and changes in the park and challenges them to accurately use tenses, collocations, phrases, word choices, proper sentence form, and language flow.

To improve student's writing skills, this research identifies common errors by categorizing them based on linguistic schemes, as proposed by Chuang & Nesi, (2006) and Vo (2018). A total of 915 errors were documented and categorized into 23 types across four distinct categories. The frequency is explained and addressed in Tables 3, 4, 5, and 4 to answer the research questions

4.1. The result overview

The findings indicate a total of 460 errors across three linguistic scheme error categories of all 20 writing samples. The data of Table 3 illustrates that grammar errors account for the highest frequency of errors at 88%, followed by lexical errors at 8%, and lexical-grammatical errors at 4%.

Table 3. The total frequency of linguistic scheme error category

No	Linguistic error category	No. of errors	Frequency in %
1	Grammar errors	407	88%
2	Lexical-grammatical errors	18	4%
3	Lexical errors	35	8%
	Total	**460**	100%

This result supports Le, (2023) that Vietnamese EFL learners faced challenges in accurately applying grammatical structures in their writing, as they tend to incorporate spoken language norms. In the same vein, Mencias & De Vera, (2018) highlighted the considerable attention given to improving grammatical accuracy among Japanese ESL learners in terms of written composition, particularly after exposure to English-infused mass media.

Moreover, table 4 presents the frequency of grammatical structure errors, with 407 errors in total. These errors are further categorized into 10 sub-categories with four major types identified: verbs, nouns, prepositions, and punctuation. Verbs accounted for the highest frequency of errors at 25%, followed by nouns at 18%, prepositions at 12%, and punctuation at 11%. The lowest frequency shows errors in linking words at 7%, passive voice at 2%, and adjectives at 1%.

Table 4. Grammar errors

No	Error types	No. of errors	Frequency in %
1	Verb	100	25%
2	Noun	73	18%
3	Pronoun	32	8%
4	Adjective	6	1%
5	Adverb	33	8%
6	Preposition	47	12%
7	Linking words	29	7%
8	Determiner	33	8%
9	Punctuation	44	11%
10	Passive Voice	10	2%
	TOTAL	**407**	100%

Moreover, table 5 indicates the presence of lexical-grammatical errors during the writing process, accounting for 18 errors which indicate a deviation in morpho-syntactic comprehension. The majority of these errors involve subject-verb agreement, accounting for 88.8%, followed by incorrect association of prepositions with nouns, verbs, or adjectives at 5.6%, as well as errors related to the attributive/predicative function of adjectives. No errors were observed in the transitivity pattern of verbs.

Table 5. Lexical-grammatical errors

No	Error types	No. of errors	Frequency in %
1	In correct association of a preposition with a noun, a verb, or an adjective,	1	5.6%
2	Subject-verb agreement	16	88.8%
3	Transitivity pattern of verbs	0	0%
4	Attribute/predicative function of adjective	1	5.6%
	TOTAL	**18**	100%

In addition, table 6 illustrates lexical errors that confuse due to the improper usage of words, often influenced by concepts from the learners' first language (L1). A total of 35 errors were reported across our sub-categories. The most frequent occurrence is misspelling, accounting for 48.5%, followed by lexical misconceptions at 28.6%. Collocational errors and the use of non-existent L2 words were observed with the lowest frequency, at 17.2% and 5.7% respectively.

Table 6. Lexical errors

No	Error types	No. of errors	Frequency in %
1	Misspelling	17	48.5%
2	Non-existent L2 word	2	5.7%
3	Lexical misconceptions	10	28.6%
4	Collocational errors	6	17.2%
	TOTAL	**35**	100%

Additionally, table 7 presents the frequent errors classified under the surface structure category, which is further divided into 5 sub-categories. A total of 455 errors are identified, with three major types predominating: misselection at 42.8%, omission at 23.5%, and misformation at 16.8%. The remaining two error types, inclusion and misordering, accounted for the lowest frequency, at 16.8% and 2.1% respectively.

Table 7. Surface Structure Category

No	Error types	No. of errors	Frequency in %
1	Omission	107	23.5%
2	Inclusion	67	14.8%
3	Misformation	76	16.8%
4	Misselection	195	42.8%
5	Misordering	10	2.1%
	TOTAL	**455**	100%

Table 8. The accumulation of error types across 20 writing samples

No	Error types	No. of errors	No. of samples	Frequency in %
1	Misselection	195	18	21%
2	Omission	107	19	12%
3	Verb	100	18	11%
4	Misformation	76	17	8%
5	Noun	73	19	8%
6	Inclusion	67	19	7%
7	Preposition	47	18	5%
8	Punctuation	44	14	5%
9	Adverb	33	14	4%
10	Determiner	33	14	4%
11	Pronoun	32	11	3%
12	Linking words	29	14	3%
13	Misspelling	17	6	2%
14	Subject-verb agreement	16	8	2%
15	Voice	10	6	1%
16	Lexical misconceptions	10	9	1%
17	Misordering	10	6	1%
18	Adjective	6	6	1%
19	Collocational errors	6	5	1%
20	Non-existent L2 word	2	2	0%
21	In correct association of a preposition with a noun, a verb, or an adjective,	1	1	0%
22	Attribute/predicative function of adjective	1	1	0%
23	Transitivity pattern of verbs	0	0	0%
	TOTAL	**915**		

Table 8 presents all types of errors in 20 writing samples classified into 23 categories. A total of 915 errors were identified with the top 8 error types highlighted: misselection accounted for 21%, followed by omission at 12%, verb errors at 11%, misformation at 8%, noun errors at 8%, inclusion errors at 7%, preposition and punctuation errors at 5% respectively. Notably, errors related to non-existent L2 words, in the correct

association of a preposition with a noun, a verb, or an adjective, as well as attributive/predicative function of adjectives, were not observed in the data.

5. Discussion

The data error analysis is further explained by providing examples of the top eight error types made by Indonesian college students. All error types that frequently occur are related to misselection, omission, verb errors, misformation, noun errors, inclusion errors, preposition, and punctuation errors. These errors show that Indonesian college students are still challenged to understand the areas of grammatical theory in terms of building the writing concept in the IELTS. Therefore, the examples are presented as follows.

First, misselection was a first rank highest error that occurred in the writing samples. Certain errors in misselection highlighted the incorrect usage of verbs and nouns within the writing samples. The students encountered difficulties when mistakenly substituting the simple present for the simple past. Other than that, inaccuracies were observed in the presentation of certain noun forms, as exemplified below.

> *(Example 1) This things are quite boring since all we **Gv {could/can}** can do **Gv {was/is}** is just sitting with trees and flowers all around.*

In this example, the student mis-selected the present form of "can" for the past form "could".

> *(Example 2) The map showcases **Lxmis {differences/discrepancies}** discrepancies of a park's layout in 1980 and now. Overall, it is rather noticeable that a lot of additions have been made to make the garden more variative and complex.*

Second, the same issue arises with omission as the second highest rank, where the students overlook the proper use of article "a/an" or "the", leading to errors. This aligns with Vo (2018) that point out the complexity of determiners which prove challenging to transfer from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2), thus contributing the higher frequency of errors. The examples are provided below.

> *(Example 3) There was **Gdet {-a}** pond with several **Gn {beaches/beach}** beach situated in the eastern side of the garden*

This example demonstrates clearly how the mother tongue, particularly Bahasa, influences the usage of English. There are no articles in Bahasa Indonesia (no a, an or the); therefore, it is unsurprising that the student transferred this knowledge into another language.

> *(Example 4) Right after we enter the park from the first gate, we can find a special area for trees to grow, it looks **Gv {-like}** that **Gdet {-the}** area only for trees.*

Additionally, errors in verb forms were frequently observed, indicating that the students struggled to differentiate between proper tenses when describing past events and changes in features using the present perfect tense. As it is seen in the following examples.

> *(Example 5) In 1980 there's **Gv {-is}** only **Gv {had/have}** have three tress in the right top of the park, flowers **Gadv {on the bottom right/in the right bottom}** in the right bottom and **Gadv {on the bottom left/in the left bottom}** in the left bottom but with three **Gn {#benches}** bench and one pond.*

> *(Example 6) But, the road on the garden **Gv {has changed/is changing}** is changing.*

In addition, misformation is the fourth most prominent issue encountered by the students, especially in misuse of articles, incorrect adverb forms, and misspelled words. Misformation refers to errors where the students utilize incorrect forms of linguistic elements that deviate from the rules of the target language. This evidence is provided in the following excerpt.

> *(Example 7) Over the years, **Gn {#the}** these green sanctuaries undergo changes, reflecting evolving societal needs and preferences.*

*(Example 8) The street in 1980 had one big road, but in **Lxm {#nowadays}** nowdays, it **Gv {-is}** **Lxm {#separated}** separeted by 4 **Lxm {#different}** diffrent **Gn {#sidewalks}** sidewalk and they all meet in the middle of the field.*

Moreover, noun errors ranked as the fifth most common type observed in some samples completed by Indonesian college students. Most of the errors occur when the students attempt to construct lengthy sentences containing redundant words. In the same vein, the improper synonym is sometimes applied to achieve a sophisticated language style but this often results in unnatural-sounding sentences. The extract is shown as follows.

*(Example 9) This changes **Gn {+way}** way **Gv {enhance/is enhances}** is enhances accessibility and connectivity within the park, allowing visitors to navigate seamlessly between different spot.*

*(Example 10) The map showcases **Gn {differences/discrepancies}** discrepancies of a park's layout in 1980 and now.*

Next, some inclusion errors occurred in the samples which contributed to the long sentences but made the sentences not concise, leading to a lack of awareness of the language structure they apply. It happens because the student found difficulty in applying grammar in their native language to the target language. Some cause unnecessary elements such as improper parallel structure unnecessary conjunctions or punctuations.

*(Example 11) **Gcon {+and}** And the gates from 1980, **Gpun {+,}** **Gvo {-was located}** on the down side and the left one is gone.*

*(Example 12) These differences make the current park easier to enjoy with 4 park entrance gates, there is a barbecue area, **Gpun {+,}** and **LxGco {+there is also}** there is also a playground to play.*

Finally, preposition errors ranked eighth highest among those observed in the writing process. Such errors may arise from the students' difficulty in accurately transferring meanings from L1 to L2. Additionally, a lack of exposure to reading, listening, and speaking opportunities may contribute to these errors, as demonstrated in the excerpt provided below.

*(Example 13) In **Gadv {#1980}** 1890, there **Gv {were/was}** was only trees, now the trees **Lxco {are moved to the back/are pushed back}** are pushed back **Gpre {of/from}** from the park.*

*(Example 14) The flowers **Gpre {on/in}** in the bottom right have been replaced **Gpre {with/to}** to **Gn {#bushes}** bush, and flowers on the other side **Gpro {-that}** have been switched to a playground.*

The current study attempts to identify the common errors and error types in the IELTS writing Task One among Indonesian college students. Upon analyzing the data, it was found that grammatical errors accounted for the highest frequency at 88%, with the verb forms being the most frequent errors at 25%, noun errors at 18%, and pronouns commonly made errors at 8%. This is in line with Le, (2023) which investigated the grammatical errors in 246 pieces of English writing in Vietnamese students. It is found that errors-related verbs contribute the highest frequency at 15.9%. Vo (2018) also supports that grammatical errors are problematic for Vietnamese students in applying wrong nouns at 30.05% and verb forms at 17.35%. In the same vein, Divsar & Heydari, (2017) pointed out that grammatical errors in wrong verb forms, article errors, and preposition errors were mostly committed by Iranian EFL learners in the IELTS essays. Grammatical errors are prevalent among Indonesian college students in the IELTS writing Task One.

In the meantime, based on the surface structure category proposed by Corder (1974), misselection emerged as the most common error, accounting for 43%, followed by omission at 24%, and misformation at 17%. This finding is consistent with the study by Mencias & De Vera, (2018) on Japanese ESL learners, which identified selection errors as the most frequent at 48%, followed by omission at 39% and addition errors at 13%. Similarly, Farrokh, (2011) found misselection, addition errors, and omission errors to be the most frequent errors in translation among Iranian translation trainees. Conversely, Nurlela et al., (2021) found omission to be the most frequent error at 30.06%, followed by addition errors at 17.65%, and misformation errors at 41.18% in their analysis of narrative writing among 50 Indonesian college students.

In summary, the identified grammatical errors and misselection underscore the challenges encountered by Indonesian college students in understanding grammatical structures and applying them effectively in their IELTS writing Task One. The cause of errors may arise from the literal meaning transfer of grammatical structures from L1 to L2 without consideration for linguistic nuances. Moreover, carelessness in the writing process is observed through the use of simplistic language and the absence of substantive elaboration in paragraphs, indicating a lack of seriousness towards the task at hand. The finding supports Nurlela et al., (2021) who noted that Indonesian college students often struggle with time management during writing tasks and exhibit the use of technology without cross-checking. These errors underscore the need for targeted instruction and practice to improve language proficiency and accuracy to help the students reach a higher range of scores in IELTS writing. It is believed that and also supported by Yusuf et al., (2023) a suitable worksheet based on the students problems is what the students need for the improvement.

6. Conclusion

Overall, the study focused on identifying the frequent errors and error types in the IELTS writing Task One among Indonesian college students. Analysis revealed that grammatical errors were predominant, constituting 88% of the total errors, with verb forms, noun errors and pronoun errors being the most frequent. This aligns with previous research findings on grammatical errors among students from other linguistic backgrounds. In addition, misselection emerged as the most common error category based on the surface strategy category, indicating challenges in understanding and applying grammatical structures effectively. These findings highlight the need for targeted instructional interventions to improve language proficiency and accuracy in IELTS writing among Indonesian college students.

Moreover, it is suggested that targeted instructional interventions in teaching grammatical theory and writing proficiency are warranted to enhance the students' understanding among Indonesian college students who prepare for the IELTS exam. These interventions could include focused grammar instruction, practice exercises adjusted to address specific error types, and feedback mechanisms to facilitate error correction. Furthermore, fostering a culture of paying attention to detail in the writing process can help decrease the tendency of carelessness and promote the production of high-quality writing compositions.

While the study provided valuable insights into frequent errors in the IELTS writing Task One among Indonesian college students, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size and scope of the study may restrict the generalizability of findings to broader populations. Additionally, the analysis focused solely on grammar written compositions, overlooking potential errors in the evaluation of task achievement, coherence and cohesion, as well as lexical resources to ensure overall writing efficiency. Moreover, the study did not delve into individual learner characteristics or proficiency levels, which could influence error patterns and require adjusted instructional approaches.

Therefore, future research could explore the efficacy of targeted instructional interventions in addressing specific error types identified in other IELTS language skills among Indonesian college students. Longitudinal studies tracking learners' progress over time could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of interventions and areas requiring further attention. Additionally, comparative studies across different proficiency levels and linguistic backgrounds could shed light on nuanced error patterns and inform differentiated instructional strategies. Furthermore, investigating the impact of technology integration and feedback mechanisms on error correction and writing proficiency could offer valuable insights into pedagogical practices in the IELTS writing assessment context.

7. Acknowledgements

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