



Analyzing Grammatical Errors in Students' Recount Writing: A Study at Middle School

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Abstract: Writing recount text remains a challenge for EFL students, particularly in the use of grammar and past tense form. Previous studies have mainly focused on identifying grammatical errors without exploring their causes from students' perspectives. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the types of grammatical errors in students' recount writing and explore the factors causing these errors. This study employed a qualitative approach involving 10 eighth-grade students at a junior high school. Data were collected through document analysis of students' recount texts and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The findings revealed that misformation was the dominant error type, followed by omission, mainly related to verb forms and tense usage. The FGD results showed that intralingual factors were the primary cause of students' grammatical errors, followed by developmental and interlingual factors. The findings suggest that teachers should provide more focused grammar instruction and corrective feedback to improve students' grammatical accuracy in recount writing.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Grammatical Errors, Surface Strategy Taxonomy, Recount Text

Introduction

Writing skills are one of the essential competencies in English language learning as they require students not only to understand vocabulary and grammar but also to be able to organize ideas in a coherent and logical manner. According to Ariani (2023) teaching English in Junior High School focuses on improving four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. From a language pedagogy perspective, these four skills can be classified in two main categories, which are receptive skills and productive skills. Receptive skills can be defined as language skills intended to receive message, such as listening and reading skills. As opposed, productive skills is intended to produce message in communication, such as speaking and writing skills ([Hasyim, M., Kuswarini, P., & Kaharuddin. 2020](#)). However, the main focus of this study is writing skills. Through writing. Students are able to share and express their ideas in a more organized way, which becomes one of the positive contributions in their efforts to develop their language skills. However, many students still face difficulties in writing certain English texts appropriately, particularly in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and organization (Lubis & Afri, 2023).

Considering these problems, it can be concluded that students' difficulties in writing skills become one of the remarkable obstacles during English language learning.

In a pedagogical view, writing skills are one of the fundamental aspects for developing critical thinking skills, improving language understanding, as well as written communication skills. Writing is beyond just expressing ideas and thoughts, but it also becomes a cognitive process for students to reflect, evaluate, and develop previously acquired knowledge ([Seddik, 2023](#)). It is inevitable that most second language learners considered writing as the most challenging skill. Despite, it is important for students to learn writing considering its long-term benefits on language development. This shows the importance on the mastery of writing skills for students in English language learning, particularly in the context of academic. Through writing, students not only learn to compose sentences that are grammatically appropriate. Simultaneously, writing also allows students to organize their ideas and thoughts in logical manner, build rational arguments, and adapt the language style to certain situation appropriately ([Mohammadi & Mustafa, 2020](#)). Despite the fact that writing skills are a critical component in measuring English language proficiency, most students still face various problems in its practice ([Asnas & Hidayanti, 2024](#)). The problems faced are not merely in the use of grammar. It also includes the ability to compose paragraphs to its appropriate structure, sort out and develop ideas logically, as well as maintaining coherence between the different parts of the writing. These problems indicates that it requires a certain period of time to truly master writing skills, as students need to think critically and consistently practice to develop this skill.

Considering the importance of writing skills in the learning process, mastering various types of texts has become an integrated part of the English curriculum, one of which is recount texts. Recount text is a written record of experience or events that occurred in the past ([Chandra et al., 2024](#)). Recount texts are a type of text that is usually taught at the high school level because they are narrative in nature and closely related to students' personal experiences. Recount text is a type of text in English language learning that composes three elements, namely social function, generic structure, and language features ([Sulistianti et al., 2024a](#)). The social function of recount text is to retell experiences or events that occurred in the past chronologically. Recount texts have a generic structure consisting of orientation, a series of events, and re-orientation, which together form the narrative flow. Meanwhile, linguistic features in recount texts include the use of past tense verbs, time connectors, action verbs, and time adverbs that support the clarity of the chronological sequence of events. This study focuses primarily on linguistic features, particularly in identifying common grammatical errors in students' recount writing.

However, although recount texts have a relatively simple structure and are closely related to students' personal experience, errors in linguistic aspects, particularly in grammar are still commonly found ([Amalina & Joko Yulianto, 2024](#)). According to James (2013), the most frequent errors found in students' writing include tense usage, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, and limited vocabulary. These errors indicate that proficiency in grammatical elements such as past tense, subject-verb agreement, and preposition usage remain a significant challenge in recount writing ([Hong et al., 2021](#)). Therefore, it is

necessary to conduct further research on grammatical errors that appear in students' recount writing in order to understand the most common types of errors and strategies to address them

Based on preliminary observations conducted by the researcher in the eighth grade at a middle school, it was found that many students have difficulty using English grammar correctly when writing. During informal interactions in the classroom, students often stated that grammar is the most challenging part of the English subject. This concern reflects that students' writing skills are influenced not only by their ability to organize ideas, but also by their mastery of sentence structure and grammatical rules. These preliminary findings encourage the researchers to conduct further studies on the types of grammatical errors that occur in students' writing as well as the factors that contribute to them.

Various previous studies have discussed the common errors in English writing by EFL and ESL learners in various countries. Several studies show that EFL students often make errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, and word choice, where spelling and mechanical errors most often occur at the word level, while punctuation mistakes and grammatical errors such as the use of articles, prepositions, conjunctions, and subject-verb agreement are common across various countries ([Mohammadi & Mustafa, 2020](#); [Nair & Hui, 2018](#); [Seddik, 2023](#)). Several previous studies on error analysis of EFL students' writing used the Surface Strategy Taxonomy framework developed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). This taxonomy classifies errors based on their surface form, namely omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The most commonly found type of error is omission, while the least common is misordering ([Matwangsang et al., 2025](#); [Mufidah & Islam, 2022](#)). Several other researchers found that the most common error is misformation ([Ariani et al., 2023](#); [Farisya Rizkah Rachman & I Gusti Bagus Wahyu Nugraha, 2024](#)). Errors in EFL students' writing are largely caused by interlingual factors, specifically the influence of their first language structure on English ([Huong et al., 2024](#); [Mohammadi & Mustafa, 2020](#); [Seddik, 2023](#)). However, there are also studies that indicate students make intralingual errors due to an immature understanding of the structure of the English language itself ([Mohammadi & Mustafa, 2020](#)).

Although there have been many studies identifying various forms of errors in the writing of EFL students, most previous studies have focused primarily on analyzing students' written work to identify and classify errors, which provides limited insight into the reasons behind these errors. Consequently, students' perspectives regarding their learning difficulties and writing experiences remain underexplored. In addition, research on grammatical errors in the writing of recount texts by Middle School Students that incorporates students' perspectives remains relatively limited. To address this gap, this study combines document analysis and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to examine not only the types of grammatical errors but also the factors leading to these errors from students' perspectives. Therefore, this study was formulated into the following research questions :

1. What types of sentence-level grammatical errors are found in students' recount texts?
2. What factors cause these errors based on students' perspective?

The results of this study are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the grammatical difficulties students' encounter when writing recount texts and serve as a basis for developing more effective writing teaching strategies in EFL classroom.

Literature Review

Recount Text

A recount text is a type of English text that narrates the story of actions, the activities of the writer, or the characters within the narrative ([Aini et al., 2023](#)). This type of text is highly relevant for training students to write in English, as it demands the consistent use of time structures and the past tense.

a. Definision of Recount Text

Recount text is a text that reconstructs past experiences by organizing a series of events in chronological order. This text focuses on who, when, and what happened, and does not contain interpretations or arguments like in exposition text.

b. Purpose of Recount Text

The main purpose of recount text is to provide information or entertain readers by conveying a real or imaginative story from the past. For example, holiday stories, memorable experiences, or event reports.

c. Generic Structure

Recount texts typically begin with an orientation, followed by a series of chronological events, and are concluded with a re-orientation which usually consists of personal comments about the experience ([Ariani et al., 2023](#); [Sulistianti et al., 2024b](#))

- An orientation

Introduce who is involved, what happens, where it happens, and when it happens.

- Sequence of events

Describe the events in the order they happen.

- Reorientation

Write a closing statement that shows your feeling or what happens at the end.

d. Language Features

Some main linguistic features of recount text include:

- Using past tense (simple past, past continuous).

- Using time connectives like then, after that, before, finally.

- Using action verbs, for example went, visited, saw, enjoyed.

- The use of personal pronouns (I, we, he, she) depends on the perspective of the story.

- Sometimes including adverbs of time and place.

Understanding the structure and linguistic features of recount text is very important for students to be able to compose coherent writing that adheres to rules. However, in practice, students often still make grammatical errors that can affect the clarity and accuracy of information in the text. Therefore, the study of errors in recount text becomes important as a foundation for improving writing instruction in the classroom.

Grammatical Error

The term for errors in grammar is grammatical errors ([Mufidah & Islam, 2022](#)). Grammatical errors are one of the main challenges faced by learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), especially in writing skills. These errors refer to deviations from the standard grammar rules used in the target language, such as errors in tense usage, subject-verb agreement, articles, prepositions, and sentence structure ([Octasary et al., 2025](#); [Pratiwi et al., 2025](#); [Sharma, 2025](#)). Grammatical errors are considered indicators that the learner has not yet fully mastered the language system being studied, making the analysis of the types and causes of these errors important to understand the extent to which their grammatical competence is developing. The ability to explain grammar rules does not mean that a person can consistently produce grammatically correct writing ([Utami & Mahardika, 2023](#)). Grammatical errors can be categorized based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which includes four main types: omission (the omission of language elements), addition (the addition of unnecessary elements), misformation (the use of incorrect forms), and misordering (errors in word order) ([Dulay et al., 1982](#)). This classification provides a methodical framework for categorizing errors made by students in their writing. Meanwhile, Brown (2000) enforce that errors should not be seen as something to avoid or eliminate (p. 224). Errors are an indication that students are in the process of learning the language. Grammatical errors in students' recount texts involve various aspects such as verbs, pronoun, word choice, spelling, order of word, preposition, and sentences structures ([Anh et al., 2022](#)). Ignorance of tenses and weak speaking skills cause EFL students to often make grammatical errors in writing, as they find it difficult to express ideas clearly in the target language ([Anh et al., 2022](#)). The majority of errors are usually associated with incorrect verb forms, followed by the use of punctuation, prepositions, and other sentence structure.

Error Analysis

Error analysis is a structured approach in second language acquisition studies that focuses on the process of identifying, classifying, and describing errors made by language learners ([Jabeen et al., 2015](#)). This study applied the error prediction classification procedure developed by Corder (1981), which divides errors into four basic types. For consistency with previous research, these types labeled as omission, addition, misformation (which Corder defines as error of selection), and misordering (which Corder defines as defines as error of ordering). The four types of errors can be better understood below:

- a. Omission errors occur when learners omit linguistic elements that should be present in a sentence in order for it to be grammatical. These errors demonstrate that learners do not yet fully understand the grammatical components that are required in English sentence structure ([Liyan et al., 2024a](#)).
- b. Addition errors happen when learners add linguistic elements that are not actually needed in sentence. These errors usually come from overusing or misapplying grammar rules, resulting in redundant forms ([Ariansyah & Rahayu, 2024](#)).

- c. Misformation errors, occur when learners use incorrect grammatical or linguistic forms. In this case, learners choose the wrong form of a word, such as using the regular past tense form of an irregular verb, choosing the wrong verb form, or using vocabulary that is not appropriate for the context (Limengka & Kuntjara, 2024; Panji Arizal & Prasetya, n.d.).
- d. Misordering errors occur when elements in a sentence are arranged in the wrong order, resulting in an unnatural or ungrammatical sentence structure (Lumban Gaol et al., 2025). These errors are often influenced by the learner's first language structure or a lack of mastery of word order patterns in English (Widyaningsih & Anugrawati, 2022).

Errors occur due to a lack of understanding of language rules, while mistakes are unintended errors that learners are capable of correcting themselves (Corder et al., 1981). Ellis (1994) reinforces this view by emphasizing that Error Analysis is a key part of studying second language acquisition, because the errors made by learners reflect their understanding of the target language system. Therefore, error analysis serves as an analytical and pedagogical tool for examining student progress and developing more effective teaching methods (Seddik, 2023). According to Ellis (1994), "Error analysis is the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes, and consequences of unsuccessful language learning" (p. 51). This means that error analysis is not only intended to record deviations from language rules but also to understand how and why these errors occur in the context of language learning processes.

Source of Errors

In Error Analysis studies, understanding the source of errors is essential to identifying the reasons behind learners making particular errors in the language learning process (Muftah, 2023). Regarding the causes of errors, Ellis (1994) refers to the classification developed by Richards (1971). Richards divides the causes of errors into three main categories, which are:

- a. Interlingual Errors

These errors occur when learners transfer rules or patterns from their first language (L1) to the target language (L2). These errors are indicators of the stage of development of learners in their language, which is the distinct system they construct while learning a second language (Matwangsaeng et al., 2025). For example, the sentence structure in Indonesian, which differs from English, can lead to mistakes in the arrangement of subject, verb, and object.

- b. Intralingual Errors

Intralingual factors are responsible for the majority of errors (Utami & Mahardika, 2023). Intralingual factors refer to the errors made by students when attempting to understand and apply the rules of the target language based on their limited experience (Utami & Mahardika, 2023). According to Ellis (1994), most studies concur that the majority of errors are intralingual. An example is the incorrect use of the past form like "goed" as the past form of "go", because students assume that all regular verbs only need

to have "-ed" added. This is called overgeneralization, where learners apply one rule excessively in contexts that are not appropriate.

c. Developmental Errors

Developmental errors occur when learners form hypotheses about the target language based on limited exposure (Rod Ellis, 1994). In this qualitative research that analyzes middle school students' writing (recount text), many grammatical errors such as tense, agreement, and word order can be categorized as developmental errors, as the students are learning and building their understanding of English sentence structure ([Zulfikar, 2020](#)).

The main difference between interlingual, intralingual, and developmental errors lies in their sources and cognitive processes. Interlingual errors caused by the influence of the first language (L1) transferring to the target language (L2), resulting in deviations in English language structures ([Gafur Marzuki et al., 2024](#)). These errors reflect external interference. In contrast, intralingual errors originate from the target language itself, usually resulting from incomplete understanding or overgeneralization of English rules ([Zulfikar, 2020](#)). Meanwhile, developmental errors occur naturally because learners are still in the process of building an internal understanding of the target language system ([Dewanto, 2025](#)). In this study, the classification of interlingual and intralingual errors was used to interpret the possible sources of grammatical errors based on students writing data and focus group discussions.

Overview of Major Theories

This study is based on two main theories in second language acquisition, namely Error Analysis theory ([Corder et al., 1981](#); [Rod Ellis, 1994](#))

- Error Analysis emphasizes the importance of errors as a source of information about the stages of language learning that students are experiencing. Corder (1981) states that errors are not a form of failure, but rather part of the learning process. In this study, Error Analysis is used as a framework to analyze grammatical errors in students' recount texts. According to Corder (1981), this type of analysis provides a direct picture of the extent to which students understand English grammar rules and reveals the aspects that are still difficult for them.
- Ellis (1994) added that Error Analysis not only identify what the error is, but also why the error occurred, so the analysis covers the cognitive and linguistic dimensions of the learning process. In addition, Ellis (1994) highlights the importance of knowing the characteristics and origins of the errors that occur. Therefore, researchers are able to evaluate not only the errors that occur, but also what causes them.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design using an Error Analysis. Qualitative content analysis was applied to examine students' written texts in order to identify patterns of grammatical errors. The analysis was guided by the Surface Strategy Taxonomy and the theory of error causes, including interlingual, intralingual, and developmental factors.

Participants and Data Sources

The participants of this study were 10 eighth-grade students from a junior high school, selected using purposive sampling. The primary data consisted of students' recount texts written as part of regular classroom assignments. To support the analysis of error causes, data from Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were also collected from the same participants. Participation was voluntary, and all participants' identities were anonymized using codes (S1-S10).

Data Collection

Data were collected through two main techniques, document analysis and Focus Group Discussion. Students' recount texts were analyzed to identify sentence-level grammatical errors. Subsequently, an FGD was conducted to explore students' perspectives on their writing difficulties, particularly related to grammar use. The discussion was audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the Error Analysis procedures proposed by Corder (1981). The analysis involved identifying grammatical errors in students' texts and classifying them into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The causes of errors were then analyzed based on data from the FGD and categorized into interlingual, intralingual, and developmental factors.

Trustworthiness

To enhance the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing the results of document analysis with the insights obtained from the FGD (Cresswell, 2014).

Result and Discussion

Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Students' Recount Texts

This section discusses the first research question, which concerns the type of sentence-level grammatical errors in students' recount text writing. The researcher collected the data from ten recount texts written by junior high school students. Using the error analysis framework by Corder's (1974), the researcher analysed there were four main types of grammatical error, which are omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. It was revealed that students often made various grammatical errors in their recount text writing.

Based on the analysis, the researcher identified several types of grammatical errors at the sentence level., including verb tense, word choice, preposition, verb form, verb to be, spelling, and sentence structure. These errors include verb tense, word choice, preposition, verb form, verb to be, spelling, and sentence structure. The distribution of these error types is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Type of Grammatical Error

No	Type of Grammatical Error	Frequency
1	Verb tense	13
2	Preposition	11
3	Verb form	8
4	Verb <i>to be</i>	7
5	Word choice	4
6	Sentence Structure	3
7	Spelling	2

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the most frequently type occurring in students' recount text writing was verb tense errors, which means that students often had difficulty in determining tense forms in recount text appropriately. Moreover, recount text writing requires students to use past tense consistently. Other errors related to prepositions, verb forms, and verb to be can be found often as well, indicating students' poor grammar ability and sentence construction. Meanwhile, spelling and sentence structure become the error types that is rarely found rather than the previous types mentioned.

While Table 1.1 shows what types of grammatical errors were frequently made by the students, Table 1.2 illustrates the way in which these errors were formed based on the surface strategy taxonomy.

Table 2. Error Category

No.	Error Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Omission	10	22.7%
2	Addition	7	15.9%
3	Misformation	25	56.8%
4	Misordering	2	4.5%
	Total	44	100%

Furthermore, based on Corder's surface strategy taxonomy, misformation appeared most frequently (56.7%). Indicating that students often used incorrect grammatical forms rather than omitting or mis ordering sentence elements.

The explanation of each error type is presented below using examples taken directly from the students' writings.

a. Omission

Omission errors occurred when students omitted necessary grammatical elements in their sentences, such as auxiliary verbs, the verb to be, or other required components. One example of an omission error was found in the sentence "*when I in there...*"(S2). In this sentence, student omitted the verb *was*, which is required to form a correct past tense clause. The correct sentence should be "*when I was there...*".

Another omission error occurred in the sentence "*I very happy...*"(S7). The student omitted the verb *to be* (*was*), which is necessary to connect the subject and the adjective. The correct form should be "*I was very happy*". These examples indicate that students frequently omitted essential grammatical elements, particularly the verb *to be*, in their recount writing.

b. Addition

Addition errors occurred when students added unnecessary elements to their sentences, resulting in ungrammatical corrections. An example of an addition error can be seen in the sentence “*I went to back home*”(S9). The addition of the preposition *to* is unnecessary because the verb *went* can be directly followed by *home*. The correct sentence should be “*I went back home*”.

Another addition error was found in the sentence “*we went to go home...*”(S4). In this case, the student added the verb *go*, which makes the sentences redundant. The correct form should be “*we went home...*”. These errors show that students tended to add extra words that are not required in English sentence structure

c. Misformation

Misformation or misformation errors occurred when students used incorrect forms of words or grammatical items, particularly in verb forms and word choice. For example, is “*I swimmmed in the pool*” (S5). This sentence shows an misformation because the student applied a regular past tense rule to an irregular verb. The correct form is “*I swam in the pool*”

Another misformation appeared in the sentence “*They helped us to gluing the flowers...*”(S8). The student incorrectly used the *-ing* form after the infinitive marker *to*. The correct sentence should be “*They helped us to glue the flowers...*”. Misformation were also found in lexical choices, such as “*submit*” instead of “*summit*” in “*I go submit Pundak...*” (S1), which reflects incorrect word formation.

d. Misordering

Misordering or Misordering occurred when students arranged words in an incorrect order, resulting in unnatural or incorrect sentence structure. An example of misordering was found in the sentence “*Me and my family take a picture together.*”(S10). The subject order and verb form are incorrect. The correct sentence should be “*My family and I took pictures together.*”

Another example is “*After coffee in home 10.30 o'clock.*”(S1). The word order in this sentence is unclear and does not follow standard English sentence structure. A more acceptable form would be “*After having coffee at home at 10.30*”. These examples show that students had difficulties in arranging sentence elements appropriately in English.

Based on the analysis, all four types of grammatical errors proposed by Corder were found in students’ recount texts. The most frequently types that can be found frequently were omission and misinformation, particularly in concern to the use of the verb *to be* and past tense forms. These findings revealed that students still struggle in constructing the correct grammar in their recount text writing.

Cause of Grammatical Errors Based on Focus Group Discussion

This section discusses the results of the analysis of students’ perception in relation to the causes of grammatical errors in students’ recount text writing. The data were collected by doing a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving ten students. The researcher used Ellis’s (1997) classification of error sources to categorize students’ responses during the

analysis of the FGD transcript, including interlingual errors, intralingual errors, and developmental errors. The following table, which is Table 1.3 shows the summary of the findings.

Table 3. Error Cause Category

No.	Error Cause Category	Supporting Evidence (Students' Statements)
1	Interlingual Errors	"Terus bingung ngurutinnya.. kayak kalimat Bahasa Indonesia nya tuh habis ini begini. Tapi kalo di inggrisnya tuh gak sama, kan kadang ada yang dibalik-balik gitukan tapi ga kebalik sebenarnya" (S9)
		"... yang susah itu nge-bahasa inggrisnya."(S1) "Yaa.. karena gatau Bahasa Inggrisnya jadi ngawur" (S6)
2	Intralingual Errors	"Grammarnya. Yaa yang... verb nya itu ga hafal"(S2)
		"Sama kadang lupa verb 2 nya apa" (S4)
		"...suka lupa verb 2 nya"(S10)
		"Ya biasanya karena cuma dengerin.. tapi ngga bisa nulisnya gitu miss"(S3)
3	developmental Errors	"Iyaa, spellingnya" (S3)
		"Salahnya di verb 1, mesti kadang pake verb 1 padahal seharusnya pakai verb 2"(S1)
		"Harusnya pake verb 2 tapi aku ada pake past perfect"(S8)
3	developmental Errors	"Kadang saat pembelajaran kita hanya menghafal teori nya tapi pas praktik kita gak tau apa-apa"(S6)
		"Mungkin kurangnya pemahaman ya miss ya, tentang materi Bahasa inggrisnya."(S1)
		"... lupa sama yang diterangin dikelas"(S8)
		"... cara ngajarnya mungkin ga cocok di aku"(S9)

The findings indicate that intralingual errors were the most prominent causes of grammatical errors, particularly related to students' limited mastery of verb forms and past tense usage. Developmental errors were associated with insufficient practice and learning strategies, while interlingual errors resulted from interference of Indonesian sentence structure. Each category is explained below.

a. Interlingual Errors

Interlingual errors refer to errors caused by the influence of the learners' first language on the target language. Based on FGD data, several students revealed that they experienced difficulties when translating ideas from Bahasa into English. This is evident when a student stated that constructing sentences in English is confusing because its structure differs from that of Bahasa.

Students 7 write the sentence '*I with my friend go to bungkul by byciel*' which is illustrated incorrect ordering sentences. In a Focus Group Discussion, students 7 agreed with the statement of student 9 which said, "*Terus bingung ngurutinnya.. kayak kalimat Bahasa Indonesia nya tuh habis ini begini. Tapi kalo di inggrisnya tuh gak sama...*"(S9).

This is indicated that students tend to rely on Indonesian sentence patterns when writing in English, which results in incorrect sentence structures. Another indication of cross-linguistic influence is reflected in students' comment about difficulties in translating their ideas.

As Student 1 mentioned, *"yang susah itu nge-bahasa inggrisannya"* (S1), which is directly proven in the sentence *'I go submit Pundak...'* written by Student 1 himself. This indicates that students mentally translate sentences from Bahasa into English, which results in sentence errors.

The findings indicate that the influence of Bahasa contributes to students' grammatical errors, in which students often faced confusion when it comes to translating and sentence-order.

b. Intralingual Errors

Students' inefficient mastery of target language rules, such as overgeneralization, incorrect implementation of rules, and poor grammatical knowledge contributed to the cause of Intralingual errors. Based on the FGD data, many students considered that grammar, particularly the past tense, as the most challenging aspect of recount text writing. This indicates that intralingual factors become the dominant cause of students' grammatical errors in students' recount text writing.

Several students admitted that they often forgot to use verb 2, as expressed in statements such as *"Salahnya di verb 1, mesti kadang pake verb 1 padahal seharusnya pakai verb 2"*(S1) and *"kebanyakan memang lupa sama verb 2 nya"*(S4,S10). Their statements align with the errors in the sentence they wrote, such as *'I go submit pundak...'* by students 1 and *'we choose going to Santerra'* by student 10 indicate that students still face difficulties in using verb forms.

Additionally, students showed confusion in applying grammatical rules correctly. One student stated, *"Harusnya pakai verb 2 tapi aku ada pakai past perfect"* (S8), indicating confusion and uncertainty in choosing appropriate tense forms. Spelling errors were also linked to intralingual factors. One student explained, *"Ya biasanya karena cuma dengerin.. tapi ngga bisa nulisnya"* (S3), proven in the sentence *'I wacht Netflix'* written by Student 7. This indicates that limited exposure to written forms contributes to spelling errors. These responses show that students' grammatical errors are largely caused by a lack of understanding and application of English grammar rules.

c. Developmental Errors

Developmental errors can be defined as mistakes that occur purely as a result of students' learning development process, reflecting the students' current stage during language learning. Based on FGD data, some students' errors are related to inconsistent practice and the development of languages competence itself. Students admitted to find grammar as the aspect that is difficult to apply in the practice even though they have studied its theory.

One student stated, *"Kadang saat pembelajaran kita hanya menghafal teori nya tapi pas praktik kita gak tau apa-apa"*(S6). This shows that students are still in the process of developing their ability to use grammar communicatively. In addition, students admit

that they often forget materia that has been previously learned. Statements such as *"lupa sama yang diterangkan di kelas"*(S8) and *"ga inget"*(S10) reflect learners' developmental stage, where grammatical knowledge is not yet fully internalized. These findings indicate that the ongoing language learning process and lack of opportunities to practice properly, also become factors that contribute to students' grammatical errors in their recount text writings.

In conclusion, the FGD analysis showed that the causes of students' grammatical errors in recount text writing can be classified into interlingual, intralingual, and developmental factors, in which the most dominant factor was intralingual. Intralingual errors that the students faced is related to their struggle in applying past tense rules and verb forms. However, interlingual factors and developmental aspects also influence to the cause of students' grammatical errors in recount text writing.

Discussion

Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Students' Recount Texts

Based on the analysis results, grammatical errors that appear in students' recount texts can be classified into four types according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, namely omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The data in Table 1.2 shows that there are 44 grammatical errors found in students' writing. Among all categories, misformation errors dominated with a proportion of 56.8%. Omission appeared as the second most common type of error with a percentage of 22.7%, while addition and misordering accounted for smaller proportions, 15.9% and 4.5% respectively.

The percentage of misformation errors reaching 56.8% indicates that choosing the right grammatical form is still a major problem for students in writing recount texts, especially in the use of verbs and tenses. The dominance of misformation may be attributed to students' incomplete mastery of English grammar rules, particularly relating to past tense verb forms. Most students seem to realize that recount text require the use of past verbs. However, they often apply the incorrect grammatical form, especially regarding to irregular verbs. Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy, a misformation error occurred when a learner used an incorrect form instead of the correct form of the target language, indicating that the learner is aware of the grammatical requirements but is unable to apply the correct form accurately (Corder et al., 1981). This finding is in agreement with previous studies reporting that EFL learners often experience issues in the use of verbs, sentence structures, and the choice of correct grammatical forms (Mohammadi & Mustafa, 2020; Nair & Hui, 2018; Seddik, 2023). In the texts written by students, misformation errors appear with the highest frequency compared to other types of errors (Ariani et al., 2023). Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that English grammar rules, especially those related to past tense forms, are not yet fully understood and applied by students in recount writing.

Representing 22.7% in total errors, omission errors are the most second prevalent type of error in students writing. These errors occurred when learners leave out linguistic elements that are required in grammatically correct sentence (Corder et al., 1981). The occurrence of omission errors suggest that students had not fully acquired grammatical

structure and therefore failed to recognize the necessity of these elements in sentence construction. These finding reinforces previous research concluding that omission are often caused by students limited grammatical knowledge ([Liyan et al., 2024b](#); [Mufidah & Islam, 2022](#)).

The presence of addition errors, even though only 15.9% demonstrates that students are not entirely passive in their use of English grammar. Instead, they try to apply the rules they have learned, but this application is often excessive or does not fit the context. Addition errors often result from overgeneralization, where learners extend a rule beyond its appropriate context (Rod Ellis, 1994). For instance, students tend to add unnecessary prepositions or grammatical markers because they believe that the more element they use, the more correct output sentences become. Consequently, addition can be viewed as part of the development of students understanding of grammar ([Widya Suputra, 2025](#)).

Misordering is the least frequent type of error, accounting for 4.5% of errors. Nevertheless, this error reflects students' difficulties in arranging words in accordance with English structure (Corder et al., 1981). This suggest that students may understand the required vocabulary or grammatical elements but struggle to place them in the appropriate order. This result supports previous research findings that Indonesian sentence structure patterns often influence the word order used by students in English (Irawansyah, 2024). From this, it seems that students' difficulty in applying the correct English sentence structure is related to the strong influence of their first language.

The findings of this study overall indicate that students are not yet fully capable of using English grammar correctly in writing recount texts. The dominance of misformation, followed by omission points to challenges in applying proper verb forms and grammatical rules, especially those related to past tense forms is still not optimal. Hence, grammar remains a significant challenges for EFL students.

Cause of Grammatical Errors Based on Focus Group Discussion

The current study conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in order to explore the causes of grammatical errors from students' perspective, instead of relying entirely on students' written documents as the previous studies. Through Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the researcher addresses the methodological gap identified in previous studies, in which the reasons of students' grammatical errors were not explored in detail.

According to Richards (as cited in Ellis, 1994), the causes of erros are categorized into three factors, which are interlingual, intralingual, and developmental factors. Intralingual errors emerge when learners construct incorrect ideas about the target language, leading inappropriate generalizations and the incorrect application of grammar rules (Rod Ellis, 1994). This statement is consistent with the findings of present study, in which intralingual errors become the most frequently found error, related to students' lack of understanding in grammatical rules, such as past tense forms and verb forms. This is also related to previous research reporting that grammatical errors often come from learners' limited mastery of English rules rather than interference from the first language (Ariani et al., 2023)

Developmental factors also contribute to students' grammatical errors. The students admitted that they do not often practice their writing and easily forgot the previous material being taught by the teacher. Some students also mentioned that the teacher moved too quickly to other material while they had not entirely understood yet. This making it difficult for them to catch up and understand more about grammar rules in writing assignment. Developmental errors arise as part of the natural language acquisition process when learner build and develop their understanding of the target language progressively (Rod Ellis, 1994). Such errors are not caused by a complete lack of knowledge, but rather reflect the stage of language development the students are currently experiencing. Therefore, the difficulties students face in remembering and applying grammatical rules indicate that they have not yet fully mastered English grammar. These findings support several previous studies view that errors become a natural part of language development and reflect students' progress toward language competence ([Buskivadze & Baratashvili, 2025](#); [Dewanto, 2025](#)).

Interlingual factors were found to occur due to differences between the sentence structures of Indonesia Language and English, particularly in word order. Interlingual errors occur when learners transfer linguistic patterns from their first language to the target language ([Rod Ellis, 1994](#)). In this study, this phenomenon was evident when several students expressed that they tended to translate sentences directly from Indonesia Language into English when they lacked vocabulary knowledge. As a result, Indonesian sentence patterns were often transferred into English, leading to inappropriate word order and grammatical structures. This finding is aligned with previous which found that the influence of Indonesia sentence patterns led students to confusion in constructing English sentences appropriately, which related to grammatical errors in their recount text writings ([Panjaitan & Seinsiani, 2017](#); [Septiana, 2020](#)). Although interlingual influence is present, its occurrence is less frequent compared to intralingual and developmental factors. The consistency between the grammatical errors found in written documents and the students' explanations during the FGD indicates strong data triangulation. The findings confirm that the grammatical errors in students' recount writing were mainly caused by limited grammatically mastery, first language interference, and insufficient practice. This result is in accordance with previous research, which states that intralingual and developmental errors are common to occur as a process of language acquisition among EFL learners ([Buskivadze & Baratashvili, 2025](#)).

The findings of this study provide several pedagogical implications for English language teaching. Since misformation errors were the most dominant type of error, particularly in the use of verb tenses, teachers should provide more focused instruction on regular and irregular past verbs through contextualized writing activities. The predominance of intralingual factors suggest that students require more opportunities to apply grammatical rules in meaningful writing tasks rather than merely memorizing them. In addition, continuous writing practice and corrective feedback are necessary to help students recognize and reduce grammatical errors. Considering the presence of interlingual factor, teachers may also explicitly compare Indonesian and English sentence structure to

help students avoid direct translation. Therefore, integrating grammar instruction with guided writing practice can support students in improving both grammatical accuracy and writing performance in recount text.

Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to answer the research questions regarding the types of sentence-level grammatical errors in students' recount text writing and to explore several factors that may contribute to those errors based on the students' perspectives.

In regard to the first research question, the results show that students made various type of grammatical errors at the sentence-level in their recount text writings. The researcher analysed students' written documents with the result that these grammatical errors were categorized into four types based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The most frequent type of error was misformation, followed by omission, while addition and misordering occurred in relatively comparable portions. These results indicate that students still experienced difficulties in determining the appropriate grammar, particularly in the use of verb forms and past tense, which are the main features of recount texts.

Meanwhile, the second research question based on the results of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) revealed that intralingual factors became the primary cause of grammatical errors made by students. These factors included students' lack of understanding in English grammar rules, students' difficulty in forming the correct verb forms, and students' lack of vocabulary. In addition, interlingual factors also contributed to these errors, such as the strong influence of students' mother tongue, which made them unfamiliar with English grammar rules. This was followed by developmental factors, in which students were inconsistent in practicing their skills and experienced less optimal learning process. Based on several findings mentioned, it can be concluded that the grammatical errors made by students are not merely due to the influence of their linguistic background, but also how this skill is applied in the learning process and students' experiences influenced the occurrence of these errors in students' recount text writing.

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing a more comprehensive understanding of grammatical errors in recount writing through the combination of document analysis and FGD, which allowed to explore both error types and their underlying causes from students' perspectives. However, this study focused only on recount text writing among middle school students in a single school level. As a result, the findings may not capture the grammatical error patterns that students produce in other writing genres or educational context. Future studies may explore grammatical errors in other genres and educational level to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' writing difficulties

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