

Exploring Students' Common Errors in Writing Recount Texts: A Case Study at Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

Writing recount texts remains a challenging task for many junior high school students in Indonesia, particularly because it requires an accurate use of grammar, sentence organization, and vocabulary mastery. Previous studies have shown that learners frequently commit errors in tense usage, sentence structure, and word choice, yet limited research has connected these issues to students' dependency on translation tools and their overall writing competence. This study, therefore, aimed to explore the common errors made by eighth-grade students in writing recount texts and to identify the underlying causes of those errors. The research involved 25 eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Liliriaje, Soppeng, and data were collected through students' written tasks supported by semi-structured interviews with both students and their English teacher. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through students' written tasks and supported by interviews with both students and their English teacher. The analysis revealed four dominant error categories: verb tense misuse, subject-verb agreement errors, sentence structure problems, and spelling mistakes. Among these, verb tense errors—especially the inappropriate use of the present tense instead of the past tense—emerged as the most frequent, indicating students' limited mastery of narrative conventions. In addition, interviews showed that students' reliance on Google Translate contributed significantly to structural inaccuracies and hindered their grammatical development. The findings contribute to the field of English language teaching by highlighting the urgent need for explicit grammar instruction, vocabulary enrichment strategies, and guided use of translation technology. Pedagogically, this research offers insights into designing targeted writing instruction that addresses students' recurring difficulties and fosters greater writing accuracy and independence in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Recount Text; Writing Errors; Grammar; Vocabulary; EFL Learners

INTRODUCTION

English writing is a crucial skill for junior high school students. One type of text taught is the recount text, which aims to recount past experiences or events coherently. However, many students still struggle to write recount texts correctly. Common errors include grammar, vocabulary, and text organization. As stated by (Prasetyo et al., 2022) Writing skills in English may be difficult for students who know English as a foreign language. It is assumed to occur because they have difficulty rewording sentences. Most problems are because students should understand the way of writing and grammatical rules, such as subject-verb agreements, including parts of speech, tense, and grammatical structure. Additionally, Fithriani (2018) argues that for Indonesia EFL (English Foreign language), the difficulty in second language writing is doubled because they need to transfer ideas from their first language into the target language and organize those ideas into new and different patterns than those in their first language (L1).

Furthermore, various studies show that junior high school students still often experience difficulties in writing recount texts. This difficulty is reflected in the many common errors found in students' writing, including aspects of grammar, vocabulary, text organization, and the use of punctuation and spelling (T. Setianingsih, 2024). As Sartika *et al.* (2022) discussed, the most common errors are in the use of verb tenses, particularly the simple past tense, and inappropriate word choice. Furthermore, students often have difficulty organizing ideas logically and coherently according to the structure of a recount text (orientation, events, reorientation). However, writing recount texts presents significant challenges for learners, especially for junior high school students who are still developing their writing competence (G. W. Hasibuan, 2023).

Writing errors are a natural and unavoidable part of the second language acquisition process. These errors indicate that learning is ongoing and that students are developing their linguistic competence (Arifin, 2016). Understanding the types and causes of these errors is crucial for improving teaching writing strategies and providing more effective feedback. Therefore, this study aims to explore the common errors made by junior high school students in writing recount texts through a qualitative case study approach. By identifying patterns of errors and their possible causes, this research is expected to contribute to the development of more targeted and responsive writing instruction (Asni et al., 2018). By identifying common errors in students' recount texts, teachers can tailor their instruction to address specific problem areas, ultimately enhancing students' writing proficiency.

However, most previous studies have mainly concentrated on classifying students' grammatical and lexical errors in recount texts without examining the underlying learning behaviors that contribute to such errors. For instance, R. Setianingsih & Robbani, (2024) emphasized grammatical inaccuracies, while S. A. Hasibuan & Ardi (2025) focused on syntactic and lexical mistakes. Few studies, however, have investigated how students' reliance on translation tools such as Google Translate

influences these errors and affects their grammatical development and writing independence. This underexplored intersection between linguistic accuracy, cognitive processing, and technological learning strategies represents a significant research gap in current EFL writing studies.

Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its integrative exploration that not only identifies and classifies students' linguistic errors but also investigates the underlying causes related to learning strategies—particularly the use of online translation tools. Unlike earlier studies that merely mapped error types, this research seeks to connect error analysis with pedagogical implications for improving students' grammatical awareness, writing accuracy, and responsible use of technology in EFL writing instruction. The findings are expected to provide new perspectives on how digital-assisted writing behaviors shape students' interlanguage development and inform more contextual and reflective teaching practices at the secondary education level.

In line with these objectives, this study aims to explore the common errors made by junior high school students in writing recount texts and to uncover the underlying causes of these errors. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research analyzes students' written compositions and interview data to identify error patterns and interpret the linguistic and strategic factors that contribute to them. The results are expected to provide meaningful pedagogical insights for teachers in developing more effective instructional strategies to minimize writing errors and enhance students' writing competence in EFL contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers have previously conducted research on students' errors in writing recount texts. While Taye & Teshome, (2024) provided a valuable foundation by mapping students' grammatical errors, their study focused primarily on identifying error types without probing into the cognitive or contextual factors behind those errors. This limitation leaves open the question of *why* such persistent grammatical challenges occur among EFL learners, despite repeated instruction. The present study addresses this limitation by not only categorizing errors but also exploring the underlying learning strategies and technological influences—particularly the use of online translators—that contribute to these linguistic inaccuracies.

Nguyen et al., (2024) convincingly demonstrated that first language transfer plays a key role in shaping students' writing errors. However, this explanation alone may not fully capture the complexity of writing challenges in modern EFL contexts, where learners increasingly depend on digital tools to generate and translate text. Therefore, the current research expands Fithriani's perspective by integrating linguistic and technological dimensions, examining how L1 interference interacts with students' reliance on translation applications in producing recount texts.

Furthermore, Cheng & Zhang (2021) emphasized the role of written feedback from teachers in reducing writing errors in EFL learners. Their research findings indicate that providing explicit and ongoing feedback can help students understand error patterns and develop greater grammatical awareness. Thus, this research contributes not only to error mapping but also to corrective strategies that can improve students' writing accuracy.

Collectively, previous studies have advanced our understanding of grammatical and structural errors in EFL writing; yet, most have treated errors as isolated linguistic phenomena. This study takes a different stance by interpreting writing errors as reflections of students' cognitive processes and technological habits. In doing so, it bridges the gap between traditional error analysis and contemporary challenges in digital-assisted language learning, offering a more holistic lens for improving writing pedagogy in junior high school settings.

Linguistic Factors

Writing in a second language is a complex skill because it involves not only mastery of grammar but also the ability to organize ideas, use vocabulary appropriately, and construct coherent sentences. Hyland & Hyland, (2019) emphasized that writing skills in EFL learners require the integration of cognitive, linguistic, and affective aspects. In the context of junior high school students, the challenge is even greater because they are still in the early stages of mastering language rules and strategies for expressing ideas. Therefore, writing errors can be seen as an indicator of the incomplete development of linguistic competence.

Grammatical errors, particularly tense usage, are one of the most frequently encountered aspects in student writing. Ellis, (2021) explains that grammatical accuracy in EFL writing is heavily influenced by students' grammatical awareness and the quality of input they receive. In recount texts, the use of the past tense is a key prerequisite because the text's function is to recount past experiences. However, many students still tend to use the present tense, indicating a limited understanding of narrative text conventions. This aligns with S. Alharbi, (2025) findings, which emphasize that tense errors often reflect negative transfer from the first language or a lack of contextual practice.

Besides grammar, sentence structure is also an important variable in this study. According to Mamad, (2018), the ability to construct complete and coherent sentences is a prerequisite for academic writing skills. Structural errors, such as fragmented or run-on sentences, indicate that students have not fully mastered English syntactic rules. Cheng & Zhang, (2021) added that weaknesses in this aspect can be minimized through consistent, explicit feedback from teachers, enabling students to develop metalinguistic awareness in their writing. Vocabulary and spelling factors also play a significant role in determining the quality of students' writing. Sore, (2024) emphasized that lexical mastery is the foundation of writing skills because a limited vocabulary hinders the fluency of expressing ideas.

Spelling errors, although often considered minor, still reflect weak lexical knowledge and attention to detail. Zhang et al., (2025) emphasized that vocabulary practice through collaborative interaction can strengthen lexical acquisition while reducing repeated spelling errors.

Strategic Factors

Another aspect that emerged in this study was the use of online translation technology, particularly Google Translate, which students frequently use to write English texts. Sanu Pattni (2018) emphasized that the use of translation tools can provide support for language learners, but without proper guidance, it can potentially reinforce structural and grammatical errors. In this context, students' learning strategies become an important variable influencing the quality of their writing. In other words, errors result not only from weak linguistic competence but also from inappropriate strategies in utilizing learning resources. From a pedagogical perspective, these strategic behaviors reveal students' desire to overcome language barriers quickly. However, they also indicate limited grammatical awareness and overconfidence in technology. Teachers, therefore, need to guide students in using digital tools critically, combining them with reflection and grammar-focused feedback.

Interlanguage and Learning Reflection

Second language acquisition theory positions errors as a natural part of the learning process. Badruli Martati et al., (2016) and Saputra et al., (2022) describes errors as evidence of interlanguage development, namely, the language system between languages that continues to develop toward the target language. This view is relevant in explaining that students' errors in writing recount texts do not merely reflect failure, but rather serve as indicators that the learning process is ongoing. With this understanding, teachers should view errors as a basis for designing more targeted learning interventions. Based on the discussion, this study views writing errors as products of the interaction between linguistic factors (grammar, structure, vocabulary, and spelling) and strategic factors (use of technology, language transfer, and learning strategies). Understanding this interaction helps teachers design writing instruction that is contextual, reflective, and aligned with students' developmental needs. The research findings are expected to not only map the forms of errors but also contribute to the design of writing learning that is more contextual, humanistic, and based on the needs of EFL students at the secondary school level.

METHOD

Design and Samples

The researcher used qualitative research, more specifically using a descriptive qualitative method. According to Creswell *et al.* (2007), Qualitative research is a method for examining and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups

attribute to a social or human situation. The research process includes emerging questions and processes, data collected in the participant's environment, data analysis that progresses inductively from particular to broad subjects, and the researcher's interpretations of the information (Sartika et al., 2022). Additionally, Davidson says qualitative research is especially beneficial for examining complex social, cultural, or behavioral phenomena in which context and meaning are essential. Researchers can obtain a deeper grasp of the subject by immersing themselves in the natural setting and engaging with participants more openly and flexibly (Hartati et al., 2023). This research method analyzed the students' errors in writing recount texts in SMPN Negeri 1 Liliriaje Soppeng. The participants of this research were the eighth-grade students of SMPN Negeri 1 Liliriaje of Soppeng Regency of South Sulawesi. The researcher used simple random sampling. Simple Random Sampling involves taking a sample of members from the population, which is done randomly without regard to the strata that exist in the population. In this research, the researcher concentrated on the eighth class 1 as the subject of this research, which consisted of 25 students.

Instrument and Procedure

The main instruments used in this study were students' written recount texts and semi-structured interviews conducted with both students and the English teacher. These instruments were designed to capture linguistic evidence of writing errors and to provide contextual insights into the factors that contributed to those errors. The researcher also served as a human instrument, actively engaging in the processes of observation, interpretation, and reflection throughout the study. To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings within the qualitative framework, several verification strategies were applied. First, data triangulation was used by comparing and cross-checking information from three different sources students' written works, interviews with students, and interviews with the teacher. This allowed the researcher to confirm recurring patterns and identify the causes of errors more accurately. Second, peer checking (peer debriefing) was conducted with two colleagues who are experienced in English language teaching and qualitative research. They reviewed samples of the coded data and discussed the consistency of the error classifications and interpretations. Third, member checking was carried out by sharing the preliminary findings with the English teacher at the research site to confirm the accuracy of interpretations and ensure that the results reflected the real classroom context. In addition, an audit trail was maintained throughout the research process, documenting data collection, coding procedures, analytical decisions, and researcher reflections. These strategies collectively enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study. By adopting these measures, the researcher aimed to present findings that were not only methodologically sound but also humanistically grounded—reflecting students' genuine learning experiences rather than abstract linguistic data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study followed several systematic stages to ensure that the identification, categorization, and interpretation of students' writing errors were conducted transparently and accurately. Guided by qualitative analytical principles, the process emphasized rigor, reflexivity, and sensitivity to learners' experiences. All students' written works were collected, coded anonymously (S01 to S25), and retyped to facilitate annotation and analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and lightly edited for clarity without changing meaning. The researcher then engaged in an initial reading of all students' texts and interview transcripts to gain a holistic understanding of the data, identify emerging error patterns, and recognize contextual factors influencing student performance. Each composition was examined line by line, with errors in grammar, verb tense, subject and verb agreement, sentence structure, vocabulary choice, and spelling highlighted and annotated. For instance, "She love the most being able to try some of the food" was identified as a subject and verb agreement error, while "I help my family clean the house" was marked as a verb tense error. After identification, errors were classified using surface structure taxonomy (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen) and linguistic taxonomy into categories such as omission, addition, misformation, misselection, and misordering. These errors were further analyzed at linguistic levels including morphology, syntax, lexis, and discourse. A coding sheet documented each error's details such as student code, sentence number, type, and category, allowing patterns and frequency to be systematically tracked.

After coding, the frequency of each error type was calculated to identify dominant patterns, and percentages were presented in tabular form to support the qualitative interpretation. To ensure reliability, two independent raters, the primary researcher and an experienced English instructor, analyzed thirty percent of the data separately, followed by consensus discussions to resolve discrepancies. Triangulation was then conducted by cross-validating written data with interview findings from both students and the English teacher to determine the underlying causes of errors, such as language interference, insufficient grammatical knowledge, or overreliance on translation tools. To ensure contextual accuracy, member checking was performed with the English teacher, and peer debriefing with fellow researchers was used to minimize analytical bias. The final stage integrated quantitative summaries and qualitative insights, combining frequency tables with illustrative excerpts from students' writing and interview quotations. Through this comprehensive process, errors were interpreted not merely as linguistic shortcomings but as indicators of learners' developmental progress, learning strategies, and interlanguage growth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study based on students' written recount texts and interviews with both students and the English teacher. The data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on describing the types

of errors, their frequency of occurrence, and the underlying causes as interpreted from participants' explanations. To facilitate understanding, a summary table is provided to display the general distribution of error types, followed by a detailed qualitative interpretation of each category.

Overview of Error Frequency

The quantitative analysis revealed that students made a range of grammatical and lexical errors in their recount texts. Table 1 below summarizes the frequency and percentage of each error type identified from 25 students' compositions.

Table 1. Summary of students' common errors in recount text writing.

Type of Error	Number of Occurrences (n)	Indicative Percentage (%)	Dominant Linguistic Feature Observed
Verb tense error	30	34.9	Misuse of past tense; present tense in recount context
Sentence structure error	29	33.7	Fragmented or run-on sentences
Spelling error	23	26.7	Incorrect word formation, especially in unfamiliar vocabulary
Subject-verb agreement error	14	16.3	Omission of "-s" in third-person singular verbs

The data indicate that verb tense errors were the most dominant, followed by sentence structure, spelling, and subject-verb agreement errors. This trend suggests that students struggle primarily with the temporal and structural conventions of English recount texts.

Qualitative Interpretation of the Findings

The qualitative analysis revealed that the most common types of errors found in students' writing of recount text. Table 2 below summarizes the common error of students' writing from 25 students' compositions.

Table 2. The Most Common Types of Errors Found in Students' Writing of Recount Text

No	Types of Errors	Students' Writing Errors
1	Subject-Verb Agreement error	" <i>She love the most being able to try some of the food</i> "
2	Verb Tense Error	" <i>I help my family clean the house and prepare traditional dishes.</i> "

3	Sentence Structure Error	“ <i>This was my first time to this city after a year ago</i> ”
4	Spelling Error	“ <i>I saw many nature views</i> ”

Based on the subject-verb agreement error above, this sentence contains an error because the students did not write it with the proper rule. The rule for the subject-verb agreement is Singular subject should be with a singular verb, and a Plural subject should be with a plural verb. So the correct sentence must be “***She loves most being able to try some of the foods***”. Fourteen students have made a subject-verb agreement, so the students are currently at a "good" level of subject-verb agreement errors. It could happen because the students occasionally made a minor error in the subject-verb agreement issue.

The second error found in the verb tense error of students' writing recount text, namely “*I help my family **clean** the house and prepare traditional dishes*”. This sentence contains an error because the use of the tenses does not proper with the recount text rule itself. In writing a recount text, the tenses that were used were past tenses. So the correct sentence is “*I **helped** my family clean the house and prepare traditional dishes*”. Thirty students made verb tense errors, so the students' level on these verb tense errors was at the "unsatisfactory" level. The reason that could make it possible was that the students used inconsistent and inappropriate verb tenses, which caused the sentence to be incomprehensible.

The third error found in the sentence structure error of students' writing recounts text, the sentence structure error is “*This was my first time to this city after a year ago*”. This sentence contains an error because the author has a fragment error (the sentence lacks a verb). Fragments are a kind of error that occurs in sentence structure. The correct sentence is “*This was the first time I **went** to this city in a year*”. Twenty-nine students made sentence structure errors, so the students' level of sentence structure errors was on the "unsatisfactory" level. The reason that could make it possible was that the student's ability to organize the sentence structure was very poor, with numerous and consistent grammatical errors. The fourth error found in the spelling error of the students' writing recount text, the spelling error is “*I saw many **nature** views*”. This sentence contains an error because the author made a misspelling in one word. The correct sentence is “*I saw many **natural** views*”. Twenty-three students made spelling errors, so the students' level of these spelling errors was on the "satisfactory" level. The reason is that the students did have an error in spelling, but it does not detract from understanding, or it is still understandable.

Limited Grammatical Mastery

The first factor influencing students' writing errors was their limited understanding of English grammar, especially verb tenses. Many students used the simple present tense instead of the simple past tense when writing recount texts. This issue was confirmed by interview results showing that students often guessed verb forms without being sure of the correct usage.

“I sometimes use the verb ‘go’ or ‘eat’ even when writing about the past, because I forget how to change it.” (Student 4, Interview, 2024)

This statement illustrates how students’ interlanguage development leads to systematic grammatical errors. Ndeze, (2018) note that such errors are a natural part of the learning process and show that learners are still constructing their internal grammar system. Thus, grammatical errors should be viewed as evidence of progress rather than failure.

Dependence on Translation Tools

Another important factor found in the data was students’ overreliance on translation tools such as Google Translate. Many participants stated that they frequently used online translators when writing, even though they were aware that the results were sometimes incorrect.

“I use Google Translate because it is faster, but sometimes the sentence looks strange, and I don’t know how to fix it.” (Student 8, Interview, 2024)

This overdependence reflects what Ahmet, Emre, (2024) describes as a strategic but uncontrolled behavior among EFL learners. Instead of forbidding the use of translation tools, teachers should help students evaluate and refine the output critically. From a humanistic teaching perspective, technology can become a bridge toward linguistic awareness if integrated with reflective classroom discussions.

Limited Vocabulary and Expression

Students also reported difficulties in expressing their ideas due to limited vocabulary. When they could not find suitable English words, they simplified their sentences, which affected the depth and clarity of their writing.

“I know what I want to say in Indonesian, but I don’t know the English word, so I just use simple words.” (Student 10, Interview, 2024)

This aligns with Erarslan (2021) argument that lexical diversity directly influences writing quality and fluency. The limitation in vocabulary prevents learners from expressing subtle meanings or emotions in their writing, resulting in repetitive and less vivid texts.

Low Motivation and Writing Anxiety

Affective factors also played a role in students’ writing errors. Some students revealed that they lacked confidence and felt anxious about making mistakes, which discouraged them from writing freely.

“I feel nervous when I write because I’m afraid my English is wrong.”
(Student 2, Interview, 2024)

This finding Özdemir & Seçkin, (2025) the concept that emotional barriers, such as anxiety and fear of correction, can hinder language performance. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to create a classroom atmosphere that promotes psychological safety and encourages students to view mistakes as a natural step in the learning process.

The findings of this study reveal several key areas where students commonly make errors in writing recount texts in English. The most prevalent errors identified include subject-verb agreement, verb tense usage, sentence structure, and spelling. Each of these error types reflects different aspects of students’ grammatical and lexical competence. Subject-verb agreement errors, while present, were less frequent compared to other error types, with fourteen students making such mistakes. This suggests that most students have a relatively good grasp of this grammatical rule, possibly due to repeated exposure and practice in earlier language learning stages. However, the persistence of minor errors indicates that reinforcement is still needed, particularly with irregular verbs and third-person singular forms. This finding aligns with previous studies. As stated by Yusuf & Ali (2025) found that appropriate verb usage and subject-verb agreement strongly influence tense proficiency, highlighting the importance of comprehensive grammar instruction and practice to improve grammatical accuracy in English learning. In addition, Pandapatan (2020) reported that students still require more instruction and *practice* in subject-verb agreement to reduce errors, with interference from their first language being a contributing factor. This study emphasizes the need for continual practice to achieve mastery.

Verb tense errors were the most common, with thirty students demonstrating difficulties in this area. The high frequency of tense errors, especially the use of the present tense instead of the past tense in recount texts, suggests a lack of understanding of the function and form of the past tense in narrative writing. Recent research shows that errors in the use of tense, especially the incorrect use of the present tense in recount text, are the most frequent errors and indicate a lack of students’ understanding of the function and form of the past tense in narrative writing (Alharbi, 2020; Cheng & Zhang, 2021). Sentence structure errors were also prevalent, with twenty-nine students making mistakes such as fragments and run-on sentences. These errors point to challenges in organizing ideas and constructing complete, coherent sentences. The inability to form well-structured sentences can impede the overall clarity and effectiveness of the writing. This finding suggests that students may benefit from explicit instruction in sentence construction and opportunities to practice combining and expanding sentences, as recommended by Majara M.H (2018) Explains that sentence structure errors, such as fragments and run-on sentences, are common in second language writers, and emphasizes the importance of explicit instruction in constructing complete and coherent sentences.

Spelling errors were made by twenty-three students, placing them at a “satisfactory” level. While these errors did not generally hinder comprehension, they indicate gaps in students’ lexical knowledge and attention to detail. Spelling mistakes are common among EFL learners, especially when dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary. Providing regular spelling practice and encouraging the use of dictionaries or spell-check tools may help reduce such errors. As Alqahtani & Rahman (2024) stated that although spelling errors do not always hinder comprehension, they reflect deficiencies in vocabulary mastery and attention to detail, and that spelling practice and the use of technology are helpful. Frequent spelling errors in EFL learners, while not significantly impeding comprehension, indicate deficiencies in vocabulary mastery and attention to detail. Therefore, regular spelling practice and the use of dictionaries and spell-checking tools are highly recommended to reduce these errors (Zhang et al., 2025).

Overall, the data suggest that while students have a basic understanding of some grammatical rules, significant challenges remain, particularly in verb tense usage and sentence structure. These findings highlight the importance of differentiated instruction that addresses specific areas of weakness. Teachers should consider integrating focused grammar exercises, contextualized writing tasks, and peer review activities to help students internalize correct forms and structures. This study is limited by its sample size and the specific context in which it was conducted. Future research could explore error patterns in different types of texts or among students of varying proficiency levels to gain a more comprehensive understanding of learners’ needs. While the findings from the students’ and English teachers’ statements reveal several key challenges faced by students in writing recount texts in English, a prominent issue is the students’ limited vocabulary knowledge, which forces them to rely heavily on Google Translate to convert their ideas from Indonesian into English. This reliance on machine translation appears to be a double-edged sword: while it helps students generate English text, it also leads to errors, particularly in grammar and sentence structure.

Several students (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5) admitted that they often write their ideas in Indonesian first and then translate them using Google Translate. This process indicates a lack of confidence and proficiency in English writing, especially in grammar and vocabulary. The students’ statements also suggest that although they have some understanding of tenses, their grasp is incomplete and inconsistent. For example, S2 and S5 mentioned that they learn tenses but often forget or do not fully understand how to apply them correctly in writing. The teacher's perspective supports these observations, emphasizing that grammar remains the main source of errors in students' writing. According to the teacher, students' frequent use of Google Translate sometimes results in inaccurate translations that do not match the intended meaning, especially in terms of tense and subject-verb agreement. The teacher also highlighted that students receive instruction in two English subjects—general English and English for specialization, with the latter focusing more on speaking and grammar. Despite this, students still struggle with grammar accuracy,

which suggests that current teaching methods may not sufficiently address students' needs in writing skills and grammar application.

This situation aligns with previous research indicating that overreliance on machine translation tools can hinder language development if not accompanied by proper guidance and explicit grammar instruction (Sanu Pattni, 2024; Ferris, 2016). Moreover, the students' limited vocabulary knowledge constrains their ability to express ideas fluently and accurately, which is consistent with findings by Norbert Schmitt (1968) that lexical knowledge is crucial for effective writing. This research has made an important contribution in identifying common errors made by junior high school students in writing recount texts, particularly in aspects of grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, and the use of online translation tools. However, most similar studies have focused on mapping error types and their causes, without delving deeper into how innovative pedagogical strategies can be designed to address these issues. In other words, there is still room for research to link error analysis results with more applicable learning interventions, such as the implementation of technology-based corrective feedback, the integration of metacognitive strategies in writing, or process-based learning approaches that enable students to build reflective grammatical awareness (Ferris, et al); (Marlina, 2024) This suggests that the research's novelty lies in its attempt to fill the gap between error analysis and pedagogical innovations oriented towards improving EFL students' writing competence at the secondary school level.

Furthermore, this study opens up the opportunity to further examine how students' reliance on Google Translate not only results in structural errors but also impacts their development of language independence. Most previous studies have highlighted errors as a result of poor grammar mastery alone (Taye & Teshome, 2024) while affective dimensions and students' learning strategies, such as writing confidence or vocabulary management skills, have not been comprehensively researched. Therefore, the novelty of this study could be directed at an integrative exploration that not only identifies errors but also examines the psychological, cognitive, and learning strategy impacts of students in writing recount texts. Thus, further research could provide a more comprehensive understanding and offer more holistic pedagogical recommendations to improve students' academic literacy in EFL contexts.

CONCLUSION

This descriptive qualitative study examined students' errors in writing recount texts and explored the linguistic and strategic factors underlying those errors. The findings revealed that students most frequently made errors related to verb tense, sentence structure, spelling, and subject and verb agreement. These difficulties reflected not only gaps in grammatical knowledge but also the influence of learning strategies, particularly students' dependence on translation tools and their tendency to prioritize meaning over grammatical accuracy. From a qualitative and humanistic perspective, these errors are not regarded merely as mistakes but as natural

manifestations of learners' ongoing interlanguage development. They illustrate how students construct meaning, test linguistic hypotheses, and gradually internalize English language rules through active use and experience. Thus, understanding students' errors provides valuable insight into how they think, struggle, and grow as developing language learners.

The results of this study also offer several pedagogical implications for English language teaching. First, teachers can use recurring errors as diagnostic tools to identify specific areas requiring targeted instruction. For instance, frequent tense and sentence structure errors can inform grammar lessons that are contextualized within meaningful writing activities rather than taught in isolation. Second, because many students rely heavily on Google Translate, teachers can guide them in responsible and reflective use of technology by designing tasks that encourage comparison between translation outputs and original writing, followed by collaborative discussion on grammatical accuracy and stylistic appropriateness. Third, teachers can promote reflective and cooperative learning through peer-editing sessions or small-group discussions that allow students to analyze their own and others' writing choices. Such practices strengthen both accuracy and learner autonomy, turning error analysis into a constructive and routine aspect of the writing classroom. Overall, the findings suggest that student errors should be regarded as valuable learning opportunities rather than failures. By interpreting errors as indicators of linguistic growth, teachers can foster a supportive classroom environment that encourages reflection, empathy, and continuous improvement in writing competence.

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