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## GRAMMATICAL ERRORS MADE BY THE STUDENTS DURING SEMINAR PROPOSAL EXAMINATION

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**ABSTRACT:** Those who are proficient in spoken English grammar can grasp the English language adequately. This ability differs significantly from written English grammar since it occurs naturally and spontaneously during conversations without any preparation. This study examined spoken grammatical errors committed by English major students during the seminar proposal examination at one public university in Jambi. To carry out this study, the researcher utilized case study research. This research effort enlisted the participation of five students from the eighth and tenth semesters of an English education study program, one male and four females. The researcher classified the grammatical errors based on Richard's theory (1990) as (1) Errors in the production of verb groups, (2) errors in the distribution of verb groups, (3) miscellaneous errors, (4) errors in the use of prepositions, (5) errors in the use of articles, and (6) errors in the use of the question. The spoken grammatical errors were assessed using the six categories above after listening, audiotaping, and transcribing their seminar proposal assessment. The findings and discussion sections will go through each feature type in further detail. The researcher expected to get some distinct information in relation to students' spoken grammatical errors and make some improvements through teaching and learning developments.

**Keywords:** *grammatical errors, seminar proposal examination, spoken language*

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## ANALISIS KESALAHAN GRAMATIKA LISAN OLEH MAHASISWA PADA UJIAN SEMINAR PROPOSAL

**ABSTRAK:** Mereka yang mahir tata bahasa Inggris lisan dapat memahami bahasa Inggris secara memadai. Kemampuan ini berbeda secara signifikan dari tata bahasa Inggris tertulis karena terjadi secara alami dan spontan selama percakapan. Studi ini berfokus pada menganalisa kesalahan gramatika oleh mahasiswa pada ujian seminar proposal jurusan Bahasa Inggris. Peneliti menggunakan metode studi kasus. Lima mahasiswa yang berasal dari semester delapan dan sepuluh program studi pendidikan bahasa Inggris yang terdiri atas satu orang mahasiswa dan empat orang mahasiswi diambil sebagai partisipan proyek penelitian ini. Peneliti mengelompokkan kesalahan gramatika lisan ini berdasarkan teori dan konsep yang diusung oleh Richard (1990) yang terdiri atas enam kategori yaitu: (1) kesalahan dalam memproduksi kata kerja, (2) kesalahan dalam pendistribusian kelompok kata kerja, (3) Keberagaman kesalahan. (4) kesalahan dalam penggunaan preposisi, (5) Kesalahan pada penggunaan artikel, dan (6) kesalahan pada penggunaan pertanyaan. Setelah mendengar, merekam, dan mentranskrip kalimat-kalimat yang digunakan selama berlangsungnya ujian seminar proposal keenam pemateri tersebut, kesalahan gramatika lisan yang terdapat pada kalimat-kalimat tersebut kemudian dianalisa serta didiskusikan lebih lanjut secara detil. Peneliti berharap dengan kesalahan grammatikal lisan yang dilakukan oleh mahasiswa dapat menghasilkan sejumlah perbaikan perkembangan belajar dan pembelajaran.

**Kata Kunci:** *kesalahan gramatika, ujian seminar proposal, bahasa lisan*

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## INTRODUCTION

Most English language learners disregard whether or not their ideas in written and spoken language have strong grammatical structures when utilizing productive skills (writing and speaking). Hence, understanding sentence structures, as a part of grammar, and knowing how each structure functions is very essential for EFL learners. Brown (1994), Hambali (2008) and Soma (2018) argued that good English represents good sentence structure as well such as subject and verb agreement, tenses, word order, verb and noun system, sentence modifiers, phrases, and clauses. As a productive skill, the value of words used as the tool of the actual communicative interaction must be the result of the analysis of a sequence of speech sounds occurring in actual daily routines of a language society (Katz, 1966; Siahaan, 2008). The overall elements are important for learners to master so that they can produce comprehensible language which can be understood by the interlocutors. The English language can only be understood well if we have good spoken English grammar skill. This skill is quite different from written English grammar since it happens in spontaneous speaking performance in natural conversations and without being planned (Carter & McCarthy, 1995; McCarthy & Carter, 1995 & Hilliard, 2014). In addition, the words and sentences produced in spoken conversation occur in real time setting without being given sufficient time for editing and revising (Cullen & Kuo, 2007). In relation to this, grammatical errors most likely happen between interlocutors during the interaction. Errors must be carefully distinguished from mistakes of second language learners and foreign language learners. An error can simply be defined as a linguistic form or combination of forms which in the same context and under similar conditions of production would, in all likelihood, not be produced by native speakers' counterparts (Lennon, 1991; Uysal & Aydin, 2017) An error cannot be self-corrected, while a mistake can be self-corrected if the deviation is pointed out to the speaker (Brown, 2007). Therefore, if the speaker has good language capacity, he or she will realize the errors and make necessary attempts to give corrections. To overcome the grammatical errors in students speaking performance, as well as to identify the kinds of errors, based on Richard's theory and concept (1990) in which errors were classified into (1) Errors in the production of verb groups, (2) errors in the distribution of verb groups, (3) miscellaneous errors, (4) errors in the use of preposition, (5) errors in the use of articles, and (6) errors in the use of question. The objective of this research was finding the answer to the question "What kind of grammatical errors are made by the students during seminar proposal examination?" and this study was only limited to this kind of examination only, not other kinds of examination. The view of traditional grammar tends to concentrate on written English and the existence of communicative grammar is important to abridge both spoken and written English to describe both types of language use (Leech and Svartvik, 2002).

## METHODOLOGY

In conducting this study, the researcher applied a qualitative research method with a case study approach (Creswell, 2017; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990) to examine grammatical errors made by English major students at one public university in Jambi during seminar proposal examination. The researcher collected the data by using the observation technique. The researcher attended the seminar proposal examinations held by the research participants which lasted the whole of June 2023. This

study included five presenters who were coded using pseudonyms (presenter 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). Most of them came from the eighth and the tenth semester at the time the data were taken. In conducting this research, I got the permission from the head of English education study program. To obtain permission from the presenters, I distributed the inform consent form to ten students who were going to hold seminar proposal examination and asked for their willingness as research participants. As a result, only five of the ten candidates were accepted to attend as my research participants. Furthermore, I also asked the participants' permission to record, audiotape, and transcribe their voices during seminar proposal examination. The audio recorded data I obtained during the seminar proposal was used for research purposes only.

In applying the sampling procedure, I took five students who came from the eighth and tenth students of English education study program to take part in my research project. They were taken based on the approval they signed in the informed consent form distributed by the researcher a week before the research was conducted. To safeguard their real identities, the writer referred to them as presenter 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 for the purpose of keeping the secret of their real identity. In this study, the writer utilized a convenience strategy which represents sites or individuals from which researchers can access and collect the data easily (Creswell, 2007, p. 126). The five participants agreed to participate voluntarily in the study. They were one male and four females. The following table shows demographic information of research participants in which all of them are the presenters on the seminar of research proposals attended by the writer. The following table contains the profile of the research participants.

*Table 1.* The Participants' Demographic Information

No	Name	Gender	Major	Current Status
1.	Presenter 1	Male	English Education Study Program	The 4 <sup>th</sup> year student
2.	Presenter 2	Female	English Education Study Program	The 4 <sup>th</sup> year student
3.	Presenter 3	Female	English Education Study Program	The 5 <sup>th</sup> year student
4.	Presenter 4	Female	English Education Study Program	The 5 <sup>th</sup> year student
5.	Presenter 5	Female	English Education Study Program	The 5 <sup>th</sup> year student

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore spoken grammatical errors made by English major students during a seminar proposal examination at a public university in Jambi, Indonesia during the academic year 2022/2023. The researcher applied the theory proposed by Richard (1990) in which grammatical errors were classified into (1) Errors in the production of verb groups, (2) errors in the distribution of verb groups, (3) miscellaneous errors, (4) errors in the use of preposition, (5) errors in the use of articles, and (6) errors in the use of question. The five students who were from the eighth and tenth semesters were selected as the sample of the research. The following excerpts came from the five presenters. For the information, there would be a lot of grammatical

errors in the excerpts since the researcher presented the excerpts as they were, without any editing.

**Presenter 1:**

**Excerpt 1:** *First of all, I would like to say thank you (for) my main advisor mam Masbirorotni, and the second advisor, Sir Robi Soma. (Thank you to)*

**Excerpt 2:** *And also, in now and also in the future, (we'll be) alternative way because it's a digital era. (It will)*

**Excerpt 3:** *And for example, if a Lecturer or teacher cannot handle the class in a traditional class, they (can be using) this alternative way. (Can be used)*

From the excerpts above, it can be said that there are some grammatical errors made by presenter 1 the word “thank you” in excerpt 1, should be followed by “to” if we want to address it to a person or people. Meanwhile, the expression thank you/thanks “for” should be followed by a noun phrase e.g., “your help”, or “the present”. Moreover, in excerpt 2, the sentence “English (which) is important to learn” indicates the omission of the relative clause “which” and this is in alignment with the theory which was initiated by Richard (1990) and can be categorized as miscellaneous errors. To fill the space in speaking, presenter 1 used the filler “hm” as an attempt to substitute the upcoming words and sentences and this is also related to one of the features in the theory proposed by Cullen & Kuo (2007) in relation to the features of spoken grammar. Meanwhile, in excerpt 3, presenter 1 had better say “If a lecturer or teacher cannot handle the traditional class” to avoid repetition and the continuing sentence should be “They can use this alternative way” This error can be categorized into errors in the distribution of verb groups.

**Presenter 2:**

**Excerpt 1:** *First I'd like to explain about the background of this research which contains the reason why (the research) conducts this research. (The researcher)*

**Excerpt 2:** *And the researchers (also will) describe research questions along with its purposes and then this study will also describe limitations and its significance. (Will also)*

**Excerpt 3:** *But in fact, we all know that persuading others is not as easy as it seems, because it required technique strategies as well as communicative competence. (requires)*

**Excerpt 4:** *And then besides (of) that, we all know that everyone has their own belief and idea. (The omission 'of')*

**Excerpt 5:** *The definition of discourse analysis is to ask going, beyond the sentence because it (focus) on the meaning of the sentence rather than the structure and syntax. (focuses)*

**Excerpt 6:** *After that, the researchers will do (categorizing and memoing). (Categorizing and note taking)*

Based on the excerpts from presenter 2 above, it can be concluded that she made some errors in relation to the subject which should be “The researcher” (excerpt 1), and in excerpt 2, a subject should be followed by “Will also”. In excerpts 3 & 5, the subject “It” at the beginning of a sentence should be followed by a verb ending with -s, or -es “It requires” & “it focuses”. In excerpt 4, it can be categorized as a “miscellaneous error” since there is something missing in the sentence. And the last excerpt can be categorized into the “error in verb groups distribution”. All kinds of errors are in line with Richard’s concept & theories.

**Presenter 3:**

**Excerpt 1:** While in process the translator focuses on (the) taking the target language, target text, and converting it into (the another) language or target text. (The omission of “the” and “another”).

**Excerpt 2:** The researcher only (focused) on examining, examine types of English idiomatic and strategies used by the translator in translating idiomatic expressions from English into Indonesian. (focuses)

**Excerpt 3:** Researcher (can hopes) that this research can enrich the word choices for the subtitlers, and the last research can be a reference for readers and future researchers. (Can hope)

**Excerpt 4:** The fourth is translating idioms by (paraphrase) translate the source language using equivalent words that close meaning to the target language. (paraphrasing).

**Excerpt 5:** Since the study once aims to analyze and (exploring) more about the strategies used by the translator in translating movie, so the researcher (choose) to use qualitative descriptive method. (explore & chooses)

**Excerpt 6:** It is from Aladdin 2019 movie that can (that will) be taken from Disney Hotstar application and retrieved subtitle from *sebuahdongeng.com* that written by Pain akatsuki. (The omission of the words “that will”).

**Excerpt 7:** Move to the data analysis, the researcher (will listing) up the pairs of source text and target text on the table. (Will list).

**Excerpt 8:** The researcher will (presentation) analysis results, spreading up analysis of interesting aspects in the comparison between source text and project text in relation (with) theoretical framework. (Will present & In relation to)

In relation to the excerpts from presenter 3, it can be found out that the word “The” in excerpt 1 should be omitted, and the use of the word “another” as the last alternative of two things. In excerpts 2 and 5, the use of subject and verb agreement should be taken into consideration and the use of verb-ing should be appropriate as well. In excerpt 3, 7, and 8, the auxiliary verb “can” and “will” should be followed by Verb 1, so the correct one is “can hope” and “will list”. As an English language learner, one should know about the rule of “gerund after preposition” as shown in excerpt 4, for example, by adding, for cutting, and so on. The rest of the errors can be listed as miscellaneous errors. In other words, those errors made by presenter 3 are in alignment with the six errors classification theory.

**Presenter 4:**

**Excerpt 1:** There (is can't) exchange students thinking, learning, problem solving, comprehension or literacy understanding like my title “Students perception Toward Using classroom discussion activities to improve critical thinking”. (probably “is”)

**Excerpt 2:** Inggris perminatan (use) classroom discussion being classroom activity. (That's relate) to my title. (Uses & relates)

**Excerpt 3:** I hope students (be) able to improve their critical thinking. (Is)

**Excerpt 4:** And in my research I only focus (about) student perception that is at that is possible or not. (On)

**Excerpt 5:** I just focus (to) increase my critical thinking. (Focus on)

It seems to the researcher that presenter 4 has two kinds of errors namely the use of be (am, is, are) and the use of prepositions as shown in excerpts 1, 3, 4, and 5. Meanwhile, in excerpt 2, he made an error in terms of subject and verb agreement in which singular subjects should be followed by verb 1 with -s, or -es.

**Presenter 5:**

**Excerpt 1:** Well, my thesis proposal (consists with) three chapters. (Consists of)

**Excerpt 2:** It means that it's helpful for (their) to take the good opportunities in other aspects of life. (For them)

**Excerpt 3:** But (if to know) or to measure someone's ability in English, we should do a test. (If we want to know).

**Excerpt 4:** So, to avoid a failure, students must (prepare) the test very well. (Prepare for)

**Excerpt 5:** Therefore, in this research the researcher is (interest to be) investigates or to find out about how English education students prepare before taking the JUELT test. (Interested in)

**Excerpt 6:** It consists (of) what are the strategies and why the reason uses students using that. (missing 'of')

**Excerpt 7:** The researcher hopes that the future student or the future test taker who will (taking) JUELT test could try various strategies that (is) suitable for them. (Will take)

**Excerpt 8:** In the chapter two consists (of) literature review and purpose previous studies. (missing 'of')

**Excerpt 9:** Since this research (is focused on) strategies in JUELT preparations. (Focuses on)

Among the five presenters, presenter 5 made the most grammatical errors during the seminar proposal examination. His errors mostly occur in terms of the inappropriate usage of prepositions “of” in “consists of”, “prepare for”, “interested in”, and “focus on”. In addition, the use of objective nouns in the sentence “It’s helpful for them”. And in the use of the “If clause” in the sentence “if we want to know”. The last error made by presenter 5 is also the same as the previous presenter's in terms of how to use the auxiliary verb “will” which is always followed by verb 1” take”.

This research intends to explore the spoken grammatical errors made by the fourth-year students (semester eight) and the tenth-year students (semester ten) comprising one male and four females during a seminar proposal examination related to Richards’ (1990) theory on spoken grammatical errors which can be classified as (1) Errors in the production of verb groups, (2) errors in the distribution of verb groups, (3) miscellaneous errors, (4) errors in the use of preposition, (5) errors in the use of articles, and (6) errors in the use of question. From the data displayed above, it can be said that the five presenters made various kinds of spoken grammatical errors starting from the misuse of prepositions, tenses, objective pronouns, subject verb agreement, gerund, and some miscellaneous errors. The latest error (miscellaneous errors) made by the presenters were in line with the research conducted by Ancker (2000), Duff & Li (2004) who reported that sentence redundancy, repetitions, and modelling were the three most common errors done by the students in speaking. Meanwhile, the result of this research indicated that presenter 5 made the most spoken grammatical errors during the seminar proposal examination, followed by presenter 3. However, presenters 2 and 4 made the same number of errors namely 5 errors of each, and presenter 1 made the least spoken grammatical errors. Interestingly, none of the presenters made errors in using articles and questions indicated by Richard’s theory since the five presenters quite understand about the use of definite and indefinite articles and the five presenters never asked questions to examiners. For that reason, they never use sentences beginning with “Do you ...?”, “Are

you...?” “Can you...?” or “Did you....?” So that is why they never made errors in this grammatical area.

## CONCLUSION

Based on Richard's (1990) theory, the five presenters' grammatical errors can be classified as (1) Errors in the production of verb groups, (2) errors in the distribution of verb groups, (3) miscellaneous errors, (4) errors in the use of preposition, (5) errors in the use of articles, and (6) errors in the use of question. It can be concluded that there are two types of errors which do not show up during the seminar proposal presentation, namely errors in the use of articles and errors in the use of questions. Because the presenters are not supposed to ask questions but just present their proposals so the errors in terms of the use of questions do not show up during the presentation. The same thing also happens to the use of articles “a” and “an” since the presenters fully understand the use of both definite and indefinite articles. It is suggested that to promote future research in the same topic, the researchers apply more comprehensive theories and concepts to identify errors made by students as EFL learners as well as more classifications to detect errors in grammar both in speaking and writing.

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