

## UNGRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES AND TYPES OF THE UNGRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTION

Desfianur Ardhi<sup>1</sup>, Sudarsono<sup>2</sup>, Ikhsanudin<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Masters Study Program of English Language Education, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Tanjungpura University, Pontianak  
Email: desfianurardhi8@gmail.com

---

---

### Abstract:

The present research is about analysis on ungrammatical constructions encountered in the texts written by the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester undergraduate students of English Language Education Program of Tanjungpura University. The objective of the study is to describe the types of the ungrammatical constructions and the causes of the ungrammatical constructions. The method of research is descriptive. The research participants were 34 students of the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester undergraduate students of English Language Education Program of Tanjungpura University. The data were collected from corpus written by the students. The ungrammaticalities occurred in the students' text. They were 496 errors encountered by the students. 312 errors related to phrasal errors and 184 related to clausal errors. The phrasal-related errors affected the area of noun phrase (37%), gerund phrase (13%), verb phrase (17%), infinitive phrase (12), prepositional phrase (12%), adjective phrase (7%), and adverb phrase (2%). The clausal-related errors were alternating form (49%), omission (33%), simple addition (15%), double marking (2) and misplaced subject and verb (1%). The sources of these errors were interlingual (2,9%) and intralingual (97,1%).

**Keywords:** Ungrammatical Construction, Types, Causes

---

---

### INTRODUCTION

---

---

Errors in the production of the second language are unavoidable phenomena among second language learners. In learning the second language, the learners usually mix the system of the target language with the system of their mother tongue that may contain differences (Cenderato et al., n.d.; Y Gatot Sutapa, n.d.), thus resulting in negative transfers. On the other hand, the students may have misconceptions about the application of the target languages' rules (Akkaya & Aydin, 2018; Amiri & Puteh, 2017). These mixes and misunderstandings produce constructions that are unacceptable in the target language.

Indonesian and English may be similar in some aspect, but differ in others. In the similar aspects, the students are facilitated in learning their foreign language, but they may make errors in the aspects that they do not share. When the first language is different from the target language, the students may transfer the first language properties into the target language negatively. For example, the Indonesian-native speakers learning English may express 'many student' as illustrated in (1), instead of 'many students' (2). The students do not pluralize the word 'student' (1) because they transfer the Indonesian rule negatively, where Indonesian may not mark

the plural forms (3). In contrast, the word 'student' preceded by the plural determiner like 'many' as shown in (1) is unacceptable in English, and it is deemed an error because it does not obey the English rule. (1) \*There are many student that study in Tanjungpura University. (2) There are many students that study in Tanjungpura University. (3) Banyak mahasiswa yang belajar di Universitas Tanjungpura.

Scovel (2022) and Corder (2021) claim that the properties of the first language that differ from the target language may contribute to the occurrence of ungrammatical constructions in the use of the target language.

The forms of the first language applied deviating in the target language are classified the ungrammatical constructions in the target language may also to some extents affect the meaning of the utterances (Kisilowska-Szurmińska et al., 2022). Language functions to deliver messages, describe things, and give the listener new information (Ivanova et al., 2012; Monteiro-Krebs et al., 2021; Rahmani, 2021).

Kracht (2023) refers language to the sets of signs consisting of sounds and words that are ruled grammatically. Without grammar, words are only a collection of vocabulary.

English is taught in high schools in Indonesia as a foreign language, therefore the students are potential to transfer their mother tongue into English positively or negatively. There were studies on language transfer made by the students. For example, Cenderato (n.d.) reported that the students of a high school in Nanga Merakai experienced transferring their L1 into English, 53% out of the whole ungrammatical mistakes in writing an essay were interlingual and 47% were intralingual (Wagiyo, 2021).

Amiri & Puteh (2017) found out 13 types of errors from the academic texts written by postgraduate students. The major errors concerned with the negative transfer of L1 into the target language. They involved the sentence structures, articles, punctuation, and word choices (Aloo & Kambona, 2019; Knudson, 2023).

Referring to the above-mentioned studies, the students did interference from the mother tongue to the target language, and the teaching of English productive skills focused more on fluency, idea organization, pronunciation, and vocabulary, but less on grammar. They contributed to the students' lack of awareness about the importance of grammar that made the English instructors have no accurate picture of their students' proficiency in grammar. Consequently, it is difficult for them to take any actions to improve their students' ability in applying appropriate grammatical rules.

Therefore, it is significant to analyze made by the students. The source of the data will be taken from the paragraph-writing test written by the second semester students of the undergraduate English Language Education Study Program, Teacher Training, and Education Faculty, Tanjungpura University who are registered in paragraph writing class. The goals of the study are to know the types and the causes of the ungrammatical constructions that occur in students' texts.

The purpose of this study is to find out the types of errors that occur in the students' text, the frequency of each type of error and the causes of the errors.

## RESEARCH METHOD

---

In carrying out a research, it is necessary to describe the method that is used to achieve the goal. Singh (2021) refers a research method to "a style of conducting a research work which is determined by the nature of the problem".

The goal of descriptive research is to describe and interpret the phenomenon and

characteristics being studied. furthermore, the data are analyzed qualitatively to identify the theme, pattern, and concepts followed by the descriptions and the interpretations (Sari & Nurhidayah, 2022; Wiklund & Laakso, 2021). In this research, the writer will analyze the students' corpus to know the type of ungrammatical constructions that occur. To serve this, the writer will use the error analysis method. Error analysis is a method to study the types and the causes of errors in second language production.

The participants of this study are the students of Tanjungpura University who are registered in essay writing class. The goals of the study are to know the types and the causes of the ungrammatical constructions that occur in students' texts. The total number of the participants number were 34 students. The participants came from similar background of linguistic environment and language acquisition

In this research, the writer collected the corpora made by the students. The corpora are the essay written by the students. The corpora will be obtained by using clinical elicitation. Clinical elicitation can be derived from interview or written composition made by the respondents (Ellis, 1994, p. 50). In this research, the writer choses written composition to elicit the corpora. This is performed by assigning the students who are registered in essay writing class to write an essay. When the corpora are obtained, the next process is to sort out the data from the corpora.

When the corpora have been obtained, the writer will do the following steps.

- a. Identifying ungrammatical constructions: The writer will break the corpus into phrases and clauses. The ungrammatical phrases and clauses will be sorted out from the grammatical ones as the data to be studied.
- b. Describing the ungrammatical constructions: In this stage, the writer will provide reasons regarding to the ungrammatical phrases and clause from the grammar perspective and give revision to the erroneous constructions.
- c. Explaining the ungrammatical constructions: in this stage, the writer will explain the sources of the ungrammatical constructions. The sources of the students' ungrammatical construction may come from the interlingual factor and intralingual factor. The latter is sub-categorized into overgeneralization, false concept hypothesis, ignorance of rules restrictions, and incomplete application of rules (Vietri, 2014; Wiklund & Laakso, 2019).
- d. Computing the types of errors.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

---

The findings are presented in the order of the research questions raised in this study. The study specifically addressed the following questions:

1. *What are the types of errors that occur in the students' text?*
2. *How frequent does each type of error appear in the corpora?*
3. *Why did the students produce errors in their text?*

The procedures of analyzing data are sorted out from the corpus into grammatical and ungrammatical constructions. The constructions were classified into phrases and clauses.

This research found 494 ungrammatical constructions sorted out from the corpora. The ungrammatical constructions are clausal and phrasal. The example of the ungrammatical forms in the phrasal level is shown in (67a) and that in the clausal level is illustrated in (68a).

(4a) You need to develop your potential.

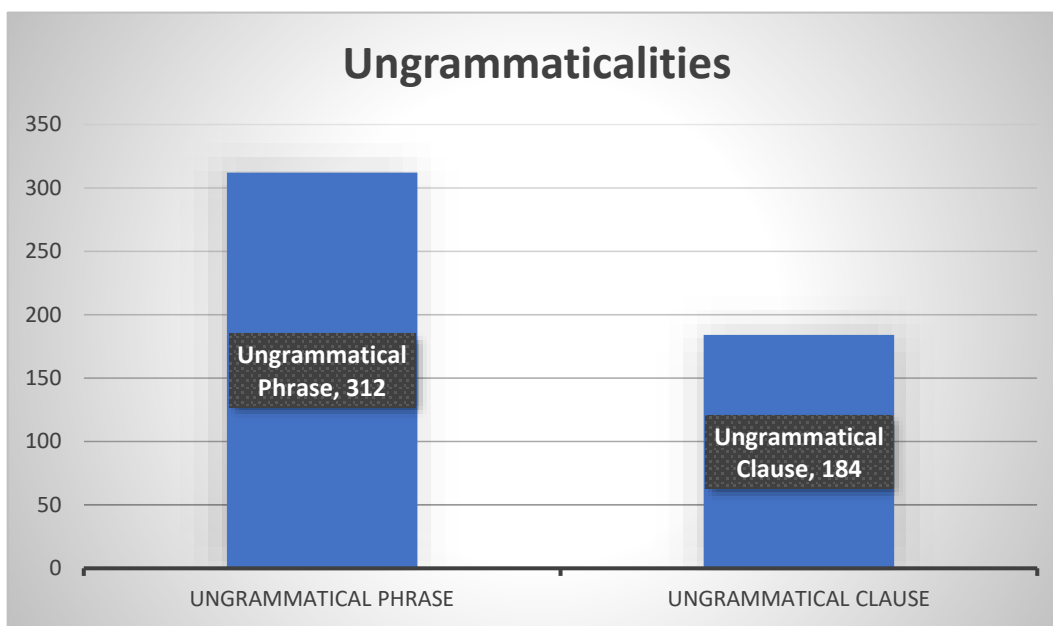
(4b) You need to develop your potency.

(5a) My parents is really important.

(5b) My parents are really important.

The example (4a) is ungrammatical because the students chosen the inappropriate word form. The possessive adjective ‘your’ requires a noun. On the other hand, The word ‘potential’ is an adjective. In order to co occur with the possessive adjective, the noun form of ‘potential’ which is ‘potency’ should be used here as seen in (4b). The example (5a) is ungrammatical because the linking verb ‘is’ does not agree in number with the subject ‘my parents’. The subject is in plural form; therefore, the verb has to be in plural as seen in the example (5b)

The ungrammatical constructions in the phrasal level are higher than that the ungrammatical forms in the clausal level as can be seen in the following graph.



**Figure 1. Ungrammaticalities Chart**

The ungrammaticality in the phrasal level concerns noun phrases (NP), verb phrases (V), adjective phrase (AdjP), gerund phrase (GP), prepositional phrase (PP) and infinitive phrase (IP) As shown in the following table. The most frequently encountered errors deal with NP, and the least ones with AdvP. The frequency of the occurrence can be seen in table 1.

**Table 1. Errors in the phrasal level**

Errors	Ungrammatical Phrases							total
	NP	VP	AdjP	AdvP	GP	PP	IP	
total	117	53	21	6	42	36	37	312
%	37	17	7	2	13	12	12	100

The ungrammaticality in the clausal level concerns alternating form, double marking, misplaced subject and verb, omission, and simple addition. The frequency of the occurrence can be seen in table 2.

**Table 2. Errors in the clausal level**

Errors	Ungrammatical clause
--------	----------------------

	Double Marking	Misplaced Subject And Verb	Omission	Simple Addition	Alternatin g form	total
total	4	1	61	28	90	184
%	2	1	33	15	49	100%

As mentioned previously, the ungrammaticalities affect the phrase and clause area. For the phrasal area, they are divided into noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, adverb phrase, preposition phrase, gerund phrase and infinitive phrase as illustrated respectively by the examples (69a) to (75a).

- (6a) My dream house is a house with \_ swimming pool, back garden and a nice rooftop.
- (6b) My dream house is a house with a swimming pool
- (7a) I wanna life in the present without regretting the past.
- (7b) I wanna live in the present without regretting the past.
- (8a) I will feel so sad and frightening.
- (8b) I will feel so sad and frightened.
- (9a) also, there is a small library around it.
- (9b) There is also a small library around it.
- (10a) I want to achieve my dreams by my own for now on.
- (10b) I want to achieve my dreams by my own from now on.
- (11a) Study abroad is one of my biggest dreams.
- (11b) Studying abroad is one of my biggest dreams.
- (12a) I don't want sweating.
- (12b) I don't want to sweat.

The sentence (6a) is incorrect. The phrase 'swimming pool' is a countable noun, so it has to be preceded by an article such as in the example (6b). The sentence (7a) is ungrammatical because the verb wanna should be followed by a verb such as in the example (7b). The word 'life' is a noun, therefore it cannot be used after the verb 'wanna'. The sentence (8a) the student selected the inappropriate adjective to describe the verb 'feel'. The adjective that is used to modify the verb of perception such as feel should end with 'ed' such as in (8b). The sentence (9a) is incorrect because the student misplaced the adverb 'also'. An adverb should take place after a verb such as in (9b). The sentence (10a) is incorrect because the student chosen the inappropriate preposition. The appropriate preposition should be 'from' instead of 'for' as seen in the example (10b). The sentence (11a) is incorrect. The verb 'study' cannot function as a subject. A subject should be a noun, pronoun, or words that act as a noun like gerund as seen in the example (11b). The sentence (12a) lacks the infinitive to. The verb 'want' should be followed by an infinitive and a basic form of a verb as seen in the example (12b).

On the other hand, the ungrammaticalities in clause are caused by some factors such as misplaced subject and verb, omission of subject and verb, omission of ordinate clause, double markings, simple addition and alternating form. They are respectively shown in the example (13a) - (18a).

- (13a) My dream house should be the one where we can live happily and comfortably.
- (13b) My dream house should be the one where I can live happily and comfortably.
- (14a) So, if we want to be a teacher, start to do something.
- (14b) So, if we want to be a teacher, we have to start to do something.

(15a) If I ever have the ability to travel back in time to relive it or to tell my past amateur self to never do thing half-heartedly and not to waste the youthful days just to pursue school or just play video games all day but try to make lots of friend, not just the ones in my class but the whole school or even other school and actually interact with them and make memories which we could later reminisce.

(15b) If I ever have the ability to travel back in time to relive it, I will undo all the mistakes I have made.

(16a) what I have chosen as the passion of mine, it should be depend on our heart.

(16b) what I have chosen as the passion of mine should depend on my heart.

(17a) if we are always learn,

(17b) if we always learn,

(18a) But, what I did in the past is do useless things for my life.

(18b) But, what I did in the past was doing useless things for my life.

The sentence (13a) is incorrect. The use of subject pronoun 'we' in the phrase 'where we can live' is inappropriate because the previous clause, 'my dream house should be', indicates self, therefore the subject in the relating clause should also refer to self. The appropriate subject to be used in the relating clause should be 'I' as seen in the example (13b). The sentence (14a) is ungrammatical because the ordinate clause lacks a subject and a verb. The correct sentence can be seen in the example (14b). the example (15a) is a sentence fragment. It lacks the ordinate clause and too overloaded. The sentence has to be reconstructed as seen in (15b). The clause (16a) contains ungrammaticality because the use of pronoun 'it' after the clause 'what I have chosen as the passion of mine'. The clause 'what I have chosen as the passion of mine' has functioned as a subject, therefore it does not need another subject and has to be immediately followed by a verb as seen in the example (16b). the clause (17a) is ungrammatical because of the addition of auxiliary verb 'are'. The clause has another verb, 'learn' which is a stand-alone verb and it should be used without a helping verb such as auxiliary to-be as seen in the example (17b). the sentence (18a) is ungrammatical because the use of inappropriate verb in the past construction. The clause 'But, what I did in the past' contains past time marker, therefore the verb that follows it immediately should be in the past form as seen in the example (18b).

Of All the ungrammatical constructions in both the clauses and the phrases, it is very necessary to know the sources of the students problem in writing text whether they occur because of interlingual or intralingual problems.

The interlingual error occurs due to the interference of the mother tongue to the target language. The students' mother tongue influenced the placement of an article in a noun modifier such as in the example (19a) and the placement of the noun head such as in (20a).

(19a) Because apart from expensive the school fees for my parents (the influenced TL)

(19b) Karena selain dari mahalnya biaya sekolah bagi orang tua saya (mother tongue)

(19c) Because, apart from the expensive school fees for my parents

(20a) The color black, gray or broken white will be the paint of my house. (the influenced TL)

(20b) warna hitam, kelabu atau putih akan menjadi warna cat rumah saya. (mother tongue)

(20c) the black, gray or broken white color will be the paint of my house.

In the example (19a) the ungrammaticality occurred in the noun modifier the expensive. The student incorrectly placed the adjective before the article the the writer assumes that the student literally translated his mother tongue structure into English without reading to the rules of forming a noun phrase. In the example (20a), the students incorrectly placed the noun head color at the beginning resembling the Indonesia strcture as shown in (20b). this occurs due to the difference between Indonesian and English rules about the placement of a noun head. In

Indonesian, the noun head is placed at the beginning. While in English, the noun head is placed at the end.

Intralingual error is the type of error caused by the unfamiliarity in the target language system, thus, the language learners may apply the rule incorrectly when producing utterance in a second language. There are 4 types of intralingual errors. They are overgeneralization, false concept hypothesized, incomplete application of rules and ignorance of rules restriction. The example of each is shown respectively from 21-127

(21a) As we know, the achieveness is one of important things in our life.

(21b) As we know, the achievement is one of important things in our life.

(22a) I wanna life in the present without regretting the past.

(22b) I wanna live in the present without regretting the past.

(23a) I'm not allowed to be emotional rather than just \_ happy all the time.

(23b) I'm not allowed to be emotional rather than just to be happy all the time.

(24a) of course, to be a teacher I should to know about technology.

(24b) of course, to be a teacher I should know about technology.

In the sentence (21a), the student overgeneralizes the suffix *ness* to form a noun. In English, the suffix *ness* is used for the adjectives words to form a noun. The root word *achieve* is a verb, so it has to be suffixed with *ment* in order to form a noun. In the sentence (22a), the student used the inappropriate word form. the verb *wanna* is a helping verb and it needs a main verb as shown in the sentence (22b), meanwhile the word *life* is a noun. the examples (22a) and (23a) show that the students have lack of ability in distinguishing the word forms resulting to the inappropriate use of certain word forms in the wrong context. In the sentence (23a), the student omitted the verb 'to be' between just and happy causing the other phrase subsequent to the subordinate conjunction 'rather than' unparallel in form with the phrase to be emotional. In the sentence (24a), the students added infinitive 'to' after the modal should. All modals should be followed by the base form a verb.

## CONCLUSION

---

There are 496 ungrammatical constructions. The ungrammaticalities affected the students written language especially in the phrases and clauses level. In the level of phrase, the students make 312 ungrammaticalities in total. These are divided into noun phrase (117), verb phrase (53), adjective phrase (21), adverb phrase (6), gerund phrase (42), preposition phrase (36) and infinitive phrase (37). For the level of clause, the students made 184 ungrammaticalities in total. The causes of errors in both phrases and clauses are omission (223), misformation (185), addition (94) and misordering (14)

The sources of errors are interlingual and intralingual. The interlingual-related ungrammaticality numbers 12 in total. They are caused by alternating form (3), misplaced adjective (1), misplaced adverb (2), and misplaced noun head (6) and intralingual (484). The intralingual-related ungrammaticality has 484 occurrences in total which are divided into false concept hypothesis (53), overgeneralization (3), ignorance of rules restriction (225) and incomplete application of rules (203).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

- Akkaya, A., & Aydin, G. (2018). Academics' Views on the Characteristics of Academic Writing. *Educational Policy Analysis and Strategic Research*, 13(2), 128–160.
- Aloo, C. O., & Kambona, O. O. (2019). *The Influence of Social Cultural Practices of Host Community*

*on the Sustainable Conservation of Maasai Mau Forest in Kenya.*

- Amiri, F., & Puteh, M. (2017). Error Analysis in Academic Writing: A Case of International Postgraduate Students in Malaysia. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 8(4), 141–145.
- Cenderato, C., Sudarsono, S., Sutapa, Y., & Gatot, Y. (n.d.). *The Ungrammatical Constructions in English Writing: Analysisontypes and Causes*. Tanjungpura University.
- Ivanova, I., Pickering, M. J., McLean, J. F., Costa, A., & Branigan, H. P. (2012). How do people produce ungrammatical utterances? *Journal of Memory and Language*, 67(3), 355–370.
- Kisilowska-Szurmińska, M., Świgoń, M., & Głowacka, E. (2022). THE USE OF ACADEMIA. EDU, RESEARCHGATE, GOOGLE SCHOLAR, SCOPUS, AND PUBLONS AMONG THE POLISH RESEARCHERS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA SCIENCES. *Przegląd Biblioteczny*, 90(2), 137–169.
- Knudson, D. (2023). Association of ResearchGate research influence score with other metrics of top cited sports biomechanics scholars. *Biomedical Human Kinetics*, 15(1), 57–62.
- Monteiro-Krebs, L., Zaman, B., Htun, N.-N., Caregnato, S. E., & Geerts, D. (2021). Depicting recommendations in academia: how ResearchGate communicates with its users (via design or upon request) about recommender algorithms. *International Conference on Data and Information in Online*, 3–25.
- Ondis, A. L. (2022). *Social Influences on US Postdoctoral Researchers' Participation in ResearchGate*. Saint Leo University.
- Rahmani, E. F. (2021). Received: 25 th February 2021; Revised: 7 th May 2021; Accepted: 27 th June 2021. *Researchgate. Net*, 8, 47–63.
- Sari, H. M., & Nurhidayah, R. (2022). UNGRAMMATICAL SENTENCES: A GRAMMATICAL ERROR ANALYSIS ON ARCHITECTS STUDENTS'CORPUSES OF PONTIANAK STATE POLYTECHNIC. *Jurnal Ilmiah STBA*, 8(1).
- Vietri, S. (2014). *Idiomatic constructions in Italian: a lexicon-grammar approach* (Vol. 31). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Wagiyo, S. (2021). *The Use of Journal Writing in Teaching English Writing*.
- Wiechetek, Ł., & Florjančič, V. (2021). Educators and academics in the digital world. Comparative analysis of using ResearchGate by Slovenian and Polish business researchers. *International Journal of Innovation and Learning*, 29(4), 387–411.
- Wiklund, M., & Laakso, M. (2019). Ungrammatical utterances and disfluent speech as causes of comprehension problems in interactions of preadolescents with high functioning autism. *Clinical Linguistics & Phonetics*, 33(7), 654–676.
- Wiklund, M., & Laakso, M. (2021). Comparison of disfluent and ungrammatical speech of preadolescents with and without ASD. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 51(8), 2773–2789.
- Y Gatot Sutapa, Y. (n.d.). THE UNGRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN ENGLISH WRITING: ANALYSISONTYPES AND CAUSES. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran Khatulistiwa (JPPK)*, 3(12).

---

**Copyright holder:**

Desfianur A, Sudarsono, Ikhsanudin (2023)

**First publication right:**

[Jurnal Syntax Admiration](#)



**This article is licensed under:**

