



Interlanguage Development in Spoken English: Grammatical Errors among Indonesian EFL Learners

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Abstract

Grammatical accuracy remains a persistent challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly in spontaneous oral communication where learners must balance fluency and linguistic accuracy. This study investigated the grammatical errors produced by intermediate Indonesian EFL learners in spoken English and examined the underlying sources of these errors from the perspective of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). A descriptive qualitative design with quantitative support was employed. The participants were 21 intermediate students enrolled in an English Education program. Data were collected through picture description tasks and follow-up interviews, then analyzed using Corder's error analysis framework, which classifies errors into omission, addition, selection, and misordering. The findings revealed 320 grammatical errors. Omission was the most frequent error category (49.6%), followed by selection (26.3%), addition (22.2%), and misordering (1.9%). Verb tense errors accounted for the highest proportion (33.8%), followed by errors involving articles, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, and noun endings. The analysis indicates that these errors primarily resulted from crosslinguistic influence, overgeneralization, insufficient grammatical knowledge, and incomplete rule application. The findings support contemporary SLA perspectives that learner errors represent developmental stages of interlanguage. Pedagogically, the study highlights the importance of integrating explicit grammar instruction with communicative speaking activities and timely corrective feedback to enhance learners' grammatical accuracy and oral proficiency.

Introduction

Human beings are inherently social and therefore depend on interaction with others in their everyday lives. Language serves as the primary medium through which such interaction occurs. However, people do not use language in identical ways because linguistic behavior is influenced by various social and cultural factors, including geographical origin, educational background, social class, generation, and occupation (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). Consequently, no two individuals possess exactly the same linguistic repertoire. Differences in background often result in variations in pronunciation, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary.

Every nation has its own language, and within each language community speakers may exhibit different dialects and accents. In the contemporary era of globalization, individuals are increasingly expected to acquire at least one foreign language in addition to their first language. English has become the most widely learned foreign language worldwide and functions as an

international medium for education, business, science, and communication (Crystal, 2019; Rose & Galloway, 2019). The number of English learners continues to grow as global interconnectedness increases.

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language at schools, colleges, and universities, including English Education Departments. These programs generally provide courses that develop both receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). In speaking courses, students are expected not only to communicate fluently but also to use English accurately and appropriately. According to Richards (2015), effective speaking involves both clarity and correctness. Clarity includes intelligible pronunciation, appropriate intonation, articulation, and coherent organization of ideas, whereas correctness involves grammatical accuracy, suitable word choice, and well-formed sentence structures. These elements help speakers convey meaning effectively and avoid ambiguity.

Despite classroom instruction, many learners still experience difficulty applying grammatical forms accurately in spontaneous speech (Kaharuddin, 2013). For example, learners may produce utterances such as “I am like cat” instead of “I like cats.” Such errors frequently recur in oral communication. From the perspective of second language acquisition, learner errors are not merely signs of failure; rather, they provide evidence of learners’ developing linguistic systems (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Arafah et al., 2021). Errors can therefore be viewed as an important part of the learning process because they reveal how learners formulate hypotheses about the target language.

Nevertheless, persistent errors may hinder communication and create misunderstandings. For students in English Education Departments, this issue is particularly important because they are preparing to become future English teachers. Identifying and analyzing learner errors can help instructors understand areas of difficulty and provide more effective corrective feedback (Brown & Lee, 2015). Behaviorist-oriented views historically emphasized the importance of correcting errors before they become habitual, although contemporary research generally regards errors as a natural stage of language development (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). Therefore, systematic investigation of learner errors remains valuable for improving language instruction.

This study focuses on errors produced in speaking because oral communication often requires immediate language processing. Learners typically have less time to plan and monitor their utterances than they do in writing, making speaking more prone to errors (Goh & Burns, 2012). In writing, learners can revise, consult references, and edit grammatical forms before submitting a final text. For these reasons, examining errors made by Indonesian learners of English in spoken communication is important. Persistent errors may continue beyond students’ academic years and potentially influence their future teaching practices. Following Corder’s (1967) distinction between mistakes (non-systematic performance lapses) and errors (systematic deviations reflecting incomplete knowledge of the target language), this research concentrates on systematic errors. The study aims to identify the types of errors learners frequently produce and to provide insights that may help improve the teaching and learning of English speaking skills.

Literature Review

Error Studies on Language Transfer (Crosslinguistic Influence)

Language transfer, commonly referred to as crosslinguistic influence (CLI) in contemporary second language acquisition (SLA) research, refers to the influence of a learner's previously acquired language(s) on the acquisition and use of another language. Rather than viewing

transfer solely as interference, recent studies conceptualize CLI as a dynamic cognitive process through which multilingual learners draw upon their existing linguistic knowledge when processing and producing a target language (Bahar, 2014; McManus, 2021). This perspective extends Ellis's (1997) earlier definition by emphasizing that transfer is shaped not only by learners' first language but also by their multilingual experiences, language proficiency, learning context, and cognitive processing.

Crosslinguistic influence may facilitate or impede second language learning. Positive transfer occurs when similarities between the first language (L1) and the target language (L2) promote accurate language production, whereas negative transfer arises when learners incorrectly apply linguistic features of the L1 to the L2, resulting in errors (Jarvis, 2016; McManus, 2021). Contemporary SLA research further argues that transfer extends beyond grammar to lexical choice, pronunciation, discourse organization, conceptual representation, and pragmatic competence (Alonso, 2016). Therefore, transfer should not simply be regarded as a source of errors but as an inevitable and natural characteristic of multilingual language processing.

Unlike earlier views that associated transfer primarily with interference, recent scholarship considers language transfer a neutral phenomenon whose effects depend on multiple interacting factors. Learners utilize prior linguistic knowledge to construct new linguistic representations, and whether this knowledge facilitates or hinders learning depends largely on language similarity, communicative demands, instructional support, and learner characteristics (McManus, 2021). Consequently, crosslinguistic influence constitutes one of the central mechanisms underlying interlanguage development and remains an important topic in SLA research.

Recent studies classify the factors influencing crosslinguistic transfer into three broad categories: learner-related variables, language-related variables, and sociolinguistic variables (McManus, 2021; Jarvis, 2016). These variables interact continuously throughout the language-learning process and explain why learners with similar linguistic backgrounds often display different transfer patterns.

Learner-related Variables

Learner characteristics play a fundamental role in determining the extent to which first-language knowledge influences second-language acquisition. One of the most widely investigated variables is age. Younger learners generally demonstrate greater phonological flexibility and are more likely to achieve native-like pronunciation, whereas adult learners tend to rely more heavily on previously established linguistic knowledge when processing a new language (Ismail et al., 2020; Lightbown & Spada, 2021). Nevertheless, recent research suggests that age does not independently determine learning success; rather, its influence interacts with cognitive maturity, quantity of language exposure, instructional quality, and motivation (Muñoz & Singleton, 2019). Another important learner-related variable is motivation and affective engagement. Learners with stronger intrinsic motivation generally devote greater attention to linguistic input, monitor their language use more effectively, and become less dependent on first-language structures during communication. Positive attitudes toward English and sustained exposure to authentic communicative situations also reduce inappropriate crosslinguistic influence and facilitate grammatical development (Dörnyei, 2020). Consequently, affective factors should be considered alongside linguistic factors when explaining learner errors.

Language-related Variables

The linguistic relationship between the learner's first language and the target language strongly influences the occurrence of transfer. Structural similarities often facilitate learning because learners can successfully apply previously acquired knowledge to comparable linguistic features. Conversely, structural differences increase the likelihood of negative transfer, particularly in grammatical morphology, syntax, and lexical collocation (Jarvis, 2016). Another important linguistic factor concerns typological distance. Languages sharing similar grammatical systems, vocabulary, or discourse conventions generally allow greater positive transfer than typologically distant languages (Alonso, 2016; Kaharuddin et al., 2023).

However, recent research suggests that objective linguistic similarity alone cannot fully explain transfer because learners' perceptions of similarity often determine whether transfer actually occurs (McManus, 2021). Learners' L2 proficiency likewise affects the degree of crosslinguistic influence. Beginning learners frequently depend on their first language because their knowledge of the target language remains limited. As proficiency develops, learners gradually rely more on target-language representations, although conceptual and discourse-level transfer may continue even among advanced learners (Jarvis, 2016; McManus, 2021).

Sociolinguistic Variables

The learning environment also influences the occurrence of language transfer. Classroom contexts generally provide explicit instruction, corrective feedback, and opportunities to notice differences between the first and target languages, thereby reducing negative transfer. In contrast, informal communicative settings often encourage spontaneous language production, increasing learners' reliance on first-language resources when linguistic knowledge is insufficient (Arafah & Bahar, 2015; Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

Furthermore, characteristics of interlocutors and communicative contexts affect learners' language choices. Research on multilingual communication demonstrates that bilingual and multilingual speakers frequently adjust the degree of first-language influence according to the linguistic background of their interlocutors, communicative goals, and sociocultural expectations (Wei, 2018). These findings indicate that crosslinguistic influence is shaped not only by linguistic competence but also by the social context in which communication occurs.

Studies on Error Analysis in Second Language Acquisition

Error analysis has long been recognized as an important approach for understanding second language acquisition (SLA). Early contrastive analysis theorists argued that many learner errors result from the transfer of linguistic features from the first language (L1) to the target language (L2) (Lado, 1957; Stockwell & Brown, 1965). However, subsequent research demonstrated that language transfer represents only one of several factors contributing to learner errors. Corder (1981) and Jain (1974) emphasized that many errors originate from learners' developmental processes rather than solely from L1 interference. Contemporary SLA research supports this perspective by viewing learner errors as evidence of the gradual development of an interlanguage system rather than as mere failures in language learning (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020).

A fundamental concept in error analysis is the distinction between errors and mistakes. Ellis (1997) explains that errors reflect deficiencies in learners' underlying linguistic competence because they have not yet fully acquired the relevant language rules. In contrast, mistakes are temporary performance lapses that occur even though learners possess the necessary linguistic knowledge. This distinction continues to be adopted in contemporary SLA research because it

enables researchers to differentiate systematic developmental problems from occasional slips in language production (Ellis & Shintani, 2014).

Corder (1973) further argued that the analysis of learner errors is beneficial for three groups: teachers, researchers, and learners. For teachers, error analysis provides valuable diagnostic information that can improve instructional planning and corrective feedback. For researchers, learner errors offer insights into the cognitive processes involved in language acquisition. For learners themselves, understanding recurring errors promotes greater language awareness and facilitates self-monitoring during language learning. Recent studies continue to acknowledge error analysis as an effective diagnostic tool for identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses and for improving language pedagogy (Loewen & Sato, 2018).

Following Corder's framework, learner errors are commonly classified into four principal categories: omission, addition, selection, and misordering. Omission refers to the absence of obligatory linguistic elements; addition involves inserting unnecessary forms; selection occurs when an incorrect linguistic item is chosen in place of the appropriate one; and misordering involves incorrect arrangement of linguistic elements within a sentence (Corder, 1973; Ellis & Shintani, 2014). This classification remains widely used because it enables researchers to systematically identify patterns of learner errors across different linguistic levels.

Examples of omission include the absence of grammatical morphemes or syntactic constituents, such as *A strange thing happen to me yesterday* instead of *A strange thing happened to me yesterday*, or *Must say also the names?* instead of *Must I also say the names?* Addition errors involve inserting unnecessary linguistic forms, for example *The books is here*, *The London*, or *I stayed there during five years ago*. Selection errors occur when learners choose incorrect grammatical or lexical forms, such as *My friend is oldest than me* or *I want that he comes here*. Misordering errors involve incorrect sequencing of linguistic elements, including pronunciation (*fignisicant* for *significant*), morphology (*get upping* for *getting up*), syntax (*He is a dear to me friend*), and lexical combinations (*key car* instead of *car key*). Such examples demonstrate the systematic nature of learner errors and provide evidence of learners' evolving interlanguage systems.

Error analysis extends beyond identifying learner errors; it also seeks to explain why those errors occur. According to Ellis and Shintani (2014), error analysis involves four interconnected processes: collecting learner data, identifying errors, classifying error types, and explaining their possible causes. Similarly, Gass et al. (2020) argue that the explanatory stage is particularly important because it enables researchers to distinguish between developmental errors, transfer-induced errors, and performance-related mistakes.

Most contemporary studies describe the error analysis procedure as consisting of three major stages: recognition, classification, and explanation (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; James, 2013). During the recognition stage, researchers determine whether a learner's utterance deviates from accepted target-language norms. This process requires careful consideration of both linguistic and situational contexts because an utterance that appears erroneous in one context may be appropriate in another. Consequently, contextual interpretation is essential for ensuring accurate error identification.

The second stage, classification, involves categorizing errors according to linguistic levels such as phonology, orthography, morphology, syntax, lexis, semantics, discourse, or pragmatics. A single learner error may belong to more than one category depending on the aspect being analyzed. For instance, the sentence *She said that yes you can go* may be interpreted as both a syntactic error and a punctuation error, whereas it may also indicate an incomplete

understanding of reported speech. Such multidimensional classification enables researchers to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of learners' language development.

The final stage, explanation, seeks to identify the underlying causes of learner errors.

Contemporary SLA literature generally recognizes three major sources of learner errors. The first is crosslinguistic influence (L1 transfer), where learners apply linguistic features from their native language to the target language. The second is developmental errors, which emerge naturally as learners formulate hypotheses about the target-language system. The third includes other learning-related factors, such as incomplete instruction, overgeneralization of grammatical rules, communication strategies, limited exposure to the target language, or occasional performance lapses (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020; Lightbown & Spada, 2021). Since these three stages are closely interconnected, comprehensive error analysis should consider recognition, classification, and explanation simultaneously in order to provide a more accurate account of learners' interlanguage development.

Method

This study employed a descriptive research design with quantitative support to investigate grammatical errors produced by Indonesian learners of English during spoken communication. Error Analysis (EA) served as the analytical framework for identifying, classifying, and explaining learners' grammatical errors. This approach is appropriate because it enables researchers to systematically examine learner language, identify recurring error patterns, and explain the possible sources of those errors within the process of second language acquisition (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020).

The study was conducted at the English Education Department of UIN Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia. The participants consisted of 21 Indonesian learners of English selected through purposive sampling based on their English proficiency. All participants had achieved an intermediate level of English proficiency, as indicated by institutional TOEFL Paper-Based Test (PBT) scores ranging from 400 to 500, which generally correspond to the intermediate proficiency level according to Educational Testing Service (ETS, 2023). Intermediate learners were selected because they possess sufficient language competence to produce extended spoken discourse while still exhibiting observable developmental grammatical errors.

Data were collected using two complementary instruments: a picture description task and semi-structured interviews. The picture description task required participants to narrate a story based on a sequence of six pictures after one minute of preparation. Their oral narratives were audio-recorded to obtain authentic spoken data for grammatical analysis. Picture description tasks are widely used in second language research because they elicit relatively spontaneous speech while maintaining comparable communicative contexts across participants (Mackey & Gass, 2022). Following the speaking task, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' awareness of their grammatical choices and to identify the possible causes of the errors found in their oral production.

The collected speech data were transcribed and analyzed using the Error Analysis procedures proposed by Corder (1973) and further developed by Ellis and Shintani (2014). The analysis involved four sequential stages: (1) transcription of learners' oral production, (2) identification of grammatical errors, (3) classification of errors into omission, addition, selection, and misordering, and (4) explanation of the possible sources of the identified errors. The analysis focused exclusively on grammatical aspects of speaking, including verb tense, subject-verb agreement, noun inflections, article usage, prepositions, pronouns, determiners, conjunctions, word order, and sentence structure.

To complement the qualitative analysis, descriptive statistics were employed to calculate the frequency and percentage of each grammatical error category. These descriptive measures facilitated the identification of the most frequently occurring errors and enabled comparisons among different grammatical categories. The interview data were analyzed thematically to interpret learners' explanations and triangulate the findings obtained from the spoken narratives. The integration of quantitative frequency analysis and qualitative interpretation provided a comprehensive understanding of the grammatical errors and their underlying causes among Indonesian learners of English.

Finding and Discussions

The analysis of 240 recorded utterances produced by 21 intermediate Indonesian learners of English revealed 320 grammatical errors, indicating that grammatical accuracy remains a significant challenge in learners' oral production. Following the error taxonomy proposed by Corder (1973) and Ellis (1997), the identified errors were classified into four categories: omission, addition, selection, and misordering. Among these categories, omission was the most frequent, suggesting that learners frequently excluded obligatory grammatical elements during spontaneous speech. This finding supports previous research showing that spoken language production places considerable cognitive demands on learners, often leading to the omission of grammatical morphemes and function words because learners prioritize meaning over linguistic accuracy (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020; Lightbown & Spada, 2021). The data can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Distribution of Grammatical Omission by Intermediate Indonesian Learners of English

Grammatical Feature	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Verb tense	93	58.4
Subject-verb agreement	21	13.2
Articles	18	11.3
Noun endings (plural markers)	11	6.9
Other grammatical forms	10	6.2
Prepositions	6	3.7
Word order	0	0.0
Sentence structure	0	0.0
Total	159	100.0

Omission of Grammatical Features

Omission refers to the absence of obligatory grammatical elements required for a well-formed sentence (Ellis, 1997). In the present study, omission accounted for 159 grammatical errors, making it the most prevalent error category. The omitted elements included verb tense markers (58.4%), subject-verb agreement (13.2%), articles (11.3%), noun endings (6.9%), other grammatical forms (6.2%), and prepositions (3.7%). These findings suggest that learners experienced greater difficulty producing grammatical morphemes that have no direct equivalents in Indonesian, particularly during spontaneous oral communication.

Verb Tense Omission

The analysis revealed that verb tense omission was the most frequent grammatical error, representing 93 occurrences (58.4%) of all omission errors. Most learners omitted obligatory tense markers, particularly the third-person singular marker -s in the simple present tense and the past tense marker -ed. Representative examples include *This picture tell about...*, *Someone*

come..., and *He realize that...*, where the correct forms should be *tells*, *comes*, and *realizes*, respectively.

These findings indicate that learners have difficulty applying English subject–verb agreement rules consistently during spontaneous speech. Unlike English, Indonesian verbs do not change according to tense or subject agreement. Consequently, learners often transfer Indonesian grammatical patterns into English, resulting in the omission of inflectional morphemes. This pattern is consistent with the theory of crosslinguistic influence, which argues that learners naturally rely on previously acquired linguistic knowledge when producing a second language, particularly when grammatical structures differ substantially between the two languages (McManus, 2021).

However, first-language transfer alone does not fully explain these findings. Contemporary SLA research suggests that omission of inflectional morphology also reflects learners' developmental stage. During real-time communication, learners frequently allocate greater cognitive resources to conveying meaning than to monitoring grammatical accuracy. As a result, low-salience grammatical morphemes, such as *-s* and *-ed*, are particularly vulnerable to omission (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020).

Another contributing factor is the morphological complexity of English subject–verb agreement. Learners must simultaneously identify the subject, determine whether it is singular or plural, recognize the appropriate tense, and apply the corresponding verb inflection. Such processing demands increase cognitive load during oral production, especially for learners with intermediate proficiency. Previous studies have similarly reported that third-person singular agreement remains one of the most persistent grammatical difficulties among learners from languages that lack verbal inflections (Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

Overall, the predominance of verb tense omission demonstrates that grammatical morphology continues to pose considerable challenges for Indonesian EFL learners. These findings reinforce previous research indicating that inflectional morphemes are acquired relatively late because they require both explicit grammatical knowledge and automatic processing during communication. Therefore, English instruction should provide greater emphasis on meaningful communicative practice that integrates grammatical accuracy with fluency rather than teaching grammatical rules in isolation (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020; McManus, 2021).

Addition of Grammatical Features

In addition to omission errors, the participants also produced grammatical errors involving the addition of unnecessary linguistic elements. According to Corder (1973), addition errors occur when learners insert grammatical forms that are not required in a well-formed sentence. These unnecessary forms may include tense markers, auxiliary verbs, articles, prepositions, plural markers, and other grammatical items. Contemporary second language acquisition (SLA) research considers such errors evidence of learners' developing interlanguage rather than mere carelessness, reflecting attempts to generalize grammatical rules before fully mastering their appropriate use (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020). Table 2 summarizes the distribution of grammatical addition errors identified in the participants' oral production.

Table 2. Distribution of Grammatical Addition Errors

Grammatical Feature	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Other grammatical forms	23	32.4
Prepositions	19	26.8
Articles	11	15.5

Subject–verb agreement (auxiliary)	11	15.5
Noun endings	6	8.4
Verb tense	1	1.4
Word order	0	0.0
Sentence structure	0	0.0
Total	71	100.0

The findings indicate that 71 addition errors were identified in the learners' spoken production. The largest proportion involved other grammatical forms (32.4%), followed by prepositions (26.8%), articles (15.5%), subject–verb agreement (15.5%), noun endings (8.4%), and verb tense (1.4%). The predominance of these error types suggests that learners frequently overgeneralized English grammatical rules or inserted unnecessary grammatical markers during spontaneous speech. Similar findings have been reported in studies of EFL learners, where overgeneralization and incomplete mastery of grammatical structures are major sources of addition errors (Lightbown & Spada, 2021; Gass et al., 2020).

Other Grammatical Forms

Errors classified as other grammatical forms comprised the largest category of addition errors, accounting for 23 occurrences (32.4%). These errors involved the unnecessary use of existential expressions (*there is/there are*), relative pronouns, conjunctions, pronouns, and gerunds. The distribution included existential expressions (43.4%), relative pronouns (17.3%), conjunctions (17.3%), pronouns (13.0%), and gerunds (8.7%).

Representative examples include:

Learner Utterance	Correct Form
A chair in the park who was painted.	A chair in the park was painted.
So, there is nobody knows that...	So, nobody knows that...
We can see there are two workers in the park.	We can see two workers in the park.
He sits down and then reads a newspaper.	He sits down and reads a newspaper.
He finishes his reading.	He finishes reading.

These findings indicate that learners frequently inserted grammatical elements that were unnecessary within the target-language structure. The most common problem involved the inappropriate use of existential constructions (*there is/there are*). In several utterances, learners transferred the Indonesian existential expression *ada* directly into English, producing structures such as *We can see there are two workers in the park*. In English, however, the verb *see* is followed directly by its object, making the existential construction redundant. Such errors illustrate negative crosslinguistic influence, where learners rely on first-language grammatical patterns when constructing English sentences (McManus, 2021).

The addition of relative pronouns similarly reflects learners' dependence on Indonesian grammatical structures. Indonesian employs the relative marker *yang* universally for people, objects, and places, whereas English distinguishes among *who*, *which*, and *that* according to the antecedent. Consequently, learners sometimes inserted inappropriate relative pronouns or used them where no relative clause was required. This finding supports previous research suggesting that grammatical differences between Indonesian and English increase learners' susceptibility to crosslinguistic transfer, particularly in structures absent from the first language (Jarvis, 2016; McManus, 2021).

Beyond language transfer, these addition errors also demonstrate overgeneralization, a developmental process in which learners extend partially acquired grammatical rules to

contexts where they do not apply. Contemporary SLA research recognizes overgeneralization as an inherent characteristic of interlanguage development rather than evidence of unsuccessful learning. As learners accumulate grammatical knowledge, they actively formulate hypotheses about target-language rules, although these hypotheses often produce temporary inaccuracies during spontaneous communication (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020).

Overall, the predominance of addition errors in existential constructions, relative pronouns, and conjunctions indicates that learners continue to experience difficulties integrating English grammatical rules into fluent spoken production. These findings suggest that grammar instruction should emphasize contextualized language use through communicative tasks that encourage learners to notice structural differences between Indonesian and English while receiving meaningful corrective feedback (Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

Selection Errors in Grammatical Features

Selection errors constituted the third largest category of grammatical errors identified in this study, accounting for 84 of the 320 total errors (26.3%). Following the taxonomy proposed by Corder (1973), selection errors occur when learners choose an inappropriate grammatical form despite recognizing that a grammatical element is required. Unlike omission or addition errors, selection errors indicate that learners possess partial grammatical knowledge but have not yet fully mastered the conditions governing the use of specific linguistic forms (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). As presented in Table 3, selection errors were distributed across six grammatical categories. The highest frequency occurred in article selection (32.1%), followed by preposition selection (23.8%), verb tense selection (16.7%), auxiliary verb selection (11.9%), other grammatical forms (11.9%), and noun ending selection (3.6%).

Table 3. Distribution of Selection Errors

Grammatical Feature	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Articles	27	32.1
Prepositions	20	23.8
Verb tense	14	16.7
Auxiliary verbs	10	11.9
Other grammatical forms	10	11.9
Noun endings	3	3.6
Word order	0	0.0
Sentence structure	0	0.0
Total	84	100.0

These findings suggest that learners encountered greater difficulty selecting appropriate grammatical forms than simply recalling grammatical rules. Similar patterns have been reported in recent SLA studies, which argue that grammatical selection requires learners to integrate syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic knowledge simultaneously during real-time speech production (Lightbown & Spada, 2021; Gass et al., 2020).

Article Selection Errors

Article misuse represented the most frequent selection error, accounting for 27 instances (32.1%). Indonesian learners frequently selected inappropriate articles or substituted one article for another because Indonesian does not possess an article system comparable to English. Consequently, learners often relied on semantic intuition rather than grammatical rules when deciding whether to use *a*, *an*, or *the*. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that English articles remain among the most persistent grammatical challenges for

learners whose first language lacks definiteness marking (Ionin & Montrul, 2019). The difficulty extends beyond memorizing rules because article selection requires speakers to evaluate whether a noun phrase is specific, identifiable, or previously mentioned within the discourse.

From an SLA perspective, article errors demonstrate the interaction of crosslinguistic influence and developmental interlanguage. Learners tend to transfer conceptual patterns from Indonesian while simultaneously constructing hypotheses about the English article system. These evolving hypotheses often result in inappropriate article choices before the target system is fully acquired (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; McManus, 2021).

Preposition Selection Errors

Preposition selection was the second most frequent subtype, representing 20 errors (23.8%). Typical examples included:

Learner Production	Correct Form
Someone comes at the place.	Someone comes to the place.
There are two workers at the park.	There are two workers in the park.
They put an announcement to the desk.	They put an announcement on the desk.

Unlike Indonesian prepositions, English prepositions express highly specific spatial, temporal, and abstract relationships. Many English prepositions also function as components of phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions, increasing their complexity for EFL learners.

The findings support previous studies showing that prepositions are acquired relatively late because their meanings are often polysemous and context dependent rather than governed by fixed grammatical rules (Tyler, Mueller, & Ho, 2018). Consequently, learners frequently rely on literal translation from their first language, resulting in inappropriate preposition choices. Recent research on crosslinguistic influence further suggests that preposition errors arise because learners attempt to establish one-to-one correspondence between Indonesian and English prepositions, although the semantic boundaries of equivalent forms rarely overlap completely (McManus, 2021). Therefore, effective instruction should emphasize contextualized language use instead of isolated memorization of prepositional lists.

Overall, the predominance of article and preposition selection errors demonstrates that grammatical accuracy in spoken English depends not only on knowledge of grammatical rules but also on learners' ability to process meaning, discourse context, and syntactic relationships simultaneously. These findings reinforce current theories of interlanguage development, which view grammatical errors as evidence of learners' evolving linguistic systems rather than simple deficiencies. As learners gain greater exposure to authentic communicative input and receive meaningful corrective feedback, their grammatical selections become progressively more target-like (Gass et al., 2020; Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

Misordering Errors in Grammatical Features

Misordering errors constituted the least frequent grammatical error category identified in this study, accounting for only 6 of the 320 grammatical errors (1.9%). According to Corder (1973), misordering occurs when learners produce all the necessary linguistic elements but arrange them in an inappropriate sequence, resulting in grammatically unacceptable utterances. Unlike omission or selection errors, misordering reflects learners' partial mastery of grammatical forms but insufficient knowledge of English syntactic organization. Table 4 presents the distribution of misordering errors across grammatical features.

Table 4. Distribution of Misordering Errors

Grammatical Feature	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Word order	3	50.0
Sentence structure	3	50.0
Verb tense	0	0.0
Subject–verb agreement	0	0.0
Noun endings	0	0.0
Articles	0	0.0
Prepositions	0	0.0
Other grammatical forms	0	0.0
Total	6	100.0

The findings show that misordering errors were equally distributed between word order and sentence structure, with three instances identified in each category. Although relatively infrequent, these errors illustrate learners' continuing difficulty in organizing English syntactic constituents during spontaneous speech.

Representative examples include:

Learner Production	Correct Form
The information about the wet paint still is there.	The information about the wet paint is still there.
After that, in the five pictures, the people say...	After that, in picture five, the people say...
The man gives a sign that this is the wet chair.	The man gives a sign that this chair is wet.
He sees his clothes are dirty because of paint the bench stamps his clothes.	He sees that his clothes are dirty because the paint on the bench stained his clothes.

The first group of errors reflects inaccurate word order, particularly the placement of adverbs, modifiers, and noun phrase components. For example, the phrase *in the five picture* demonstrates learners' uncertainty regarding the ordering of numerals and nouns in English. Such errors are likely influenced by Indonesian phrase structure, in which modifiers frequently follow nouns, whereas English generally places modifiers before the head noun. This finding supports research on crosslinguistic influence, which suggests that learners often transfer first-language syntactic patterns when producing a second language, especially during spontaneous oral communication (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008; McManus, 2021). The second group involves sentence structure, where learners struggled to organize clauses that accurately conveyed the intended meaning. Rather than reflecting a lack of grammatical knowledge, these errors indicate difficulties integrating lexical, grammatical, and discourse information simultaneously during speech production. According to current models of interlanguage development, such errors emerge because learners are still refining their internal grammatical system while attempting to communicate fluently under real-time processing constraints (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020).

From a cognitive perspective, sentence planning requires speakers to coordinate clause structure, constituent order, and semantic relationships before articulation. Intermediate learners often prioritize communicative meaning over syntactic precision, making misordering errors relatively inevitable during spontaneous speech. Similar findings have been reported in recent SLA research, which demonstrates that syntactic accuracy develops gradually as

learners gain increased exposure to meaningful input and opportunities for communicative practice (Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

Although misordering represented the smallest proportion of grammatical errors in this study, it remains pedagogically significant because incorrect constituent order may reduce comprehensibility even when individual lexical and grammatical items are accurate. Therefore, classroom instruction should extend beyond sentence-level grammar to include phrase structure, clause organization, and discourse-level production through communicative tasks, guided output, and focused corrective feedback. Such instructional approaches have been shown to facilitate the gradual restructuring of learners' interlanguage and improve syntactic accuracy in oral communication (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020).

Conclusions

The present study investigated grammatical errors in the spoken English of 21 intermediate Indonesian learners of English through picture description tasks. A total of 320 grammatical errors were identified and classified into four categories based on Corder's (1973) error analysis framework: omission, addition, selection, and misordering. Among these, omission errors were the most frequent (49.6%), followed by selection (26.3%), addition (22.2%), and misordering (1.9%). Across all grammatical features, verb tense errors were the most prevalent (33.8%), indicating that tense and aspect remain the greatest challenge for Indonesian EFL learners during spontaneous oral production. This was followed by errors in article usage (17.5%), prepositions (14.1%), subject–verb agreement (13.1%), other grammatical forms (13.4%), noun endings (6.2%), and word order and sentence structure (1.9%). These findings suggest that learners experience greater difficulty with grammatical features that are either absent or substantially different in Indonesian, particularly those requiring inflectional morphology and syntactic precision. The results are consistent with previous studies demonstrating that grammatical accuracy in spoken second-language production develops gradually as learners' interlanguage becomes increasingly sophisticated (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020; Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

The analysis further revealed that the observed grammatical errors stemmed from several underlying processes commonly identified in second language acquisition research. The most prominent source was overgeneralization, whereby learners extended partially acquired grammatical rules to inappropriate contexts, particularly in the use of noun endings and other grammatical forms. In addition, insufficient grammatical knowledge contributed to errors involving verb tense, noun endings, and auxiliary verbs, while incomplete rule application resulted in inaccurate subject–verb agreement. Evidence of crosslinguistic influence was also found, especially in article usage, reflecting structural differences between Indonesian and English. These findings support contemporary views of learner errors as natural manifestations of interlanguage development rather than merely indicators of failure (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Gass et al., 2020; McManus, 2021). From a pedagogical perspective, English instruction should emphasize meaningful communicative practice, explicit attention to problematic grammatical features, and timely corrective feedback to promote both grammatical accuracy and oral fluency.

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