

**GRAMMATICAL AND MECHANICAL ERRORS IN STUDENTS' ENGLISH WRITING AT UNIVERSITAS PAHLAWAN TUANKU TAMBUSAI****Hannisa Haris¹, Afriza Rahma Rani²*** hannisaharis1@gmail.com, afizarahmaranii@gmail.com^{1,2} Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai, Bangkinang, Indonesia**ABSTRACT**

Writing is a crucial aspect of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, yet many students face difficulties in applying grammatical rules and writing mechanics. This research aims to analyze the types and frequency of grammatical and mechanical errors in the English writing of second-semester students in the Undergraduate Program in Elementary Teacher Education at Universitas Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai. A qualitative descriptive method was used, involving 40 student writing samples selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through document analysis and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed a total of 78 grammatical and mechanical errors. The most frequent error types were capitalization (23.08%), verbs (16.67%), and nouns (10.26%). Errors also appeared in the use of pronouns, articles, adjectives, and prepositions. These results show that students still struggle with fundamental grammar and mechanics, especially in sentence structure. The research recommends more focused grammar instruction and writing practice to reduce errors and improve writing accuracy and fluency.

Keywords: descriptive analysis, EFL students, grammatical errors, sentence structure, writing mechanics

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental component in acquiring English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It demands not only a proficient command of vocabulary and ability to develop coherent (Prayuda et al., 2023), but also a thorough understanding of grammatical rules and writing conventions, including punctuation, capitalization, and spelling (Fitria, 2024). For EFL learners, generating sentences that are both grammatically accurate and mechanically correct is often a major obstacle, especially during the initial phases of academic writing.

At Universitas Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai (UP), students in Undergraduate Program in Elementary Teacher Education are expected to develop their English writing as part of their language competency. However, many students still struggle with constructing grammatically correct sentences and frequently make various grammatical and mechanical errors.

Previous observations and assignment have shown that 2nd semester students in Undergraduate Program in Elementary Teacher Education UP frequently make mistakes, such as using verbs, forming noun, using capital letter and articles, etc. These mistakes indicate a gap in their understanding and application of basic grammatical rules and writing convention, such as grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. therefore, this research aims to analyze the types and frequency of grammatical and mechanical errors in students' English writing, identify the most common type of errors, and highlight areas that need further instructional support.

By identifying common error patterns, English lectures and educators can develop more effective teaching strategies that directly address students' weakness in writing. Finally, the findings of this research are expected to contribute to the enhancement of students' writing proficiency and support their academic development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used a qualitative descriptive. A qualitative descriptive method is a methodological approach that provides a comprehensive and straightforward summary of events or experiences, staying close to the data (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024). In this research, qualitative descriptive was applied to identify and analyze the types and frequency of grammatical errors found in the written of 2nd semester (Undergraduate Program in Elementary Teacher Education) students at UP. The purpose of the study was to understand common grammatical challenged faced by the students, particularly in relation to sentence and the use of various parts of speech in writing.

Criterion sampling was applied in this research. It is a purposive sampling technique in which participant are chosen based on specific, predefined criteria directly related to the research objectives (Memon et al., 2025). In this research, a total of 40 student writing samples was collected and examined. These samples were obtained from 2nd semester (Undergraduate Program in Elementary Teacher Education) students at UP, ensuring the natural use of language without correction or intervention.

The scope of study focused on grammatical errors within simple, compound, and complex sentences. Errors were categorized according to their grammatical types, such as verb, noun, pronoun, article, adjective, capitalization, etc.

The variables in this research consisted of the students' written product as the independent variable, and the dependent variable was the number and types of grammatical errors identified within those sentences. Data collection was conducted through document analysis, where the written texts were manually reviewed (Al-Shehri, 2025). Each grammatical error was identified, marked, and categorized based on the part of speech and sentence structure. This method allowed the researcher to collect qualitative data on common patterns of grammatical inaccuracies in the students' writing.

Then, data were analyzed using descriptive techniques. Errors were quantified based on their frequency and percentage. The results were then organized and displayed in tables. This approach allowed the researcher to determine which types of grammatical mistakes occurred most often and how they were distributed across various sentence structures.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To analyze the types and frequency of grammatical errors made by second-semester (Undergraduate Program in Elementary Teacher Education) students at UP, a total of 40 students' writing were examined. The results are presented in the table below, which categorizes the types of errors found along with their frequency and percentage.

Table 1. Errors Founded from Types of Sentences

No	Types of Sentences	Grammatical Errors	Total
1	Simple Sentences	49	49
2	Compound Sentences	10	10
3	Complex Sentences	24	24
Total			83

Table 1 shows that number of grammatical errors found in different types of sentences. There are 83 sentences contained grammatical errors: 49 (59.04%) were found in simple sentences, 10 (12.05%) were found in compound sentences, and 24 (28.91%) were found in complex sentences.

Table 2. Type of Errors Founded from Students' Written Sentences

No	Type of Errors	Type of Sentences			Total
		Simple Sentence	Compound Sentences	Complex Sentences	
1	Noun	5		3	8
2	Pronoun	2	1	1	4
3	Verb	6	1	6	13
4	Adjective	2	1		3
5	Adverb				
6	Preposition		1		1
7	Conjunction				
8	Interjection				
9	Article	3	1		4
10	Capitalization	19	4	5	18
11	Spelling	3		3	6
Total		49	10	24	78

As shown in the table 2, a total of 78 errors were found in students' written sentences. The most common errors were related to capitalization, with 18 (23.08%) of total errors. The following are some examples of these errors:

(a) *i made a big mistake.* (ZN)

(b) *Now I'm studying at UP, and **She** is continuing her education at UR.* (DCA)

(c) *But **Unfortunately**, after three months of graduating from high school,* (RF)

The sentence (a) *i make a big mistake*, the pronoun "i" should be capitalized as I because it is a subject pronoun and it also appears in the beginning of the sentence. Therefore, the correct sentence is "*I made a big mistake.*" In Sentence (b), *Now I'm studying at UP, and **She** is continuing her education at UR*, the pronoun "She" should not be capitalized although it is also a subject pronoun because it doesn't start a new sentence. The corrected sentence is "*Now I'm studying at UP, and she is continuing her education at UR*". The last sentence (c) *But **Unfortunately**, after three months of graduating from high school*, the word "Unfortunately" should not be capitalized because it is not the first word of the sentence. Therefore, the correct sentence is "*But unfortunately, three months after graduating from high school.*"

The second most frequent error type was verb. This result supports the perspective of Wishon and Burks Wishon & Burks as cited in (Ratnaningsih & Azizah, 2019). 13 (16.67%) verb errors were seen in the students' writing sentences. These errors likely include incorrect

verb forms, tense inconsistencies, or subject-verb agreement issues, which are common challenges for learners, especially when dealing with complex sentence structures. The following are some examples of these errors:

- (a) *One of us **stay** in Batam. (NNH)*
 - (b) *We often **sharing** stories to each other, but now, we are in different university, but still meet during holiday. (NS)*
 - (c) *We like shopping together and **buy** what we want. Although we do not have money. (DP)*
- In the sentence (a) *One of us stay in Batam*, the verb “stay” should be in the third person singular form “stays” to match with the singular subject “One”. The correct sentence is “*One of us stays in Batam.*” In Sentence (b), *We often sharing stories to each other, but now, we are in different university, but still meet during holiday*, the verb “sharing” is incorrect. It should be the base form “share” because “often” is an adverb that modifies the verb, and after auxiliary verbs or modals, the base form is used. The corrected sentence is “*We often share stories to each other, but now, we are in different university, but still meet during holiday.*” The last sentence (c) *We like shopping together and buy what we want. Although we do not have money.* The verbs in the first sentence are inconsistent in form. It should be “*We like shopping together and buying what we want. Although we do not have money.*”

The third most frequent error type was noun. 8 (10.26%) noun errors were found in the students’ writing sentences. These may involve incorrect singular/plural usage or inappropriate noun choices. This result supports the perspective of Darus and Subramaniam as cited in (Chan, 2024). The following are some examples of these errors:

- (a) *I have nine best friend from high school. (NNH)*
- (b) *I like Anggi because she is a good friends. (FAP)*
- (c) *She also often listen to my complaint without getting bored of listening to them. (AM)*

In the sentence (a) *I have nine best friend from high school*, the noun “friend” should be pluralized to “friends” because the number “nine” indicates more than one. The correct sentence is “*I have nine best friends from high school.*” In Sentence (b), *I like Anggi because she is a good friends*, the word “friends” should be singular “friend” to match with the singular subject “she”. The corrected sentence is “*I like Anggi because she is a good friend.*” The last sentence (c) *She also often listen to my complaint without getting bored of listening to them*, the word “complaint” should be pluralized as “complaints” since the pronoun “them” refers to multiple complaints. The correct sentence is “*She also often listen to my complaints without getting bored of listening to them.*”

The fifth most frequent error type was pronoun. 4 (5.13%) pronoun errors were found in the students’ writing sentences. These errors include incorrect use of pronoun forms or disagreement between pronouns and their antecedents (Pratiwi et al., 2019). The following are some examples of these errors:

- (a) *We have a lot of In common, such as food, whatever **she** like she definitely likes too. (RR)*
- (b) *We study at the same University, but **they** are in the nursing program. (AFA)*
- (c) *I hope **I** will be friend forever. (NAA)*

In the sentence (a), *We have a lot of In common, such as food, whatever she like she definitely likes too*, the pronoun “she” is used twice, but the first one seems unclear and possibly mean to refer back to “I”. Therefore the correct sentence is “*We have a lot of In common, such as food, whatever I like she definitely likes too.*” In Sentence (b), *We study at the same University, but they are in the nursing program*, the pronoun “they” is unclear and inconsistent with subject “we”. It should be “we”. The corrected sentence is “*We study at the same University, but we are in the nursing program.*” The last sentence (c) *I hope I will be friend forever*, the word “I” appear twice. The second word “I” is inappropriate pronoun. It

should be “we”. The correct sentence is “*I hope we will be friend forever.*”

The sixth most frequent error type was article. 4 (5.13%) article errors were found in the students’ writing sentences. This result supports the perspective of Maolida as cited in (Puspita & Suswanto, 2023). These errors include incorrect use of articles and omission articles. The following are some examples of these errors:

- (a) *Ucup has a incredible sense of humor. (MM)*
- (b) *She is øbeautiful and sweet person. (DP)*
- (c) *I have ø childhood friend named Andes. (RF)*

In the sentence (a), *Ucup has a incredible sense of humor,*” the article “a” is incorrect because it precedes a word starting with a vowel sound “incredible”. According to English grammar rules, “an” should be used before vowel sounds. Therefore the correct sentence is “*Ucup has an incredible sense of humor.*” In Sentence (b), *She is ø beautiful and sweet person,* there is a missing article before “beautiful”. It should be “a beautiful”. The corrected sentence is “*She is a beautiful and sweet person.*” The last sentence (c) *I have ø childhood friend named Andes,* the article “a” is missing before “childhood friend.” It should be “ a chilhood friend.” The correct sentence is “*I have a childhood friend named Andes.*”

The seventh most frequent error type was adjective. 3 (3.85%) adjective errors were found in the students’ writing sentences. These errors include incorrect placement or form of adjectives, impacting the descriptive quality of sentences. The following are some examples of these errors:

- (a) *She is a **beauty** and sweet person. (DP)*
- (b) *She is very **kinds** to me. (AM)*
- (c) *She is a kind woman and **indiferen** but I like her. (NAA)*

In the sentence (a), “*She is a beauty and sweet person,*” the word “beauty” is a noun, not an adjective. In this context, the correct adjective form “beautiful” should be used. The corrected sentence is “*She is a beautiful and sweet person.*” In Sentence (b), “*She is very kinds to me,*” the words “kinds” is incorrectly pluralized; “kind” is the correct adjective form. The corrected sentence is “*She is very kind to me.*” The last sentence (c) “*She is a kind woman and indiferen but I like her,*” the adjective “indiferen” is misspelled and should be “indifferent.” Therefore, the correct sentence is “*She is a kind and indifferent woman, but I like her.*”

The eight most frequent error type was spelling. 3 (3.85%) spelling errors were found in the students’ writing sentences. Most of the spelling mistakes were phonetic, with students writing words the way they sound rather than using their correct spelling (Al-Saudi, 2020). The following are some examples of these errors:

- (a) *We friend since **elementari** school. (RP)*
- (b) *She is **Verri** kind to me. (AM)*
- (c) *She also often listens to my complaints **Withot** getting bored of listening to them. (AM)*

In the sentence (a), “*elementary*” should be corrected to “*elementary.*” In (b), “*Verri*” is a misspelling of “*very,*” and in (c), “*Withot*” should be written as “*without.*” These mistakes are not related to adjective placement or form, as previously suggested, but instead point to a need for better spelling accuracy and a stronger grasp of common English vocabulary.

The ninth most frequent error type was preposition. 1 (1.28%) preposition error was found in the students’ writing sentences. It involves selecting inappropriate prepositions to express relationships in the sentence. This result supports the perspective of Dulay, Burt, & Kransen as cited in (Setyaningrum & Fatmawaty, 2020). The following is the examples of this error:

- (a) *We often share stories to each other, but now, we are indifferent university, but still meet **in** holiday. (NS)*

In the sentence (a), “We often share stories to each other, but now, we are indifferent university, but still meet *in* holiday,” this phrase “but still meet in holiday” uses incorrect phrase. It should be “but still meet during holiday”. Therefore, the correct sentence is “We often share stories to each other, but now, we are indifferent university, but still meet during holiday.”

CONCLUSION

This research revealed a total of 78 grammatical errors across simple, compound, and complex sentence structures. The most frequent errors were related to capitalization (23.08%), followed by verb usage (16.67%), and noun errors (10.26%). These common issues indicate difficulties in mastering fundamental grammatical concepts such as subject-verb agreement, correct word forms, and proper sentence capitalization.

Other error types found that include pronoun errors, article misuse or omission, adjective misuse, and incorrect prepositions, though these occurred less frequently. The findings highlight that even basic grammatical components remain a challenge for students, particularly when forming more complex or compound sentences.

Overall, this research suggests the need for targeted grammar instruction focusing on areas such as verb tense consistency, article usage, and sentence mechanics to enhance the accuracy and fluency of students' writing. Regular practice and feedback may also help students internalize these rules and reduce common errors in future writing tasks.

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