

# Analysis of Students' Errors and Writing Flow: A Case Study in Written Process Paragraphs by the First Semester Students of English Department at the University of Mataram

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## ABSTRACT

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This study analyzes students' errors and writing flow in process paragraphs written by first-semester English Department students at the University of Mataram in the academic year 2024/2025. Process writing is a fundamental skill in EFL contexts, yet many students struggle with grammatical accuracy and logical sequencing when composing process paragraph. The objectives are to identify types of errors, evaluate the quality of writing flow. The Interview data were obtained from 15 students' process paragraphs and interviews with five students, then analyzed using Dulay et. al. (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, Norrish's (1983) causes of errors, and Oshima and Hogue's (2006) framework for writing flow. The findings revealed a total of 60 errors consisting of misformation (40%), omission (30%), misordering (18.3%), and addition (11.7%). These errors were primarily caused by carelessness, translation habits, and first language interference, often occurring simultaneously. In terms of writing flow, all students successfully maintained a clear time sequence, 80% used appropriate transition signals, yet only 46.7% consistently applied the principle of one step per sentence. These weaknesses reduced sentence-level clarity despite overall chronological organization. In conclusion, the study shows that students' challenges in writing process paragraphs are both grammatical and developmental, suggesting the need for grammar reinforcement alongside explicit instruction on coherence, transitions, and sentence clarity

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## I. Introduction

Writing is usually considered the most challenging skill for EFL learners among the four basic language skills, which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing involves logical order and coherence for linguistic accuracy, which becomes an essential component of learning English [1]. It demands a combination of grammatical knowledge, vocabulary use, and the ability to articulate ideas coherently in a systematic manner. In Indonesia, English is still taught as a foreign language with limited real-life exposure, which makes learners frequently struggle to apply effective grammar rules and demonstrate coherence in writing [2], [3] [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

A process or procedural paragraph is one of the basic types of expository writing and demands clarity, logical sequencing, and grammatical accuracy. In process paragraph writing, students are required to present steps in a logical and chronological order supported by appropriate transitional signals and clear sentence construction to ensure coherence and reader comprehension [4]. However, Indonesian EFL students generally have problems with these features. They consistently use literal translation from their mother tongue and commit grammatical errors of omission, misformation, and misordering [5]. The identification of the types and causes of the persistent errors helps describe the current writing problems that students face. Furthermore, it provides a foundation for developing more effective teaching strategies that promote both ability and confidence in writing. This is particularly significant in the Indonesian context. since engagement through goal-setting, a supportive

environment, and relevant teaching approaches are vital ingredients in language development [6], [7]  
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Previous research conducted by reference [8], [9], [10] indicated that the students' most frequent error types were omission and misformation, reflecting their gaps in linguistic competence and organizational skills. However, students' reliance on translation technologies and lack of prewriting activities such as brainstorming ideas or outlining before drafting, worsens the issues and leads to incomprehensible text. This phenomenon aligns with the preliminary interview with first-semester students at the University of Mataram who expressed difficulty with grammar rules, translation issues, and organizing thoughts in writing a process paragraph.

To address these challenges holistically, this study integrates three analytical frameworks. Dulay's et al. (1982) surface strategy taxonomy is used for identifying types of errors, Oshima & Hogue (2006) principles of writing flow are applied to assessing textual organization, and Norrish's (1983) framework is employed to identify the causes of errors. These integrated methods provide a comprehensive understanding of students' writing by examining grammar accuracy, structural organization, and the learner-related causes underlying their errors. Together, they address the structural, linguistic, and developmental dimensions of writing performance.

Thus, this research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What types of errors are made by the students in process paragraph writing?
2. Do the students' process paragraphs demonstrate appropriate writing flow?
3. What are the causes of errors in process paragraph writing from students' perspectives?

## II. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design as proposed by Creswell (2018), which gives more emphasis to the understanding of linguistic phenomena in their natural settings rather than through numerical measurement. This design has been selected because it provides an in-depth study of grammatical errors and writing flow for process paragraphs among students, focusing on how and why these errors take place.

The participants of this research were fifteen first-semester students of the English Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram, in the 2024/2025 academic year. Their written works were collected from SPADA Unram, the official online learning platform at the university. The researcher accessed the SPADA system through the lecturer's account with permission and was allowed to download the data needed. Five students who produced highest number of errors were followed up with interviews to delve deeper into the underlying causes of their mistakes.

This study's data collection instruments contained submitted students' process paragraphs as the main data along with a writing flow checklist. In addition a semi-structured interview was conducted to clarify students' writing habits, use of translation, and perceived issues in writing process paragraph. Data analysis was conducted in three stages: first, identifying and classifying errors using Dulay's et al. (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which includes omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Second, evaluating writing flow based on Oshima & Hogue (2006) criteria consist of three elements: clear time sequence, appropriate transition use, and one step per sentence. Third, determining the causes of errors according to Norrish's (1983) categorization of translation, carelessness, and first language interference. To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, triangulation was completed by comparing findings in students' written paragraphs and writing checklists with the interview data. This comparison provided deeper insight into students' linguistic skills and writing flow.

## III. Results and Discussion

This section describes and interprets the findings of research conducted on grammatical errors and writing flow in process paragraphs by first-semester students enrolled in the English Department, University of Mataram, during the 2024/2025 academic year. Discussion is related to three points: (1) types of grammatical errors found in students' writing, (2) the causes of those errors, and (3) the writing

flow. Each point is discussed in relation to the theoretical framework by Dulay et al. (1982), Norrish (1983), and Oshima & Hogue (2006).

#### A. Types of Errors

Students' process paragraphs were analyzed using Dulay et al. 1982 Surface Strategy Taxonomy. It was found that four major types of grammatical errors were committed by the students: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Out of the total 60 errors from fifteen writing samples collected from the Paragraph Writing class, the following are the frequency distribution results as shown in Table 1: misformation (40%), omission (30%), misordering (18.3%), and addition (11.7%).

Table 1. Types of Errors

Types of Error	Total Cases	Percentage (%)
Omission	18	30.0
Addition	7	11.7
Misformation	24	40.0
Misordering	11	18.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

The second most frequent type of error was omission, typically about articles, prepositions, and infinitive markers. For example, Student 1 wrote, *“by using the left joystick for player movement and right joystick for trick or dribbling,”* which lacks the article *“the”* before *“right joystick.”* Another example is from Student 2: *“Second is prioritize topic that you need to learn”*; here, both the infinitive marker *“to”* and the article *“the”* are lacking. These omissions disrupted grammatical accuracy and clarity because they reflected interference from Indonesian, in which the use of such markers is often absent.

Though less frequent, addition errors reflected students' tendency to add unnecessary elements. For example, Student 15's phrase *“To make the result of your test is satisfying”* had a redundant linking verb *“is,”* which, when removed, gave the grammatically correct phrase, *“To make the result of your test satisfying.”* Similarly, in the sentence *“Finally, when your test will start in a minute, re-read all of your notes, and last, pray before you take the test,”* the word *“and last”* was not needed since the sentence already used *“Finally.”* These errors are caused by overgeneralization and limited syntactic awareness.

The dominance of misformation errors suggests that most students have acquired partial grammatical knowledge but still apply the forms incorrectly. For example, Student 2 wrote, *“Students will prepare to get good test result,”* whereas the singular noun *“result”* should be pluralized as *“results.”* Student 15 wrote, *“Mesmorize your notes”* instead of *“Memorize your notes”*; notice the misformation regarding both spelling and morphology. These findings suggest that students often understand what the relevant grammatical pattern is but frequently fail to apply it correctly.

Misordering errors contributed to 18.3% of all errors; these errors occur from the inappropriate placement of some words or phrases that disturb the natural flow of sentences. This is illustrated by the sentence of Student 9 *“...take some time to relax, don't stay up late, and get enough sleep to not be tired.”* The word phrase *“to not be tired”* is better written as *“so you are not tired.”* These errors indicate difficulty in applying the appropriate word order for English, which has a significant difference from the Indonesian Structure.

The most common error categories were misformation and omission, followed by misordering and addition. This finding shows that students still need specific instruction regarding the structure and grammatical pattern

#### B. Writing Flow

After examining the types of grammatical errors, the next findings are related to students' writing flow, which indicates how well they arranged and connected their ideas in writing a process paragraphs. The writing flow was assessed based on Oshima and Hogue's (2006) criteria: clear time

sequence, appropriate sequencing transitions, and one step per sentence. In Table 2, all students (100%) were found to have applied a clear time sequence. Similarly, twelve students (80%) used sequencing transitions correctly, while only seven students (46.7%) were able to consistently use one step per sentence principle.

Table 2. Writing Flow

Writing Flow Criteria	Students Demonstrating	Percentage (%)
Clear Time Sequence	15	100
Sequencing Transitions	12	80
One Step per Sentence	7	46.7

Excellent writing flow was found in the work of Student 8. In his paragraph on how to make sautéed corn, each sequence of steps was clearly and sequentially given: “First, prepare three corns and cooking spices... Next, fry the ground spices... After that, turn off the gas stove and remove the stir-fried corn. Finally, serve and enjoy it with your family.” The use of consistent transitional words, like first, next, and finally, helped create a smooth and logical flow, with every sentence representing only one complete step.

On the other hand, some students had problems with using transitions. For example, Student 11 wrote, “The first step is to choose a game that matches your interests. Read the game instructions or watch a tutorial to understand the rules and controls. Start with the beginner level to get familiar with the gameplay...” Despite the order seeming reasonable, the absence of appropriate transitions like next or then disturbed the writing flow. Furthermore, more than half of the students did not apply the principle of one step per sentence. For example, Student 1 wrote, “In defense, use the circle or box button to grab the ball cleanly and L2 to keep the player’s balance,” combining two actions into one sentence. It was better if these were separated into “In defense, use the circle or box button to grab the ball cleanly. Then, press L2 to maintain the player’s balance” for readability and coherence.”

Overall, while students were able to maintain chronological order across the writings, there was a wide range in their control over transition use and sentence-level clarity, suggesting that the issues extend beyond grammatical accuracy to cohesion and textual organization.

### C. Causes of Errors

To understand the underlying causes of students’ writing errors, five students with the highest frequency of errors were interviewed. The framework by Norrish (1983) was used to analyze the data, classifying three major causes: translation, L1 interference, and carelessness. In Table 3, translation and carelessness became the most dominant causes, followed by L1 interference.

Table 3. Causes of Errors

Student Code	Translation	L1 Interference	Carelessness	Dominant Cause(s)
Student 10	✗	✗	✓	Carelessness
Student 15	✗	✗	✓	Carelessness
Student 12	✓	✓	✗	Translation + L1 Interference
Student 13	✓	✗	✗	Translation + L1 Interference
Student 2	✓	✓	✓	Translation + L1 Interference + Carelessness

The findings reveal that translation and carelessness are the main factors, while L1 interference also shows a significant influence. Many students who relied on direct translation often translated Indonesian sentence patterns into English led to incorrect grammar structure. Student 13 mentioned, *“There are some parts of the sentence where I don’t know the meaning.”* Student 2 revealed, *“Sometimes, when I use Indonesian, I translate it into English.”* Similarly, Student 12 said, *“Sometimes I think in English first, but when I don’t know the English, I translate it from Indonesian.”*

First language interference was visible in the students' transfer of Indonesian grammatical features like omitting articles or plural markers. Student 2 said, *“Sometimes I forget to put the or the -s because in Indonesian, we don’t need that,”* and Student 12 showed confusion about punctuation and article placement. These examples show how L1 interference impacted both sentence- and word-level accuracy.

Carelessness was related to students' writing habits, especially in rushing assignments or skipping revision like proofreading. Student 10 stated, *“I only checked grammar and spelling very briefly... mostly in a hurry”*; Student 15 said, *“I check sentence by sentence, but sometimes I face deadlines and get distracted.”* These statements reflect that time pressure and lack of careful proofreading can lead to avoidable mistakes.

Overall, these findings confirm Norrish's (1983) theory that EFL writing errors result from a combination of grammatical and behavioral factors. Translation habits and interference from L1 shaped grammatical patterns, while carelessness affects the frequency of errors due to insufficient editing and attention to form

#### **D. Discussion**

The results of this study showed that first-semester students of the English Education Program at the University of Mataram experienced grammatical and writing flow difficulties while writing process paragraphs. The grammar aspect was analyzed using Dulay et al. (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which categorizes errors into four: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Misformation errors (40%) were dominant, followed by omission (30%), misordering (18.3%), and addition (11.7%).

The dominance of misformation errors might indicate that students had partially acquired grammatical knowledge but still did not know how to apply the correct forms in a good manner. Many students appear to understand general rules, such as pluralization and word formation, but struggle to apply them consistently. For example, in the sentence *“Students will prepare to get good test result”* shows confusion about pluralization, while *“Mesmorize”* instead of *“Memorize”* reflects incorrect word form usage. These errors may also be influenced by structural differences between Indonesian and English in plural making which are less explicitly marked in Indonesian. Omission errors were also frequent; for example, in *“Second is prioritize topic that you need to learn”*, both the infinitive marker *to* and the article *“the”* were omitted. Misordering errors like *“get enough sleep to not be tired”* made a phrase that caused awkwardness and reduced clarity.

Another case was found in addition errors, such as *“and last”* after the word *“Finally”* showed unnecessary repetition. These grammatical error findings indicate that students are aware of grammatical structures but could not maintain accuracy throughout the sentence construction. This pattern develops the previous studies of reference [10] [Click or tap here to enter text.](#) and [14] [Click or tap here to enter text.](#), which reported misformation and omission as the most dominant types of error. However, the low frequency of addition errors is contrary to the findings by reference [15] [Click or tap here to enter text.](#), This suggests that students in this study were more prone to omitting or misforming grammatical elements than overgeneralizing rules, indicating limited control of correct form selection rather than excessive rule application. .

Further clarification of the causes of the errors was given to explain why such errors persisted. Taken from Norrish's (1983) framework, the three most significant causes identified were translation, first language interference, and carelessness. Many students claimed to rely on direct translation from Indonesian to English, especially when they did not know the vocabulary. Student 13, for example, explained that she translated word-for-word because she did not know what particular words meant, while Student 2 mentioned, *“Sometimes I write in Indonesian first, then translate into English.”* The habit often resulted in grammatical distortion and inappropriate structure. First language interference was also detected, especially about grammatical elements absent in Indonesian, like articles, plural

markers, and word order. As Student 2 identified it, "Sometimes I forget to put the or the -s because in Indonesian, we don't need that." That is to say, Indonesian grammar patterns were transferred unconsciously into writing in English because Indonesian does not require articles or plural markers in the same way English does. Carelessness became the third important cause. This habit may stem from limited writing practice, low awareness of the importance of proofreading, and tendency to prioritize task over accuracy. Students themselves confessed that they wrote fast in a limited time without revision, which resulted in avoidable errors. For instance, Student 10 mentioned, "I only checked grammar and spelling very briefly... mostly in a hurry." These results confirm studies by reference [9] and [15], who also discovered that translation habits, L1 interference, and poor proofreading were common causes of the writing errors that Indonesian EFL learners have been repeatedly found to commit. Overall, the present findings support Norrish's (1983) contention that students' writing errors are caused by the convergence of linguistic and behavioral factors rather than simply by a lack of grammatical competence. Specifically, limited grammatical awareness as a linguistic factor, combined with insufficient proofreading habit as a behavioral factor increased the likelihood that errors were both produced and left uncorrected.

In terms of writing flow, the analysis using Oshima & Hogue (2006) framework showed that all students (100%) maintained a clear time sequence, which means that they understood chronological order as one of the characteristic features of process paragraph writing. For example, in Student 8's paragraph on How to Make Sautéed Corn, showed a logical flow through the consistent use of transitional words "First," "Next," "After that," and "Finally." This action indicates that students were capable of organizing their ideas logically. At the same time, most students (80%) also applied sequencing transitions appropriately. But for some students, like Student 11, the listed steps were connected without sufficient transitional devices, which affects the textual cohesion. The principle that was found most challenging was the one-step-per-sentence principle, which less than half of the students (46.7%) were able to apply. For example, in Student 1's sentence "In defense, use the circle or box button to grab the ball cleanly, and L2 to keep the player's balance," two actions were stated in a single sentence. If revised following Oshima and Hogue's (2006) principle into two steps with only one action in each, this would be clearer and easier for the reader to follow. These results align with reference [16], where Indonesian EFL learners tend to maintain logical sequencing but struggle to create cohesion at the sentence level. This similarity may result from teaching practices that prioritize logical sequencing over grammatical cohesion.

This research supported the previous studies by combining error analysis, the causes of errors, and evaluation in writing flow within one comprehensive framework. The conclusions highlight students' limited grammatical control, particularly in misformation and omission errors, as well as weaknesses in applying the principle of one step per sentence. These patterns indicate not only gaps in grammatical competence but also difficulties in maintaining sentence-level clarity. Therefore, effective writing instruction should simultaneously strengthen grammatical accuracy and develop students' ability to connect ideas smoothly and present steps with structural clarity. Therefore, pedagogical interventions for English are suggested to combine contrastive grammar instruction with explicit cohesion training and guided revision practices to foster both linguistic accuracy and fluency.

#### IV. Conclusion

This study revealed that first-semester students of the English Education Program at the University of Mataram frequently produced grammatical errors in their process paragraph writing in the forms of misformation, omission, misordering, and addition. Among these, misformation was the most common type, followed by omission, misordering, and addition. The majority of these errors involved incorrect use of verb forms and tenses, omission of grammatical elements such as articles and infinitive markers, unnecessary addition of words, and misplacement of sentence components. These findings indicate that while students possess basic grammatical awareness, they still struggle to apply English structures accurately and consistently in their written work.

In addition, the causes of these errors were mainly attributed to carelessness, translation habits, and first-language interference. Carelessness emerged as the most dominant factor, as many students admitted to revising their work minimally or writing under time pressure. Direct translation from Indonesian to English and the unconscious transfer of Indonesian grammatical rules also contributed to recurring inaccuracies, particularly in article usage, pluralization, and sentence structure.

As for the writing flow, all students correctly organized their ideas chronologically, showing an understanding of sequencing as a key aspect of process paragraph writing. However, there were significant inconsistencies in the use of transition signals, and nearly half of the students failed to apply the one-step-per-sentence principle. These weaknesses affected the clarity and coherence of their writing, reducing the effectiveness of their procedural explanations.

Overall, the results from this study emphasize that teaching students how to write a process paragraph effectively entails more than simply providing instruction on grammar; it also requires explicit teaching of sentence structure, cohesion, and self-editing strategies. Thus, teachers should incorporate various grammar practices, transitional-focused writing tasks, and peer-review activities to improve the accuracy and the fluency of students' English writing compositions. By integrating error analysis, writing flow assessment, and learner perspectives, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of students' grammatical and developmental challenges in early-semester EFL writing. However, since the study was limited to a small sample and focused only on process paragraphs, future research should involve larger and more diverse participants and explore other writing genres or instructional interventions.

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