

## TYPE OF ERROR ON ARTICLES IN STUDENTS' WRITING

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### Abstract

In learning English as foreign language, Indonesian learners may produce errors since the structure of their first language is different with English as the foreign language. Errors also happened when learners use articles in English. The objective of the research is to find out students' understanding in using articles. This research also aims to find out what type of error which mostly appears in students' writing. This research is a descriptive qualitative research combined with error analysis methodology, using Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The research participants were 90 students of Bina Sarana Informatika University majoring Communication Study. The result of the research shows that most of the students have some difficulties in using articles. The most common errors made by students is omission errors which happened as much as 41%. The second most common errors which appear in students' writing is addition error as much as 26% which number is not much different with misformation errors as much as 24%. The least type of error found in students' writing is misordering error as much as 9%.

### Abstrak

Dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing, pembelajar dari Indonesia dapat mengalami kesalahan karena struktur bahasa pertamanya berbeda dengan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Kesalahan juga terjadi saat mereka menggunakan artikel dalam bahasa Inggris. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui sejauh mana pemahaman siswa dalam menggunakan artikel. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengetahui jenis kesalahan apa yang paling banyak muncul pada tulisan siswa. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif yang dikombinasikan dengan metodologi analisis kesalahan dengan menggunakan *Surface Strategy Taxonomy*. Partisipan penelitian adalah 90 mahasiswa Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika jurusan Ilmu Komunikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa mengalami kesulitan dalam menggunakan artikel. Kesalahan paling umum yang dilakukan oleh siswa adalah *omission error* sebanyak 41%. Sedangkan kesalahan paling umum kedua yang muncul dalam tulisan siswa adalah *addition error* sebanyak 26% yang jumlahnya tidak jauh berbeda dengan *misformation error* sebanyak 24%. Jenis kesalahan terkecil yang ada dalam tulisan siswa adalah *misordering error* sebanyak 9%.

## INTRODUCTION

Grammar is a part of language which is still considered difficult by many students at university although they have studied it since they were in elementary junior high and senior high school. It can be seen when they have to do grammar exercise or write a text. There are some students who got low mark in answering and doing grammar task. There are also some errors found in their writing.

There are some grammatical elements that must be used correctly when students write a composition, such as preposition, tense, subject-verb agreement, and article. The accuracy of grammar, including articles, is necessary in academic writing. It automatically influences the quality of the writing itself.

Article is a little part of language but it is very important. (Crystal, 2008) remarked that articles are subclasses of determiners which display a primary role in differentiating the uses of nouns. It is in line with (Parrott, 2004) who stated that articles belong to the wider class of determiners, words, or phrases that come at the beginning of a noun or noun phrase and give signal whether the information is new or familiar, or tell us something about quantity.

Every time a noun is used, people have to decide whether they have to use an article or not, and if it is necessary to use an article, then it should be decided which one. The use of article before a noun or noun phrase is based on some factors including meaning, shared knowledge, context, and whether the noun is singular, plural, countable or uncountable.

In addition, (Napitupulu, 2017) stated that article is a word that is used with a noun to indicate the type of reference being made by the noun, and it is related to definiteness and indefiniteness.

In English, the category of definiteness and indefiniteness is mainly realized by means of two articles: the definite article (*the*) and the indefinite article (*a, an*). *The* indicates that a noun stands out from other nouns of the same class, whereas *a/an* indicates that a noun shares the same features and it is not distinguished from other nouns of the same class. *The* is used with a noun that has been mentioned before, and it is known or identifiable. For example: *I bought a new bag last night. The bag was cheap.* Whereas *a/an* is used with a noun that has not been previously mentioned in the context, and it is, therefore unknown (Aarts, 2011). For example: *I need a new laptop.*

(Hewson, 1972) stated that "the definite and indefinite articles are among the ten most frequent words of English discourse". Besides, (Sinclair, 1991) also listed *the* as the most frequent word and *a* as the fifth most frequent. It proves that these two small words have a wide-ranging effect on speech styles and expression. Therefore, it is clear that using English article accurately is important in writing, especially in academic writing.

In learning English as a foreign language, students may have difficulties in acquiring the language since the structure of their mother tongue is different with English as the target language. That is why errors may happen in the learning process. Errors may also appear in their writing since the system of articles using in English is quite complex and students need time and effort to master it.

(Richards & Rodgers, 2014) further explained that in learning a second or foreign language, an error is the use of a linguistic item which a fluent or native speaker of a language regards as faulty or incomplete. It includes the misuse of a word, grammatical item, and speech act in a way.

The writers found that there are still many students that have difficulties in using articles. Practically, many students still don't know when they have to use an article and what kind of article they have to use in a sentence. It can be seen from the result of their routine exercises when they have to finish some worksheets. They also produced some errors of article using in their academic writing.

Error is something that almost always exists in language learning process since learners may have difficulties in acquiring the target language because of the different of language system between the learners' first language and their second or foreign language. Finding the difficulties experienced by learners and the influencing factors is quite important in order to minimize the errors. That is why many researchers have done error analysis research to achieve the goal.

Based on (Corder, 1981) error analysis refers to the study and analysis of the errors made by second or foreign language learners. It is useful for the remedial courses, combining appropriate using articles (Alhaisoni, Gaudel, & Al-Zuoud, 2017). It is used to identify, categorize, and analyze the errors made by students in acquiring and learning materials for teaching and learning activities, and formulating effective learning strategies for both learners and teachers (Erdogan, 2005). Moreover, error analysis has a vital role in studying the processes that go beyond the understanding of English as a second or foreign language.

Analyzing errors made by learners can be done by using Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982). This taxonomy concerns with identifying cognitive processes that underlie the learners' reconstruction of the new language. It divides the errors into four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering error.

Omission error can be seen through the absence of an item which must appear in a well-formed utterance. The learners may omit certain linguistic forms because of the production complexity. This type of error is divided into two categories: omission of content morphemes and omission of grammatical morphemes.

Addition error can be seen through the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance. This type of error is divided into three categories: double markings, regularization, and simple

addition. Whereas, misformation error is characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. This type of error has three categories: regularization, archi-forms, and alternating form. Then, misordering error is characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme in an utterance. It can be said that the words used in a sentence are in incorrect arrangement.

Those types of errors frequently appear in students writing. (Agustina & Junining, 2015) held a research which shows that there are some grammatical errors found in the students writing, including the use of tenses, noun/verb inflections, and phrases. Furthermore, the result of the research held by (Akbar, Marafat, & Lia, 2019) shows that omission and misformation errors commonly found in English Department students' essay writing.

Error in the using of articles was also found in students writing. Some studies of error analysis concerning the error of article using have been conducted by some researchers, among others (Alhaisoni et al., 2017), (Al-qadi, 2017), (Crompton, 2011).

(Alhaisoni et al., 2017) found that the frequency of omission errors was higher than the frequency of addition and misformation errors. The study also showed that errors of using 'a' were more common than errors of using 'an' and 'the' in the writing texts. (Al-qadi, 2017) revealed that addition errors were the most frequent errors appeared in students' writing, where substitution was the second frequent while omission errors shown to be the least frequent type of errors. (Crompton, 2011) found that the commonest errors involved are the mis-use of definite article for generic reference. These errors are likely caused by L1 transfer rather than an interlanguage developmental order. It is argued by a comparison of the forms of generic reference in English and Arabic.

Having seen such problem also occurs on L1 Indonesian learners, the researchers would like to hold a study about the articles errors made by L1 Indonesian learners. This study is conducted to know the students' understanding about the articles and the most common errors exist in their writing.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research is a descriptive research combined with error analysis methodology. (Atmowardoyo, 2018) explained that descriptive research is used to systematically describe the existing phenomena as accurately as possible by collecting the data through the use of research instruments such as test, questionnaire, interview, or observation. It may also cover the studies about learners' errors in foreign or second language learning. However, since the studies are specific in their steps of analysis, they are commonly categorized as error analysis.

The research participants were 90 students of Bina Sarana Informatika University majoring Communication Science. They were taken from class 44.IB.05, 44.IC.05, and 44.ID.05. The writers randomly chose 30 students from each class.

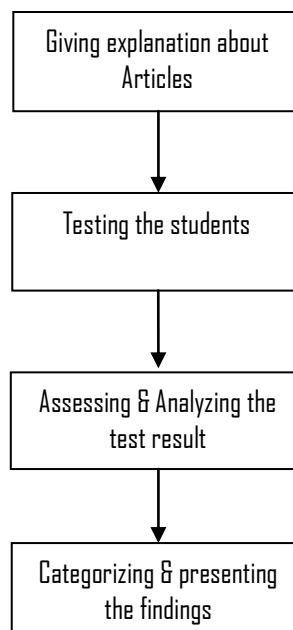
The researcher collected the data to investigate the accuracy of articles using by giving a test consisting of 30 questions in the form of multiple choices task and 10 questions in the form of fill-in-the blank task. The rubric used to assess the test is as follow:

**Table 1. Assessment Rubric**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Score</b>
Very Good	91 - 100
Good	71 - 90
Sufficient	51 - 70
Poor	26 - 50
Very Poor	0 - 25

The writers asked the students to write a descriptive text about their families to investigate the types of errors students made in using the articles. In this case, the writers used error analysis using surface strategy taxonomy. The steps in error analysis include data collection, identification of errors, and classification of errors. The errors are categorized into addition, omission, misformation, and misordering errors.

The research design is described as follow:



**Figure 1. Research Design**

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The first test given to 60 students are 30 questions in the form of multiple choice task and 10 questions in the form of fill-in-the blank task. The result of the test is shown in the following table:

**Table 2. Test I Result**

Category	The number of Students
Very Good	5
Good	24
Sufficient	33
Poor	23
Very Poor	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>

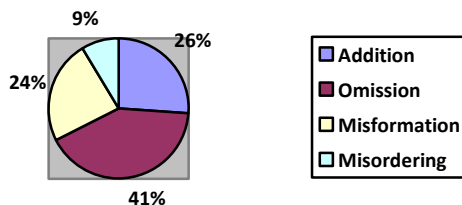
From the table above, it can be seen that only 5 students whose scores belong to very good and 24 students whose scores belong to good. As much as 33 students got scores which belong to sufficient category. Even there are 23 students whose scores belong to poor and 5 students whose scores belong to very poor. This result informed that most of the students face difficulties in using articles. Some of them still don't understand when and where to put articles and what kind of article that have to be put before noun as well.

To confirm the result of the first test, the students were asked to write a descriptive text telling about their families. After that, the errors of articles found in students' writing were analyzed using Surface Strategy Taxonomy. Having analyzed the data, the following results are found:

**Table 3. Types of Article Errors made by Students**

Types of errors	Frequency
Addition	24
Omission	38
Misformation	22
Misordering	8
<b>Total of Errors</b>	<b>92</b>

The percentage of each type of errors which appears in the students' descriptive writing can be seen clearly in the following chart.



**Figure 2. Percentage of Article Errors made by Students**

The most common errors made by students are omission errors which appeared as much as 41% of students' errors in writing descriptive text. They missed an article that should be placed before a noun as shown in the example below:

**Table 4. Omission Errors**

Error Identification	Correction
I have brother.	I have <b>a</b> brother.
My mother usually buys pair of shoes at Summarecon Mall Bekasi.	My mother always buys <b>a</b> pair of shoes at Summarecon Mall Bekasi.
I tell amazing story to my little sister every night before sleeping.	I tell <b>an</b> amazing story to my little sister every night before sleeping .
We watch comedy movie in our family room.	We watch <b>a</b> comedy movie in our family room.
I have sister and two brothers.	I have <b>a</b> sister and two brothers.

Addition errors contributed 26% of the errors made by students when they write a descriptive text. It happened when they wrote an article in front of a noun that doesn't need an article, and even they wrote an article in front of an adjective as shown in the table below:

**Table 5. Addition Errors**

Error Identification	Correction
His hobby is <b>a</b> climbing.	His hobby is climbing.
My father is <b>a</b> tall.	My father is tall.
She is <b>a</b> smart.	She is smart.
My brother goes to <b>the</b> work.	My brother goes to work.
My mother says, the result of <b>the</b> our housework is good.	My mother says, the result of our housework is good.

As much as 24% of the errors which appeared in students' writing were categorized as misformation errors. Students still confused about how to use *a* and *an* before unspecific noun as shown in the examples below.

**Table 6. Misformation Errors (a, an)**

Error Identification	Correction
She gives me <b>a</b> advice.	She gives me <b>an</b> advice.
My father only has <b>a</b> hour for lunch.	My father only <b>an</b> hour for lunch.
My mother has <b>an</b> proportional appearance.	My mother has <b>a</b> proportional appearance.
She is <b>a</b> interesting wowan.	She is <b>an</b> interesting wowan.
My mother is <b>an</b> housewife.	My mother is <b>a</b> housewife.

Misformation errors also happened when students used *a* or *an* instead of *the* which is shown in the following examples:

**Table 7. Misformation Errors (a, an, the)**

Error Identification	Correction
There is a little garden around my house. <b>A</b> garden is planted with mango trees.	There is a little garden around my house. <b>The</b> garden is planted with mango trees.
Look at <b>a</b> woman over there! She is my older sister	Look at <b>the</b> woman over there! She is my older sister
There is a helper in my house. <b>A</b> helper looks happy to help my mother	There is a helper in my house. <b>The</b> helper looks happy to help my mother
After working day and night. My father lay his body on <b>a</b> bed	After working day and night. My father lay his body on <b>the</b> bed
There is a studio room in my brother's house. <b>A</b> studio room is very cozy	There is a studio room in my brother's house. studio room is very cozy

The least type of errors which appeared in students' writing is misordering errors as much as 9% of the total errors. The following examples are misordering errors of articles using in students' descriptive writing:

**Table 8. Misordering Errors**

Error Identification	Correction
She fights her brother <b>the all time</b> .	She fight her brother <b>all the time</b> .
She has <b>a mother very beautiful</b> .	She has <b>a very beautiful mother</b> .
My sister always gets <b>score the highest</b> in her class.	My sister always gets <b>the highest score</b> in her class.

## CONCLUSION

The result of test I showed that most of the students have some difficulties in using articles. Then, through students' descriptive writing, it can be inferred the most common errors made by students are omission errors which happened as much as 41%. Whereas, the second most common errors appear in students' writing is addition error as much as 26% which number is not much different with misformation errors as much as 24%. While, the least type of error is misordering error which was found in students' writing as much as 9%. The error may happen because of the different structure between Bahasa Indonesia and English so that the students got difficulties in acquiring the language, in this case English article system. Hopefully,



there are some further research discussing the factors which affect the errors made by students and how to minimize error in teaching and learning process.

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