

# Error Analysis on EFL Students' Thesis Proposal Writing

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## Abstract

The present research was intended to analyse the errors made by the university students, especially the students in the eight semesters who write thesis proposals. Hence, the main objective of the present research was to investigate types of errors as well as to know the dominant errors which were existed in students' thesis proposal compositions. This research employed descriptive quantitative study by calculating the number of errors by percentage. There are 42 participants from English Education Department in one of public university in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The results showed that there were 195 errors consisting of 71 (36%) addition errors, 64 (33%) misinformation errors, 48 (25%) omission errors, and 12 (6%) misordering errors. The most dominant errors as shown by the percentage were students tended to add more than the structure or grammar needs. Students overgeneralized to use affix -s in verb and to use double auxiliaries (be, are, is). These results suggest that the instructor needs to help students on understanding and practicing more to fix the errors.

**Keywords:** errors, EFL students, grammar, thesis proposal

## 1. Introduction

Grammar is one of the essential components for English as Foreign Language (EFL) students to master English (Rasul & Suseno, 2018). Coghill and Magedanz (2003) stated that grammar is a set of rules that affect the structure and decides how words are situated together to achieve the meaningful unit. Ur (2009) saw grammar as the way how to put words together in order to make a good and correct sentence. Their ideas are corresponding to Brown (2001) who said that grammar is a set of rules that govern, arrange, and relate words in sentences which contributes to the development of meaning in language. It is understood that grammar becomes a pivotal component of language and it represents the system of sound and system of written symbols.

EFL learners can receive some benefits if they can master the grammar (Navaz, 2021). The first benefit is for analyzing the sentence. Students with grammar knowledge can easily understand a sentence as they can analyze its pattern (Navaz, 2021). Second, for speaking the students cannot speak well and correctly without grammatical pattern. It helps the students to understand better what people say and to communicate clearly. Finally for writing, grammar is also important for the students. For example, if their writing do not use the correct grammatical pattern, it will be confusing and its meaning will be different from its purpose. Therefore, we should study grammar while we are studying a language, whereas according to Effendi (2017), learning grammar helps to improve the quality of their graduating papers. Nassaji and Swain (2000) explain that grammar is very influential and provides significant impact to students' attainment of accuracy. Zang (2009) mentions that grammar is a part of communicative competence that is very influential for someone to comprehend to transfer communication goal.

There are some parts of English grammar, some of which are verbs and auxiliary verbs. According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen (1983) auxiliary verb is one of the difficult grammatical components in learning English. Parrot (2000) states that "this is because language users are facing the following issues: Choosing when to use, choosing what to use, creating questions and negative statements using modal verbs" (p. 281). Then, verbs are divided into parts three parts based on the tense (Azar & Hagen, 2019). They are present form, past form, and past participle form. The different forms of verbs are used for different functions of tense. Unfortunately, students still produce grammar errors in their writing products since there was interferences from their mother tongue language which does not use tenses, does not have verbs transformation forms, and does not apply any auxiliaries in language production

Considering some errors that students' produced, to overcome these, experts have defined the concept error to help

researchers identifying them. Gustilo and Magno (2012) defined error as deviation of linguistic rules from the target forms. Gass and Selinker (2008) defined errors as something systematic. It occurs again and again which students usually do not recognize it as an error. Similarly, Brown (2000) mentioned error as a recognizable deviation appeared in adult's grammar of native speakers that reflects their incomplete competence to use the language. Hence, error is characterized by incomplete knowledge and is identified as constant deviation. Subekti (2018) in his study suggested when the teacher recognize the common errors appeared in students' writing works, the teachers should pay attention to these errors during teaching, improve the proportion of teaching to revise these errors together with the improvement for all teaching aspects, and make the students be cautious of the errors. Furthermore, teacher should train students with editing and proofreading skills for better writing composition development.

Recognizing the errors that students have made through scientific research such as error analysis is important as evaluation and reflection for future writing improvement (Costa, 2015; Imaniar, 2018; Jabeen et al., 2015). EFL students can learn from their errors and avoid making similar mistakes as they have known the possible causes of errors as well as the way to correct them (Rana et al., 2019). Teachers are also benefited since they can evaluate their teaching success and analyze their students' common errors production which later can be the focus for improvement (Al-Khasawneh, 2014; Wang, 2008). Due to the importance of errors recognition in the study of EFL and especially for developing students' writing competence, some studies have been conducted in various contexts (Chaudary & Al-Zharani, 2020; Karim et al., 2018; Naimi, 2020; Phuket & Othman, 2015; Silalahi, 2014). These studies suggested further investigations on the use of verbs and auxiliary in different EFL settings and context since different EFL students might make different grammar errors that influenced their writing's clarity. Studying grammar, especially verb and auxiliary verb is important to be learned by the students as they bring different meanings in different forms (Vasbieva, 2015). Meanwhile, the existed research focused on students' writing class, not in the context of thesis proposal writing. Based on the reserachers' preliminary study through interviewing students' thesis supervisors in the present research setting, they said that students often wasted times to have grammatical errors revisions. Therefore, the present research would contribute to aid EFL students who are composing their thesis proposal to avoid grammatical errors. They would be able to save their time and graduate soon when they could minimize their writing errors (Alsied & Ibrahim, 2017). Therefore, the researcher was interested in studying the students' errors in using verb and auxiliary verb regarding the types as well as the most dominant error. By understanding and knowing the students' errors, it is expected that the teacher can help students improve the quality of their students' thesis proposal writing (Sarfaz, 2011; Wang, 2008). This study focused on the students' errors in using modal auxiliary in writing the thesis proposal. Considering the above rationale, this study focused to answer the following research problems:

- 1) What were the errors made by EFL students in writing thesis proposal?
- 2) What were the most frequent errors made by EFL students in writing thesis proposal?
- 3) What were the causes of errors made by EFL students in writing thesis proposal?

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Grammar*

Many experts have defined the term grammar. First, Brown (2001) explained that grammar is a set of rules which govern the arrangement of words or phrases in a sentence. Second, Coghill and Magendaz (2003) said that grammar is a rule which influences the structure of a sentence and determines how words are set to make meaningful unit. Third, Ur (2009) described grammar as a mould for words to be shaped to make a good sentence. Fourth, Gleason and Ratner (2009) believed that grammar helps language students to form and construct sentences which are acceptable and understandable for communication. From the ideas of the experts, it was understood that grammar is a set rule of a language which consists of sounds, words, phrases, sentence patterns.

Grammar is important knowledge in learning a language. It benefits learners to produce meaningful ideas through writing and speaking as well as helping them to comprehend information in a communication (Hughes, 2002; Rasul & Suseno, 2018). People use English grammar whenever they speak or write, understand someone else's speech or write and there are many signals, too, that help the listener or reader get the message.

Unfortunately, grammar is no longer become the focus for teaching EFL in schools and university (Toprak, 2019). Some universities immersed the grammar course into English skills courses (Hanganu, 2015) and not many schools in Indonesia provide specific class for teaching grammar (Andriani et al., 2021). So, there was no specific English grammar course anymore. The policy makers tried to reduce EFL students' anxiety when students spoke in English. However, this policy affected positively to students speaking skill but not for students' writing skills which required

them to use grammar accurately (Andriani, et al., 2021).

## 2.2 Errors and Mistakes

Some experts introduced different definitions of errors and mistakes which are important to comprehend. According to Brown (2000), an error is a noticeable variation from the adult grammar of a native speaker that shows a learner's inter-language ability. Ellis et al. (2009) stated that error is a flaw in learners' comprehensions or even have never got any knowledge of certain information yet before. Both Brown (2000) and Ellis et al. (2009) characterized students produce errors when they cannot do self-correction because they do not know the correct one. While a mistake, in Brown's (2000) opinion, is an unintentional slip of the tongue or pen, errors occur when language users do not comprehend the grammar of the language (Muhsin, 2016). Then, according to Richards et al. (1992), a student makes a mistake when writing or speaking as a result of a lack of concentration, exhaustion, carelessness, or other factors.

Based on the arguments presented above, it is clear that distinguishing between performance and competence errors is critical. Determining the nature of a deviation, as well as what a learner's mistakes and errors are, can be difficult. A mistake is a non-systematic performance error, whereas an error is a systematic learner competency problem (Rana et al., 2019). In more practical way i.e., writing practice, EFL teachers can notice their students produce mistakes if the deviation does not appear often in students' writing composition. But, if the deviations occur many times or constantly from the beginning to the end of writing composition, the students produce errors (Utami, 2019).

There are different sorts of language errors, according to Jabeen et al. (2015, p. 56). This study focuses solely on surface taxonomy-based errors in the use of auxiliary and verb. The following are the specifics of the theories:

1. Omission errors (OE) are defined as the absence of an item that must appear in a properly formed utterance. Some morphemes are omitted despite the fact that they are potential morphemes in a sentence.
2. Addition errors (AE) are the inverse of omission errors. They are indicated by the presence of words that must not be present in a properly formed utterance.
3. Misformation errors (MFE) are classified as incorrect structure and morpheme use. Misformation errors occur when a learner inserts some words or sentences that are incorrect.
4. Misordering errors (MOE) are defined as the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group in a sentence. Misordering errors occur systematically in both second and first language constructions, especially simple (direct) and embedded (indirect) questions.

Brown (2000, p. 213) framework containing the source of errors were used to understand the possible causes that triggered students to make errors in thesis writing. The frameworks stated that the sources of errors are:

1. Interlingual Transfer; This source of error is recognized when the EFL students' performance to use English is still influenced or interfered by the element of their first or native language. It is because students are familiar and accustomed to first or native language pattern or system before acquiring expertise in their new language.
2. Intralingual Transfer; This source of error is a sign of the students' incomplete understanding of the new language. The students tend to overgeneralize the new language rule, ignore the restricted rules of new language, apply the new language incompletely, and create false hypothesis on new language concept. For example, "Does John can sing?", other example abound utterance likes "He goed", "I don't know what time is it," and "I'll a tombee."
3. Context of Learning; This source of error appears since the students are unable to contextualize the new language they have learned. Teacher may teach students language by drilling without explaining and training students with the true use in real context.

Communication Strategies; This source of error usually is encountered as students do not really understand to use the strategies.

## 2.3 Studies of Errors in EFL Students' Writing

The attempts to scrutinize the EFL students' errors in writing were found at different education levels, such as universities (Adrian, 2015; Amoakohene, 2017; Chaudary & Al-Zahari, 2020, Kumala et al., 2018) and schools (Gustilo & Magno, 2012; Muhsin, 2016). The studies stated that the EFL students commonly produced grammatical errors in writing (Amoakohene, 2017) such as in applying subject-verb agreement (Andrian, 2015; Kumala et al., 2018), operating tenses (Chaudary & Al-Zahari, 2020; Gustilo & Magno, 2012; Muhsin, 2016), and using phrasal verb (Vasbieva, 2015). Also, some other errors such as errors in writing mechanics, errors in switching sentence types, and errors in choosing appropriate diction were occurred in EFL writing class (Sarfaz, 2011; Silalahi, 2019;

Wang, 2008). These studies reveal that EFL students in various research settings and learning context would produce different grammatical errors in writing. Similarly, this research might provide more insights on errors made by EFL students at university level. Moreover, those studies promote further research to investigate the use of verbs and auxiliary because these grammar focus could influence the writing's clarity (Vasbieya, 2015).

Based on the types of errors produced by EFL students, Chaudary & Al-Zaharis' (2020), Kumala et al.s' (2018), Muhsin's (2016) studies stated that EFL students produced all errors types (omission, addition, misformation, and misordering). However, the dominant errors produced were varied. Muhsin (2016) mentioned that misformation type was the most dominant, while Kumala et al. (2018) stated that omission was the most dominant (37% occurrences) which was followed by addition with 32% of occurrences. Henceforth, it needs further confirmation and analysis to notice the most dominant errors occurs while the research would be conducted in the present research setting. This research finding would contribute to the understanding of dominant errors in writing for EFL teachers to make the priority in deciding the solutions for minimizing the errors production.

Errors were usually produced due to some reasons. According to studies, errors appeared because of interlingual interference (Sarfaz, 2011), intralingual interference (Rana et al., 2019; Silalahi, 2019), inadequate practice in English writing, and carelessness (Chaudary & Al-Zahari, 2020; Kumala et al., 2018). These reasons underlie various errors occurred in different settings and contexts of previous studies. Moreover, noticing the EFL students' reasons in this research setting would benefit their teachers. Therefore, teachers should think critically about their students' production of errors in writing for finding a solution (Wang, 2008), should motivate and guide the students continuously to be aware of errors (Rana et al., 2019), and should lead students to learn through practice rather than focusing on theories only (Amara, 2020). Teachers could develop students' competence to avoid errors by asking them to investigate errors through assessment for learning activity since it may also help better understand the process of second and foreign language acquisition (Jabeen et al., 2015). Successful planning for EFL teaching will reduce the potential of errors occurrences in students writing i.e in students' thesis proposal writing (Vasbieva, 2015). Due to these varieties of findings, the present research would investigate and confirm the most dominant error type which would have been produced by EFL students in this research setting, as well as its causes.

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1 Research Design and Setting*

The present research employed a descriptive analysis design with a quantitative approach. This study was conducted at an English education department, faculty of education and teachers training, in one of a public university in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. However, the research setting was not conducive enough for students to attend the English courses due to an emergency learning situation. The island, where the university is situated, experienced 7.0 Richter earthquake that destroyed some of the university buildings and forced students to learn inside the emergency tents. During the emergency learning situation, students were insecure by the sudden earthquake attack on various strengths.

#### *3.2 Participants*

The participants of this research were forty-two students who were writing their thesis proposal at the English Education Department in one of public universities in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia in the academic year 2021-2022. Their age ranged from 20 to 22 and they should finish their thesis proposal in the respective academic year before registering themselves for thesis proposal seminar. The selection of the participants process was begun by sharing an offer to all students in semester seventh in the academic year 2021-2022 through English Education Department WhatsApp group. Then, forty-two students accepted the researchers' offer and shared their thesis proposal files as the research data. Students submitted their documents to the department staff through Schoology, a learning management system (LMS) used for thesis proposal consultation with the lecturers. They submitted their files from March to May 2022. Considering the consent for the research, the researchers asked for an official permission letter from the head of the department for conducting the research and collecting the students' theses proposal documents. The participants took part in this study voluntarily after signing the consent forms and their names were presented in the abbreviation to protect the participants' privacy.

The context of this research was an English Education Department in one of public universities in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The department obligates the students to start writing their theses proposal draft in the semester seventh of their study with the goal that the students can conduct their theses proposal seminar at the end of their semester seventh. Therefore, students should have finished writing their fixed and final theses proposal documents during the semester to avoid bachelor program graduation delay.

3.3 Data Collection

The data of this research were the students’ theses proposal documents which were submitted to their department’s Schoology (LMS for theses proposal consultation with the lecturers). Therefore, the data collection procedure was conducted through some steps. First, the researchers accessed of English Education Department’s Schoology to get the forty-two students’ theses proposal files on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. Second, the researchers downloaded them and documented them in researchers’ computer. Third, the researchers named the files according to the students’ abbreviated names. These files then were ready to be analyse following the analysis procedure of this research.

3.4 Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, data were analysed through some processes. First, identifying the errors in participants’ thesis proposal documents. Second, classifying the errors according to the types of errors (Gustilo & Magno, 2012). Third, conducting quantitative calculations to know the frequency of occurrences of each error and to find out the dominant error in using verbs and auxiliaries. The formula to analyze the frequency of errors is described as follows:

$$X = (\sum ETn / \sum n) * 100\%$$

Description:

X = Percentage of each error type

$\sum ETn$  = Total error occurrence for a certain type of error

$\sum n$  = Total error occurrence

4. Results

4.1 Errors in Students’ Thesis Proposal

Based on the students’ thesis proposals that have been collected from March to May 2022, the research found 195 errors in using auxiliary and verb. According to the analysis using Surface Taxonomy theory, there had been four types of errors, such as addition, omission, misordering, and misformation. The result of each type of errors is presented in table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Error in Students’ Thesis Proposal

No	Name	Errors							
		Using Auxiliary				Using Verb			
		OE	AE	MFE	MOE	OE	AE	MFE	MOE
1	AA	2	1			2		3	
2	SA	5		2	1		1		
3	ZA		2				1	2	
4	DA					1			
5	MJA					3			
6	PA	4		3			2	2	
7	BA	1	3						
8	LA					2			
9	DAL							1	
10	RB			1					
11	ZC	1			1	1			
12	UAF	2	2				1		
13	NH							3	
14	AH	3		2		1			
15	FDH	2							
16	AOH	4		2			1		
17	AH							2	
18	SH								
19	MH	2	1	4			1		
20	MI					4			1
21	SM	3							
22	AM		3		1		3	1	1
23	YNP	2							
24	AOH	1							
25	LHR	2	2	3			1	4	

26	AR	2		2	1				
27	RR					2			
28	MR				1	2			
29	AS				1				
30	YS	1	2		2				
31	RAS						1		
32	SS								
33	UA				1	2			
34	MS	2	2	3				3	
35	MY	1			1			3	
36	MS			4			2	2	
37	AA	2			2	1			
38	MU		1	2				1	
39	SW	2	1		2			1	
40	BY			1		1		2	
41	AYD	3						2	
42	MZF			1	2	1	2		
Total		47	18	30	7	24	30	34	5

4.2 Frequency of the Errors

The errors in using modal auxiliaries have been observed and grouped into their type. In order to determine the percentage of occurrence of each type, the following steps were taken. First, classifying the errors according to the types of errors (Gustilo & Magno, 2012). Second, calculating the total numbers of each type of error. Third, dividing the total numbers of each type of error by the total number of errors for all types. Then, transforming the result into the percentage form by multiplying it with 100%.Based on the result of calculation, the percentage of each type of errors is presented in table 2 as follows:

Table 2. Frequency of Errors

No	Types	Using Auxiliary		Using Verb	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Addition	47	46%	24	25%
2	Misformation	30	29%	34	37%
3	Omission	18	17%	30	32%
4	Misordering	7	8%	5	6%
Total		102	100%	93	100%

Comparing the occurrences of errors in both using the auxiliary and verb, using auxiliary were more than using verb. There were 102 using auxiliary errors (52%) and there were 93 using verbs errors or 48%.

In this research, the result of the analysis found that the students made four type of errors in using auxiliary and verb, they are omission, addition, misformation and misordering. The data show that students produced more errors in using auxiliary comparing to use the verb. There were 102 auxiliary misusing with addition errors as the most dominant. While errors to use verb were 93 occurrences with the most frequent one was misformation error.

There are some examples of each type of erros were present as follows:

4.3 Addition

Addition error is identified by looking for the existence of a point that must not appear in a well-formed sentence. The finding showed that students produced errors in using auxiliary and verb. There were 46% using auxiliary errors and 25% using verb errors. Some examples of addition errors were found in table 3 as follows:

Table 3. Examples of Addition

Type	ERROR	CORRECTION
Using Verb	it was obligatory for students who <i>were studies</i> in every educational institutions	it was obligatory for students who <i>study</i> in every educational institution
	The students at.... <i>gets</i> some problems	The students at.... <i>get</i> some problems
Using Auxiliary	people <i>uses</i> it as a connectors among the countries	people <i>use</i> it as a connector among the countries
	The research <i>will be implement</i>	The research <i>will implement</i>
	learners <i>are easily to comprehend</i> English	learners <i>comprehend easily</i> English
	when <i>they are learn</i> to speak English	when <i>they learn</i> to speak English
	they <i>are must able</i> to speak English	they <i>must be able</i> to speak English
	English <i>is makes</i> people understand many information	English <i>makes</i> people understand much information

The examples above showed that students usually add *affix -s* which was actually inappropriate for the structure of sentence. Without that addition, the sentences would be better. In relation with the use of auxiliaries, students tended to add *be, are, is (to be)* while those ‘be’ were not correct if they were added in sentence.

#### 4.4 Omission

Based on the result analysis, it was found that there were 18 (17%) errors of omission in using auxiliary made by the students. They also did 32 omission errors in using verbs in writing their thesis proposal. These errors were characterized by the absence of auxiliary and verb that had to appear in a sentence construction. Some examples of omission errors were found in table 4 as follows:

Table 4. Examples of Omission

Type	ERROR	CORRECTION
Using Verb	Therefore student <i>tend</i> to domesticate the application in such away	Therefore, student <i>tends</i> to domesticate the application in such away
	Although it <i>consider</i> as an active role of students..., and the research problem will <i>be answer</i> .	Although it <i>considers</i> as an active role of students..., and the research problem will <i>be answered</i> .
Using Auxiliary	It <i>not mean</i> that teacher in the classroom	it <i>does not mean</i> that teacher in the classroom
	So that why, the researcher wants...	So that <i>is</i> why, the researcher wants ...
	the researcher confirmed that the statements will understandable.	the researcher confirmed that the statements will <i>be</i> understandable.
	The participant of this research four classes	The participants of this research <i>are</i> four classes
	so the researcher able to conclude the data	so the researcher <i>will be</i> able to conclude the data
	After all of the answers <i>have classified</i> and English further is important <i>to learn</i> as international language.	After all of the answers <i>have been</i> classified and further, English is important <i>to be learnt</i> as an international language.
	<i>There</i> several learning methods they are <i>must able</i> to speak English	<i>There are</i> several learning methods they <i>must be able</i> to speak English
	Students skill in English are still low because all of the student lack of motivation	Students’ skills in English are still low because all of the students <i>are</i> lack of motivation
	A cooperative learning method <i>believed</i> to give chance for ...	A cooperative learning method <i>is believed</i> to give a chance for...

Some examples of omission errors above explained that students preferred to omit *affix -s, and -ed* in using verb. Actually, they should use *affix -s* as the verb must show agreement with singular subject for expressing facts. Students also omitted the *-ed* to show verb or activity in the past. Related to the use of auxiliary, students forgot to use *do* as an auxiliary verb to express negative and interrogative meaning. Students also omitted some “to be” such as *be, are, and is*.

#### 4.5 Misformation

Based on the theory, misformation errors are recognized by the use of a wrong form of the grammar. The result of the analysis found that the students made 30 (29%) errors of misformation in using the auxiliary. The 34 misformation (37%) errors also appeared in students’ thesis writing proposal in using the verb. Some examples of misformation errors were found in table 5 as follows:

Table 5. Examples of Misformation

Type	ERROR	CORRECTION
Using Verb	The research <i>will found</i> about students...	The research <i>will find</i> about students...
	The study <i>used</i> experimental method	The study <i>will use</i> experimental method
	Teachers <i>using</i> technology therefore ...	Teachers <i>use</i> technology therefore ...
	According to Brown (2000), reading <i>have</i> some macro skills	According to Brown (2000), reading <i>has</i> some macro skills
Using Auxiliary	The use of information and communication technologies <i>are</i> very important	The use of information and communication technologies <i>is</i> very important
	<i>it was</i> obligatory for students	<i>it is</i> obligatory for students
	The researcher <i>described</i> the situation in which the students <i>got</i> written feedback from their teacher in writing tasks,	The researcher <i>will describe</i> the situation in which the students <i>will get</i> written feedback from their teacher in writing tasks,
	<i>It was aimed</i> to gain the students’ perception on DCF and ICF	<i>It is aimed</i> to gain the students’ perception on DCF and ICF
	the researcher <i>confirmed</i> that the statements will understandable.	the researcher <i>will confirm</i> that the statements will be understandable.
	The participants <i>is four classes</i> of ..... for the questionnaires	The participants <i>are four classes</i> of ..... for the questionnaires

The examples of errors above showed that students produced many errors in using auxiliary and verb based on the correct grammar rules. As shown by the findings, that misformation errors placed in second position of all errors in students’ thesis proposal writing. Regarding the use of verbs, the students did not make good agreements between subject and predicate such as in “Teachers *using*”. It should be “use” since the verb was not preceded by “be”. Then, students also forgot to use the base verb after modal auxiliary “will”. The last, students also misused to apply future tense verbs as the students wanted to show activity that would happen in the future.

Students also made errors to use the auxiliary. It appeared when they did not use ‘to be’ (*is > are, was > is*) correctly.. Students also did not use modal auxiliary “will” while they should express future activity.

4.6 Misordering

The fourth error in the students’ thesis proposal composition was misordering. The error can be noticed by recognizing the incorrect placement of words in a sentence according the correct rules of grammar. The finding in the present research discovered that the students made 7 (8%) errors of misordering to use auxiliary and 5 (6%) errors in using the verb. The examples of misordering errors were found in table 6 as follows:

Table 6. Examples of Misordering

Type	ERROR	CORRECTION
Using Verb	Learners <i>are easily to comprehend</i> English	Learners <i>comprehend easily</i> English
	School <i>will much consider</i> the students’ attitude	School <i>will consider much</i> the students’ attitude
Using Auxiliary	The teacher did not know <i>what are</i> the students favourite learning strategy	The teacher did not know <i>what</i> the students favourite learning strategies <i>are</i>
	The researcher will meet the principal to ask about <i>will be</i> the researcher <i>able to</i> take MIA X class as the subject	The researcher will meet the principal to ask about the researcher <i>will be able to</i> take MIA X class as the subject

The example above showed that the students found it was difficult to use modal auxiliaries and auxiliary to be in the correct order since they face intralingual transfer problem. Students failed to construct indirect interrogative sentence due to their overgeneralized understanding in composing the interrogative sentence. They always put modal auxiliary earlier or before the ‘doer/subject’ (i.e. ‘*will be* the researcher *able to*’ that should be ‘the researcher *will be able to*’). Similarly, students got

Students failed to construct indirect interrogative sentence because of overgeneralized English grammar for

interrogative sentence development (i.e. ‘*will be* the researcher *able to*’ that should be ‘the researcher *will be able to*’). They comprehended that interrogative sentence usually put modal auxiliary at the beginning or before the ‘doer/subject’. The same errors happened when students had to use verbs together with adverbs or quantifiers. The positions of verbs were not correct that influence the understanding of the reader.

## 5. Discussion

In short, the present research reveals that students’ thesis proposals contain all errors in surface taxonomy theory with a total of 195 errors consisting of 71 (36%) addition errors, 64 (33%) misformation errors, 48 (25%) omission errors, and 12 (6%) misordering errors. Comparing the most dominant errors that appeared in the use of auxiliary and verb, the finding showed difference. The most dominant error in using auxiliary was addition errors with 47 occurrences (46%). This result shows different findings from Cahyaningrum (2014) who states misformation was the most dominant errors in using auxiliary in students’ composition. Moreover, regarding the use of verb in sentence, the dominant errors was not addition, it was misformation with 34 occurrences (37%). This finding also shows different idea from Kumala et. al. (2018) who state that omission is the most dominant errors in writing.

The highest percentage of auxiliary errors (addition, 46%) in the present research was confirmed by the similar high percentage of auxiliary errors in Amoakohene (2017). He stated that students’ error frequency in using ‘be’ was higher (13.35%) compared to other errors such as errors in using articles (7.05%), errors in using prepositions (6.80%), omission of the subject (6.04%), errors in possessive case (4.78%), misordering in composing adjective phrase (3.02%), and errors in using pronouns (2.26%). Moreover, he recommended the university (UHAS) to provide more credit hours for teaching auxiliary to students. Parrot (2000) and Torabiardakani et al. (2015) state that the students often have problems deciding when they use certain auxiliary, to choose which auxiliary should be used, and how the auxiliary should be used in interrogative and negative sentences. In this research, it may be assumed that the students made errors because they were confused in choosing which one to use. Based on the result of the analysis, the students got difficulties in choosing which one to use, such as ‘they *are must able* to speak English’ or ‘they *must be able* to speak English’.

The occurrence of the verb error was also discussed by Adrian (2015) that showed similar finding as in the present research. He states that students found it difficult to use correct verbs in different time and situation. For example, students said ‘The study *used* experimental method’ while it should be ‘The study *will use* experimental method’ as the students compose thesis proposal and has not yet implemented. This occurrence describes the different first language system (Bahasa Indonesia) and learnt language (English).

In learning English, the students usually made errors and it is caused by some sources. From the analysis of the students’ thesis proposal, it could be noticed that errors came from outside and inside aspects which are caused by context of learning and intralingual transfer. Students did overgeneralization on employing ‘to be’ for non progressive or even passive sentence such as in “it was obligatory for students who *were studies* in every educational institution” and “The research *will be implemen*”. Students also showed their incomplete understanding by unable to apply auxiliary do in negative sentence “It *not mean* that teacher in the classroom” and unable to keep subject-verb agreement in sentence “Although it *consider* as an active role of students...”. Sartika et al. (2017) state that students in higher education still meet problems to understand the use of verb in tenses and auxiliary.

Context of learning also influences the student’s error in using both auxiliary and verb. Lin (2012) states that context of learning refers to the teaching learning process with the materials, which means that the students made errors because the misleading explanation or unclear explanation from the teacher and because the teaching method was not interesting. The participants of the present research are students who could not study grammar and writing in a conducive situation. Their classes were ruined by 7.0 Richter earthquake that stroke Lombok Island, requested them to miss some meetings and sometimes they had to learn inside emergency tents.

The English Education Department in the university should develop a good grammar curriculum which may be applied online and offline as an adaptation to all learning situations in order to minimize the students’ grammatical errors. They also need to pay more attention to the students’ thesis proposal writing. Direction to provide adequate feedback to the students on students writing would be favourable to improve students writing quality (Uusen & Mürsepp, 2010) and reduce the linguistics errors (Ellis et al., 2009). Also, providing students thesis writing practice as material or single topic in writing course will give more chances to practice grammar and writing will also help students develop their ability in using grammar correctly (Refnita, 2012).

“Learning through experience is the best teacher” is a quote that teaches everyone to review on what has done (Costa, 2015). Similarly, studying the errors that were in thesis proposal composition may help students improve their

writing. There are some advantages that may be taken by students as mentioned by Corder (1981). He explains why learning from students' errors is important. First, students' errors describe to the teacher on what students have learned and something they have not yet achieved. Second, the errors provide evidence on how to learn language best. Third, students could learn English grammar through the reflection on the errors they made (Imaniar, 2018). It means that errors contain a lot of information's about which part of the students' difficulties that are hard to produce correctly. On the other hand, Al-Khasawneh (2014) states that teachers may benefits from knowing students' error that is as the basis for designing and preparing effective teaching materials. Prediction of errors would also help teachers to be well-prepared to provide aids to solve and avoid similar students' problems in writing thesis.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study was aimed to investigate students' errors in composing thesis proposal as well as finding the most dominant one. Based on the result and discussion, it can be concluded that when all errors were calculated, the most dominant errors as shown by the percentage were students tended to add more than the structure or grammar needs in using auxiliary and tend to miss the morphological form of verbs in sentences. Students overgeneralized to use affix -s in verb and to use double auxiliaries (be, are, is) or students got intralanguage transfer problem. It happens because students lack an understanding of English grammar. Moreover, the non-conducive place for learning grammar and writing during the natural disaster in Lombok, influenced their learning achievement. These results suggest that the teacher need to help students on understanding more to fix those errors. Furthermore, it also suggests that the teachers should ask and give students more chance to practice more the grammar. They need to understand the English grammar well, by practicing and consulting with their senior or with the teachers.

Beside the positive pedagogical contribution of this study, the future research needs to discuss other factors, psychological and environmental factors, to depict clearer insight factors that trigger students' errors in writing thesis. Additionally, the use of more data collection techniques will strengthen the validity of future research.

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