



## Essay Error Analysis on the 1<sup>st</sup> Year Students of English Education Department

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify and describe the most common errors found in essay writing produced by first-year students of the English Education Department at STKIP Muhammadiyah Enrekang. The study employed a qualitative descriptive design. The data were collected through documentation of students' essay assignments written over several weeks and then analyzed to classify the types and frequency of errors. The findings revealed that students still experienced substantial difficulty in producing accurate English essays. A total of 330 errors were identified and categorized into 24 error types. The most frequent problems appeared in articles, prepositions, spelling, meaningless sentences, word choice, subject-verb agreement, auxiliary verbs, plural forms, verb forms, and capital letters. The analysis also showed improvement after corrective feedback was provided, with the number of errors decreasing from 250 in the earlier essays to 80 in the later essays. These findings indicate that grammatical accuracy, lexical choice, and sentence construction remain major challenges for beginning EFL writers. The study concludes that error analysis is essential for helping lecturers identify learners' difficulties and design more effective teaching materials, feedback practices, and writing instruction. More guided practice and explicit correction are recommended to improve students' essay writing ability.

### KEYWORDS

*Essay writing; error analysis; writing errors; EFL students; grammatical accuracy*

### INTRODUCTION

Writing is an extremely important part of each university study. The students will write assignments that may range from one paragraph to several pages long, and will write answers on tests and exams that may be a few sentences long or a complete essay. Academic writing in English may be different not only from academic writing in our own

language, but even from other writing in English (Zemach & Lisa, 2003). Student writing is the center of teaching and learning in higher education, fulfilling various objectives according to the various contexts in which it occurs. Students and lecturers alike recognize the necessity for good communication skills both within the university and in the larger world. Whilst some research signals that an ever-increasing range of writing

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demands are being made of students (Ganobcsik-Williams, 2001), the evidence also shows that the most traditional practice - essay writing - continues to affect many disciplines (see National Inquiry Committee on Higher Education, 1997). Whether the essay supposed to continue to be the main type of writing produced by the student and whether students recognize how to be successfully involved in this and other writing practices are the questions that are raised more often.

Student academic writing extends to be the center of teaching and learning in higher education, but it is often an imperceptible curriculum dimension; that is, rules or conventions governing what are considered academic writings are often regarded as part of the 'common sense' education students have, and are therefore not explicitly taught in punitive courses. If students are less familiar with this convention, assumptions are often held that they will 'take it' as part of learning their subject education. Although this position may be understood in the context of a small and broadly homogeneous higher education system, it is no longer advocated in the current context where significant changes affect all aspects of teaching and learning, including student academic writing (Coffin, Curry, Goodman, etc., 2003).

Essay writing is a compulsory to pass in English Education Department in STKIP Muhammadiyah Enrekang especially at the 2nd semester. As the researcher concerned, the students mostly find the difficulties to write good essay. There are 24 numbers of common errors the students frequently made in their English writing including article, sentence structure, L1 interference, word choice, verb form, plural form, phrasal verb, spelling, preposition, conjunction, capital letter, subject-verb agreement, auxiliary verb, tense agreement, uncountable noun, word order, redundancy, missing object, apostrophe, missing verb, adverb, noun form, missing noun, and meaningless (Silalahi, 2014). The researcher expected to analyze the common errors in essay writing on the 1st year students of English Education Department.

## METHOD

This study used qualitative descriptive research design. Qualitative descriptive research was used to describe data relating to errors used in essay writing on first year of English department of STKIP Muhammadiyah Enrekang. In this study, researchers discuss the research method namely (1) research design, (2) subject and object of research, (3) method and data collection instruments, and (4) data analysis. The subject of this research was essay of English Education Department students. The object of this research was the essay errors in terms of aspects article, sentence structure, L1 interference, word choice, verb form, plural form, phrasal verb, spelling, preposition, conjunction, capital letter, subject-verb agreement, auxiliary verb, tense agreement, uncountable noun, word order, redundancy, missing object, apostrophe, missing verb, adverb, noun form, missing noun, and meaningless. This study used documentation method with instruments his research was the research itself. The data analysis technique was the most important step to answers the problems that want to be solved. Data of this study presented qualitatively descriptive.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Types of Errors: Collection of Samples of Learner Essay Writing Assignments*

In the end of semester around 4 month length, the students had learnt how to write a good essay. There are some ways to compose great essay writing, and it depends what genre of essay you are going to write. In this study, some of essay that they had to do were 1) descriptive and process paragraphs 2) opinion paragraph 3) comparison and contrast paragraph 4) problem/solution paragraph. Brainstorming, making a list, free writing, and mapping are ways to write those paragraphs. The students wrote at least 14 times short essay for the assignment. They composed their own sentences based on the questions given. The researcher then

collected all of the students' sentences for analysis.

From the collected data, there are a total of 330 errors occurred during the essay writing assignments as shown on table 1.

### **Description and Evaluation of Error**

Table 1. Errors Evaluation during the essay writing assignments

No	Errors	Number of Errors (pre)	Number of Errors (post)
1	article	16	7
2	sentence structure	5	1
3	L1 interference	10	3
4	word choice	40	15
5	verb form	20	13
6	plural form	5	2
7	phrasal verb	25	14
8	Meaningless	15	5
9	Spelling	8	2
10	Preposition	10	0
11	conjunction	2	0
12	capital letter	3	0
13	subject-verb agreement	1	0
14	auxiliary verb	13	4
15	tense agreement	8	0
16	uncountable noun	0	0
17	word order	4	0
18	redundancy	18	7
19	missing object/subject	12	2
20	apostrophe	3	0
21	missing verb	5	0
22	adverb	7	0
23	noun form	13	4
24	missing noun	7	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>250</b>	<b>80</b>

Table 1 present that there had been decreases in numbers of errors regularly from pre essay writing and post essay writing from 250 to 80 errors only. Word choice is the most errors done by students, it is 40 errors and otherwise uncountable noun is no errors. Almost no errors also on subject-verb agreement and even down to 0 on the post

essay writing. Sentence structure, plural form, conjunction, missing verb, apostrophe, adverb, capital letter, are less error and reduced significantly to 0 after researcher telling the errors made. Table 2 shows students' sample sentences with errors were indicated by an underline and italic.

Table 2. Students' Sample Sentences

No.	Sentences	Type of Errors
1	I want <u>my dreams</u> to be <u>achieved</u> and when <u>my dreams</u> are <u>achieved</u> ,	redundancy
2	It <u>is</u> works in shipping	auxiliary verb
3	I want to be <u>a</u> entrepreneur	article
4	<u>The next my live</u>	Noun form
5	I hope I can <u>following</u>	Verb form
6	I <u>choose</u> STKIP M Enrekang because .....	tense agreement
7	If the money that I collect <u>already a lot of</u> ,	sentence structure
8	<u>That so</u> hard to me	missing verb
9	In order to be successful <u>people</u>	word choice
10	<u>i</u> really want to be an artist	capital letter

The table 2 presented some of errors done by the students. The researcher only picked some of them as a representative and below are students' sample sentences in which the researcher had made corrections. The researcher did the same way in marking the students' essay writing assignment for 4 consecutive months. This method of

correcting students' essay errors could initiate a comfortable learning environment for students because they did not only get scores but also comments from the teacher in the form of possible corrections. The errors are indicated by underline and possible corrections to the errors are indicated by italic.

Table 3. Students' Sample Sentences with Possible Corrections from the Researcher

Student sentence	Possible correction	Type of Error
I want <u>my dreams</u> to be <u>achieved</u> and when <u>my dreams</u> are <u>achieved</u> ,	I want my dreams to be achieved and when <u>it happened</u> ,	redundancy
It <u>is</u> works in shipping	I <u>work</u> in shipping	auxiliary verb
I want to be <u>a</u> entrepreneur	I want to be <u>an entrepreneur</u>	article
<u>The next my live</u>	My <u>life</u> in the future	Noun form
I hope I can <u>following</u>	I hope I can <u>follow</u>	Verb form
I <u>choose</u> STKIP M Enrekang because .....	I <u>chose</u> STKIP M Enrekang because .....	tense agreement
If the money that I collect <u>already a lot of</u> ,	If the money that I collect <u>enough</u> already	sentence structure
<u>That so</u> hard to me	that <u>is</u> so hard to me	missing verb
In order to be successful <u>people</u>	In order to be successful <u>person</u>	word choice
<u>i</u> really want to be an artist	<u>I</u> really want to be an artist	capital letter

As shown in table 3, it can be concluded that some of the mistakes that are often made by students in writing essays are redundancy, auxiliary verb, article, noun form, verb form, tense agreement, sentence structure, missing verb, word choice, capital

letter. Students often ignore the use of tenses when making sentences. We can see the sentence above, for example, (I choose STKIP Muhammadiyah Enrekang because) that student should have been written (I chose STKIP Muhammadiyah Enrekang because)

whereas in the selection of words one student cannot distinguish when to use people and when to use person. As in the following example, (In order to be successful people) that supposed to be (in order to be successful person). Another case, students often ignore the use of capital letters "I" instead of "Me" in meaning. For example, (i really want to be an artist), it seems very easy, but sometimes students use lowercase.

The following 10 biggest mistakes made by students in writing essay start from the highest to the lowest error.

**Table 4.** The Top Ten Studentship' Most Common Errors

No	Types of Error	Number of Frequency
1	Article	56
2	Preposition	51
3	Spelling	49
4	Meaningless	41
5	Word Choice	38
6	Subject-verb Agreement	37
7	Auxiliary Verb	34
8	Plural Form	25
9	Verb Form	20
10	Capital Letter	5

Table 4 illustrates that the article is the biggest type of error made by students in writing essays and then followed by prepositions with a frequency of 51 errors. Spelling is also in third position, indicating that students are very weak in spelling. However, the lowest type of error made by students is an error in writing a capital letter with only 5 frequencies while the verb form is only 20 word errors.

## CONCLUSION

Writing essays in English is not an easy task for STKIP Muhammadiyah Enrekang students because it does not only require logical thoughts to be written in writing but must also have adequate vocabulary used in the form of English tenses and

sentence structure. The lecturer should play an important role in giving full support to his/her students that awareness in understanding grammar and the accuracy of language is very necessary in writing essays.

From the mistakes in writing essays done by students, the biggest mistakes are in articles and prepositions. This is uncommon for the students in universities throughout the world whose English is their second language or only as a foreign language. Another very essential conclusion, which needs to be noted by English instructors is to improve the methods or strategy that are good in teaching and to help students to learn better in the use of English in a correct grammatical.

One of the biggest concerns is that the lecturer should explain the mistakes that are often made by students who usually students do not know their mistakes. Another suggestion for lecturers is to provide more essay writing exercises to students because practice makes perfect.

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