GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF MALE AND FEMALE EFL STUDENTS ACROSS DIFFERENT MOTHER TONGUES

ILYAS, ASMAN BIN MOHD TAHIR, NURSIDAH

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Bone, Universitas Negeri Malang, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Bone

Ilyaslovesf4@gmail.com, asmanbinmohdtahir96@gmail.com, nursidah.amin@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates grammatical errors in English writing produced by male and female EFL students from different mother tongue backgrounds (Makassarese, Bugis, and Javanese). Using a qualitative descriptive case study design, six participants, three males and three females, were asked to compose 150-200 words essay on the topic "The Benefits of Using Cell Phones" to examine how gender and mother tongue influence grammatical accuracy. The errors were identified and categorized using Dulay et al.'s (1982) surface strategy taxonomy, consisting of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The analysis revealed that the Bugis male student demonstrated the highest frequency of omission errors, while the Makassarese male student produced the fewest. Both male and female students showed similar patterns in addition errors, with the Bugis and Makassarese female students recording the highest counts. Misformation errors were most frequently found in the Bugis male student and the Makassarese female student, whereas misordering errors were also common among the same two participants. Overall, the findings indicate that mother tongue plays a substantial role in shaping the types and frequencies of grammatical errors committed by male and female EFL learners. These results highlight the importance of recognizing linguistic background in instructional planning, enabling educators to design targeted teaching strategies to improve grammatical accuracy. Moreover, the findings can assist curriculum developers in constructing more inclusive and effective programs that address the specific learning needs of students from diverse mother tongue backgrounds.

Keywords: Grammatical Error, Gender, Mother Tongues, Writing

INTRODUCTION

English, as one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, possesses complex grammatical rules that can often be challenging for learners to master. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, in particular, frequently face difficulties in avoiding grammatical errors during both written and spoken communication (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Snow, 2019). While the mastery of English grammar is essential for effective communication, it is often characterized by intricate rules, exceptions, and variations that make it challenging for non-native speakers to internalize. The complexity of English grammar is further compounded by the influence of learners' native languages, which can shape how they acquire and use grammatical structures in English. The tendency to apply the rules and structures of one's first language to English is common among EFL learners, and this transfer often results in noticeable grammatical errors (Ellis, 2020). Therefore, the mother tongue plays a crucial role in shaping the grammatical accuracy of learners, influencing their ability to produce grammatically correct sentences in English.

In addition to linguistic background, Wei, (2022) explained that gender differences may play a role in the frequency and type of grammatical errors made by EFL learners. The studies indicate that male and female learners might approach language differently, leading to variations in grammar usage and stylistic tendencies . For example, learners from languages with rigid word orders such as German or Arabic might find it difficult to adapt to the flexible sentence structures of English, which can result in errors related to subject-verb agreement or

prepositions. Meanwhile, gender-based distinctions in language use could arise from social and cultural factors. Women, for instance, may be more inclined to use politeness markers or hedging expressions, whereas men may favor more direct linguistic constructions. These distinctions, though subtle, can influence how grammar is applied in English by male and female EFL learners.

Given these observations, this research aims to conduct a case study examining grammatical errors among EFL learners, focusing specifically on comparisons between male and female students with diverse mother tongues. The study seeks to identify and analyze common grammatical errors, highlighting differences influenced by gender and native language. According to Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2015), understanding the recurring types of grammatical errors can provide valuable insights into the specific grammatical aspects that pose the greatest challenges for EFL learners. Errors such as incorrect verb tense usage, omission of articles, or improper pluralization may reflect interference from learners' first languages, while gender may be associated with distinct stylistic preferences in language use.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to deepen the understanding of how grammatical errors manifest differently among male and female EFL students across various linguistic backgrounds. Findings from the study could contribute to the development of improved teaching methods and learning strategies tailored to diverse student needs. By identifying error patterns and their possible causes, educators can design curricula that directly address common problem areas, thereby enhancing learners' grammatical competence and communicative proficiency. Moreover, such insights can inform the creation of gender-inclusive teaching approaches that encourage balanced participation and equitable learning outcomes in EFL classrooms.

An in-depth understanding of grammatical errors is also critical for developing learners' confidence and communication skills. Frequent grammatical mistakes can hinder clarity and fluency, affecting learners' ability to express themselves effectively in academic, social, or professional contexts. For instance, an EFL learner who repeatedly commits grammatical errors during business presentations may fail to convey ideas persuasively, which could impact organizational success. The importance of understanding these errors is further emphasized by prior research (Brown, 2020; Celce-Murcia et al., 2019; Ellis, 2020; Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2015; Wei, 2022), which collectively underscores the complexity of English grammar and the multifaceted factors influencing language acquisition.

EFL learners come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, each with unique challenges and learning trajectories. As Taguchi (2017) notes, understanding the nature of grammatical errors among such a varied population is essential for developing student-centered instructional strategies. Although speaking and listening are often prioritized in EFL education, writing and grammatical precision remain foundational for effective communication. Therefore, identifying and categorizing grammatical errors in both spoken and written English can guide teachers in creating targeted interventions that enhance learners' overall language competence. A more comprehensive understanding of gender-based differences in grammar usage may also assist educators in designing equitable curricula that foster inclusivity and linguistic awareness among students of all backgrounds.

A common difficulty among EFL learners arises from the transfer of grammatical structures from their native language to English, a phenomenon widely acknowledged in second language acquisition research (Zheng & Zhang, 2020). The influence of the first language can result in persistent grammatical challenges, particularly for learners whose native linguistic systems differ significantly from English. For example, learners from languages like Japanese or Chinese often encounter difficulties in mastering English articles

and prepositions due to differences in syntactic and morphological rules (Zhang & Yuan, 2021). Similarly, speakers of agglutinative languages such as Turkish might overuse suffixes, while speakers of isolating languages like Vietnamese might omit necessary grammatical markers. Such variations highlight how linguistic background shapes learners' grammatical accuracy.

This study also draws on theoretical frameworks such as Language Transfer Theory and Interlanguage Theory to explore how EFL learners construct their understanding of English grammar. Language Transfer Theory posits that learners naturally apply grammatical rules from their first language to the target language, often resulting in errors when the two systems differ structurally. Meanwhile, Interlanguage Theory provides a dynamic perspective on language learning, suggesting that learners develop an evolving, intermediate linguistic system that reflects their progress toward mastering the target language. These theoretical perspectives help explain not only why grammatical errors occur but also how they evolve and diminish over time as learners gain proficiency (Yin, 2018).

By integrating these frameworks, this research seeks to bridge the gap between existing theories and empirical observations of grammatical errors among EFL learners. It also investigates how gender and mother tongue interact in shaping these patterns. Sociolinguistic perspectives further enrich this analysis by emphasizing that gender-based differences in grammar usage may be influenced by socialization, culture, and communicative norms (Wei, 2022). Understanding these factors will help formulate research questions that link linguistic theory with real-world language use, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of EFL learning dynamics.

In conclusion, this research aims to examine grammatical errors in both written and spoken English among male and female EFL students from various mother tongue backgrounds. By employing a case study approach, it endeavours to uncover the underlying causes of grammatical errors and explore how language transfer and gender differences influence learners' grammatical performance. Ultimately, this study aspires to contribute to the enhancement of EFL teaching methodologies and to promote effective, inclusive, and linguistically informed instruction that supports the global pursuit of English language proficiency. Based on this background, the research problem in this study is formulated as follows: What types of grammatical errors are made by male and female EFL students across different mother tongues in writing?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Learning a foreign language inevitably begins from the foundation of the learner's mother tongue, as one's first language serves as the initial cognitive and structural framework for acquiring a new linguistic system. Consequently, grammatical errors are an inherent and expected part of the second language acquisition process. These errors often arise when learners attempt to comprehend, internalize, and apply the grammatical rules of the target language, particularly when the syntactic, morphological, or phonological patterns of their native language differ significantly from those of the language being learned. The process of acquiring a new language, therefore, involves a complex negotiation between old and new linguistic structures, where errors serve as natural by-products of active learning rather than indicators of failure. Over the years, scholars in the field of second language acquisition have paid close attention to these errors because they provide valuable insights into learners' internal mechanisms of language processing, cognitive development, and rule formation rather than simply being signs of imperfect performance (Hidayah et al, 2024).

From a historical perspective, the understanding of grammatical errors has evolved considerably. During the mid-twentieth century, the Behaviorist theory of language learning

dominated the field and viewed language acquisition primarily as a process of habit formation. According to this perspective, learning a new language involved replacing existing first-language habits with those of the target language through repetition, reinforcement, and imitation. In this framework, errors were regarded as negative indicators evidence that learners had failed to properly form new linguistic habits. They were thought to arise from interference, where pre-existing first-language structures intruded upon attempts to produce correct second-language utterances. As a result, early pedagogical approaches focused on eliminating errors through extensive drilling and memorization, believing that correct repetition would lead to accurate language production. However, this view was increasingly challenged as linguists and psychologists began to study learners' interlanguage behavior and noticed that even with abundant exposure and correction, errors continued to occur systematically.

A major shift occurred with the emergence of Selinker and Lamendella's (1978) Interlanguage Theory, which reconceptualized grammatical errors as an integral and necessary aspect of the language learning process. Interlanguage Theory posits that second language learners develop a dynamic, evolving linguistic system that lies somewhere between their first language (L1) and the target language (L2). This intermediate system referred to as "interlanguage" contains a mixture of rules from both languages, as well as novel constructions unique to neither. From this perspective, grammatical errors are not merely random mistakes but reflections of a learner's current stage of linguistic development. They indicate active attempts to internalize and restructure grammatical rules. Therefore, instead of being viewed as failures to learn, errors become markers of progress, revealing that learners are constructing and testing hypotheses about how the target language operates.

The Interlanguage Theory also complements Lado's (1957) Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), which proposes that similarities between the first and second languages facilitate learning, while differences create challenges that often lead to errors. CAH offers a predictive framework for identifying potential sources of difficulty in second language learning by comparing linguistic structures across languages. For example, if the mother tongue lacks articles, as in many Asian languages, learners might frequently omit them in English writing or speech. While CAH effectively predicts which areas may cause errors, Interlanguage Theory goes a step further by explaining why such errors persist even after repeated exposure to correct language use learners' internal linguistic systems continue evolving and stabilizing at different stages. When used together, these theories provide a comprehensive explanation of how first language influence interacts with cognitive development to shape grammatical accuracy, especially in multilingual contexts such as those involving Bugis, Makassarese, and Javanese learners.

Building on these foundational theories, subsequent research in Error Analysis has significantly expanded the understanding of grammatical errors. Rather than viewing errors solely as negative aspects to be corrected, Error Analysis regards them as crucial indicators of learners' developing linguistic competence. As Corder and other linguists have emphasized, errors provide evidence that learners are actively engaging with the rules of the target language and testing hypotheses about its structure. This perspective shifts the focus from error elimination to error interpretation what an error reveals about the learner's cognitive strategies and linguistic progress. Through systematic identification and classification of errors, researchers can gain valuable insight into the stages of language development, the influence of native language structures, and the areas of English grammar that present the greatest challenges for learners.

Error Analysis also emphasizes that grammatical errors vary across individuals and learner groups, influenced by factors such as linguistic background, exposure to English,

learning environment, and gender. Recognizing these variations allows educators to design more targeted instructional strategies. For example, if male and female students exhibit distinct error patterns in tense usage or sentence structure, these findings can inform differentiated pedagogical approaches that address specific learner needs. Similarly, by identifying common errors among students from certain linguistic backgrounds, such as the omission of articles among learners from article-less languages, teachers can create focused lessons that tackle these recurrent difficulties directly.

Informed by these theoretical perspectives, the present study analyzes grammatical errors in EFL writing by categorizing them into the four types commonly identified in Error Analysis: omission, addition, misordering, and misinformation. These categories capture the range of grammatical deviations observed in learner production, from missing linguistic elements to incorrect word order and the substitution of inappropriate forms. Rather than relying on visual representations or experimental frameworks, this study conceptually examines how these error types manifest across learners from different mother tongue backgrounds and investigates whether patterns differ between male and female students. The exploration of similarities and divergences between these groups provides valuable insights into how linguistic background and gender interact to influence grammatical performance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

METHOD
Research Design
The present study employed a qualitative descriptive design, a methodological approach that emphasizes a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of phenomena as they naturally occur. This design was chosen because the primary objective of the research was not to test specific hypotheses or establish causal relationships, but rather to provide a detailed description of the grammatical errors produced by male and female English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students from different mother-tongue backgrounds in their written English. The qualitative descriptive method aligns with the exploratory nature of this study, which focuses on observing, identifying, and interpreting linguistic patterns within authentic learner data. By adopting this design, the researcher was able to examine students' written texts in depth, describing the forms and frequencies of grammatical errors without manipulating variables or imposing external control over the data.

Unlike experimental or quantitative designs that rely on numerical measurement and statistical inference, a qualitative descriptive approach allows for a more nuanced exploration of linguistic behavior as it naturally manifests in learners' writing. The goal was to represent learners' grammatical errors as accurately and transparently as possible, reflecting real-world language use. This approach is especially suitable for studies in applied linguistics and second language acquisition, where understanding the nature, form, and function of language patterns is often more valuable than quantifying their frequency. By focusing on description rather than prediction, the study highlights the contextual and cognitive factors influencing learners' grammatical performance, particularly the role of gender and native language background.

Through the application of this qualitative framework, the researcher observed and analyzed linguistic features in detail, capturing distinct variations in grammatical performance across both gender and mother-tongue groups. This method also facilitated the identification of subtle linguistic tendencies that might have been overlooked in a purely statistical analysis. The use of descriptive analysis made it possible to explore not only what errors occurred, but also how and why they appeared in specific contexts. Such an approach

provides a richer understanding of EFL learners' interlanguage development and the influence of linguistic transfer from their native languages.

In organizing and classifying the data, the study applied Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, a well-established framework for analyzing grammatical errors in second language research. This taxonomy categorizes errors into four main types: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Each category represents a specific type of deviation from standard grammatical rules, offering insight into how learners construct English sentences at different stages of language acquisition. For example, omission errors occur when learners leave out necessary grammatical elements, such as articles or verb endings, while addition errors involve inserting unnecessary words or morphemes. Misformation errors reflect the use of incorrect forms, and misordering errors reveal difficulties with word sequence and sentence structure.

By employing this taxonomy, the researcher was able to systematically describe the patterns and frequencies of grammatical errors produced by learners from various linguistic and gender backgrounds. This categorization allowed for meaningful comparisons between groups, highlighting not only the common types of errors made by all learners but also the specific patterns that may be associated with gender or native language differences. The qualitative descriptive design was therefore the most appropriate choice for this study, as it provided the flexibility and depth required to capture the complexity of learners' grammatical constructions in an authentic and context-sensitive manner. Ultimately, this approach contributed to a comprehensive understanding of how male and female EFL students from diverse mother-tongue backgrounds construct and use English grammar in their written communication.

Participants

The participants of this research were six fifth-semester English Education students at IAIN Bone, consisting of three male and three female students who came from different mother-tongue backgrounds: Bugis, Makassarese, and Javanese. Specifically, the male group included one Bugis student, one Makassarese student, and one Javanese student, while the female group consisted of one Bugis student, one Makassarese student, and one Javanese student.

Participants were selected from a fifth-semester academic writing course because students at this level had already received formal instruction in English grammar and paragraph writing, making them suitable for identifying persistent grammatical errors despite prior learning. The selection also followed a purposive sampling strategy to ensure representation across gender and linguistic backgrounds, allowing the study to examine error patterns comparatively between male and female EFL learners with different mother tongues.

Instruments

The primary research instrument utilized in this study was a researcher-developed writing task specifically designed to elicit grammatical structures that students would naturally produce in an authentic writing context. The task served as the central tool for collecting linguistic data representative of participants' spontaneous written performance in English. In designing the instrument, careful attention was given to creating a writing prompt that would encourage meaningful language production without imposing excessive cognitive or lexical demands. Accordingly, participants were instructed to compose a short essay of approximately 150–200 words on the topic *"The Benefits of Using Cell Phones."*

This particular topic was intentionally selected because it is familiar and relevant to students across diverse gender and mother-tongue backgrounds. Mobile phones are a universal aspect of modern life, and most students possess both the personal experience and vocabulary necessary to discuss their advantages. By choosing a topic that is accessible and

culturally neutral, the study aimed to minimize the influence of content knowledge or topic familiarity on grammatical performance. In other words, differences in the quality of writing could be attributed primarily to the learners' linguistic competence rather than disparities in conceptual understanding or background knowledge. This methodological consideration ensured that the focus remained on grammatical accuracy and structure, which were the central concerns of the study.

The word limit of 150–200 words was strategically determined to balance depth and comparability. It provided each participant with sufficient opportunity to demonstrate a range of grammatical constructions, while maintaining consistency in the amount of data produced. Essays shorter than this range might not reveal enough syntactic variety for meaningful analysis, whereas longer compositions could lead to fatigue or reduced consistency among participants. This uniformity allowed the researcher to systematically identify, categorize, and compare grammatical errors across gender and linguistic groups using the same evaluative framework.

To complement the writing task and strengthen the validity of data interpretation, brief follow-up questions were employed as a supplementary instrument. These questions were used selectively when clarification was needed to accurately interpret the meaning or context of a participant's written text. The purpose of these prompts was not evaluative but interpretive to ensure that the grammatical errors were classified based on the students' intended meaning rather than possible misunderstandings by the researcher. Such clarification helped prevent misinterpretation during the error categorization stage, thereby enhancing the accuracy and reliability of the analysis.

Procedures

The procedures of this study were systematically conducted through several carefully planned stages to ensure consistency and reliability of data collection and analysis. In the first stage, the researcher selected a total of six participants, consisting of three male and three female EFL students. The participants were purposefully chosen to represent three different mother-tongue backgrounds, Bugis, Makassarese, and Javanese, so that variations in grammatical patterns could be observed across both gender and linguistic diversity. Before the writing activity began, all participants were briefed about the task requirements, including the topic, word limit, and time allocation. This preliminary explanation ensured that every participant understood the same set of instructions and that the data collected would be standardized for meaningful comparison across groups.

In the second stage, each participant was asked to compose an original essay of approximately 150–200 words on the topic *"The Benefits of Using Cell Phones."* The writing activity was completed within a single session under controlled conditions. To maintain the authenticity of the grammatical features produced, students were not allowed to use dictionaries, grammar-checking software, or receive peer feedback during the process. This restriction ensured that the resulting texts accurately reflected the learners' independent grammatical competence rather than any external linguistic support.

During the third stage, once the essays were collected, brief individual follow-up questions were administered when necessary. These questions aimed to clarify unclear expressions or ambiguous sentences, allowing the researcher to interpret the meaning accurately without altering the students' original wording.

In the final stage, all essays were analyzed using Dulay et al.'s (1982) surface strategy taxonomy, which categorizes grammatical errors into four types: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. This framework enabled a systematic classification of each participant's grammatical patterns and provided a structured basis for comparative analysis across gender and mother-tongue groups.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed through three systematic and interrelated steps to ensure the accuracy, consistency, and reliability of the findings. In the first stage, the researcher thoroughly read and reviewed each essay several times to identify all sentences containing grammatical errors. Every line was examined in detail to detect even subtle deviations from standard English grammar. This close reading process aimed to minimize oversight and ensure that each grammatical error, whether related to word form, structure, or syntax, was accurately identified.

The second stage involved categorizing all detected errors according to Dulay et al.'s (1982) surface strategy taxonomy, which provides a widely recognized framework for analyzing grammatical errors. The taxonomy divides errors into four main types: *omission*, *addition*, *misformation*, and *misordering*. When a single sentence contained multiple errors, each one was independently identified and coded to preserve analytical precision.

In the third stage, the researcher calculated the total frequency of each error type for all participants. These frequency counts were then compared across gender and mother-tongue groups to determine dominant patterns and recurring tendencies. The distribution of errors served as the primary basis for interpreting how linguistic background and gender influenced grammatical accuracy in students' written English, providing the data foundation for answering the research questions.

FINDINGS

Types of grammatical errors made by male and female EFL students across different mother tongues in writing

The first thing is omission is the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed. The researcher found out some students' errors in omission. As follows, the result of one student's writing: Bugisnese student (female): (1) *"Cell phones are have a lot of benefits."* (Omission of the word "that" after "are" is incorrect; "are" is unnecessary); (2) *"These days everyone have and using phone."* (Omission of the article "a" before "phone" and incorrect verb forms); (3) *"from kids and eldery to especially in a city."* (Omission of the articles "the" before "elderly" and "especially"); (4) *"we can use it for calls, watch, reading news."* (Omission of the correct gerund form "watching"); (5) *"searching informations."* (Incorrect plural form of "information")

The second thing is addition is the presence of an item that must not appear in a well-formed utterance. As follows, the result of one student's writing: AFRR: Female: (1) *"They didn't didn't book again."* (Repetition of "didn't"); (2) *"Visit to another country."* (Unnecessary preposition "to").

The third thing is misformation errors are characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. As follows, the result of one student's writing: AFRR: Female: (1) *"phones is important thing"* - Subject-verb agreement error. Correction: "phones are important things." (2) *"internet so very useful"* - Incorrect sentence structure. Correction: "the internet is very useful." (3) *"politic, social, economic"* - Errors in word form. Correction: "politics, social, economics." (4) *"student"* - Incorrect singular form used instead of plural. Correction: "students." (5) *"they didn't didn't book again or to book to write information from teacher"* - Sentence structure and word choice errors. Correction: "They don't need to use books anymore to write down information from teachers." (6) *"phone so very useful"* - *Incorrect sentence structure. Correction: "phones are very useful."* (7) *"funny video from tik tok, or youtube, and instagram"* - Capitalization errors for proper nouns. Correction: "funny videos from TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram."

The last point is misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. AFRR: Female: (1) *"phones is important thing"*- should be corrected to: "phones are important things." (2) *"many on a lot of school appliance study with phone"*- should be corrected to: "many schools use phones for studying." (3) *"Phone use phone also help people to find new friend through social media from another country through social media"*- should be corrected to: "Phones also help people find new friends from other countries through social media."

After collecting the data, the researcher analysed the students' written tests one by one to find out grammatical errors made by males and females across different mother tongues and created a table of students' writing errors. As follows, the result of the analysis in Table 1:

Table 1. Types of errors in writing

Categories	Omission	Addition	Mis-formation	Mis-ordering
Makassarese student (female)	4	2	7	3
Makassarese student (male)	3	2	4	2
Bugis student (female)	5	2	5	2
Bugis student (male)	6	2	5	4
Javanese student (female)	5	1	6	2
Javanese student (male)	5	2	3	1
Total	28	11	30	14

Based on the table above, the data indicated that Bugis male students produced the highest number of omission errors, suggesting greater difficulty in maintaining grammatical completeness. Among female participants, Bugis and Javanese students also showed higher frequencies of omission, possibly due to similar linguistic transfer effects from their mother tongues. In contrast, Makassarese male and female students made the lowest omission errors, reflecting comparatively stronger grammatical control.

Grammatical errors made by males in writing

Table 2. Errors in writing made by males

Categories	Makassarese (Male)	Bugis (Male)	Javanese (Male)
Omission	3	6	5
Addition	2	2	2
Mis-Formation	4	5	3
Mis-Ordering	2	4	1

Based on the table above, the writing errors of male students (Makassarese, Bugis, and Javanese), namely Makassarese student (male) had 3 errors in the Omission section, 2 Additions, 4 Mis-formations, and 2 Mis-orderings, Bugis student (male) had 6 errors in the Omission section, 2 Additions, 5 Mis-formation, and 4 Mis-ordering, and Javanese student (male) had 5 errors in the Omission section, 2 Additions. Mis-formation as many as 3, and Mis-ordering as many as 1.

Grammatical errors made by females in writing

Table 3. Errors in writing made by females

Categories	Makassarese (Female)	Bugis (Female)	Javanese (Female)
Omission	4	5	5
Addition	2	2	1
Mis-Formation	7	5	6
Mis-Ordering	3	2	2

Based on the table above, writing errors from female students (Makassarese, Bugis and Javanese), namely Makassarese (female) student had 4 errors in the Omission section, 2 Additions, 7 Mis-formations, and 3 Mis-ordering, Bugis student (female) had 5 errors in the Omission section, 2 Additions, 5 Mis-formations and 2 Mis-orderings, and Javanese student (female) in the Omission section had 5 errors, 1 Addition, 6 Mis-formations, and Mis-ordering as many as 2.

The researcher found the percentage results of four types of errors made by the students. The result percentages of errors in students' writing are:

Table 4. Percentage of Errors

Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage
Omission	28	32,94%
Addition	11	12,94%
Mis-formation	30	35,29%
Mis-ordering	14	16,47%

The results indicated that misformation errors were the most frequent, with a total of 30 instances (35.29%). This suggests that many students struggled to apply correct grammatical forms, such as using inappropriate verb tenses or incorrect word structures. The second most common error type was omission, accounting for 28 cases (32.94%), showing that learners often left out necessary grammatical elements like articles, auxiliary verbs, or plural markers. Misordering errors occurred 14 times (16.47%), reflecting occasional confusion in sentence structure or word sequence. Lastly, addition errors were the least frequent, appearing 11 times (12.94%), indicating that unnecessary elements were sometimes inserted into sentences.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that grammatical errors in English writing produced by male and female EFL students vary across mother-tongue backgrounds, indicating that linguistic background plays an influential role in shaping learners' grammatical accuracy. This aligns with Lado's (1957) Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, which posits that the greater the structural difference between L1 and L2, the more errors are expected to occur. Despite exposure to English writing instruction, the learners in this study still demonstrated error patterns that reflect the continuing influence of their interlanguage system (Selinker & Lamendella, 1978).

For the Makassarese group, the female student produced more errors across three categories, omission, misformation, and misordering, compared to the male student. A possible explanation is that Makassarese sentence structure differs from English in terms of article usage and verb formation, which likely contributed to omission and misformation errors. Although previous studies often associate greater grammatical accuracy with female students (Huang, 2023), the current finding suggests that gender does not always correspond linearly with grammatical performance; the dominance of the mother tongue may override gender tendencies when interference is strong. This supports Error Analysis literature, which emphasizes that grammatical mistakes reflect developing linguistic hypotheses rather than a lack of ability.

In contrast, the Bugis group revealed that the male student produced more omission and misordering errors compared to the female student. This is consistent with Asih (2023), who found that male learners tend to make more errors than females due to greater risk-taking, carelessness, and reliance on mental translation. Because Bugis language does not consistently mark tense, plurality, or verb inflection, the Bugis male student often omitted

auxiliary verbs and past-tense markers. The similar frequency of addition and misformation errors between both students suggests that interference from the Bugis language structure affects both genders in comparable ways. This supports Interlanguage Theory, indicating that learners generate provisional rules influenced by L1, regardless of gender, when the target structure is unfamiliar.

For the Javanese group, a mixed pattern emerged: both students produced comparable omission errors, but the female student demonstrated higher misformation and misordering errors. Javanese allows flexible word order in informal registers, which may explain why the female student struggled more with subject–verb inversion and incorrect verb forms. Although earlier studies suggest that females generally approach grammar more cautiously (Huang, 2023), the present findings show that grammatical accuracy depends not only on gender-related performance tendencies but also on the extent to which L1 structures differ from English. Thus, patterns of grammatical errors are shaped by the intersection of mother-tongue grammatical features and individual learner strategies rather than gender alone.

Taken together, these findings support the argument that mother tongue interference is the strongest contributor to grammatical error patterns, while gender may influence, but does not determine, grammatical performance. The results strengthen the theoretical stance that errors are not evidence of failure, as suggested by Behaviorism, but rather indicators of learners actively constructing their interlanguage (Selinker & Lamendella, 1978). Moreover, similar to the observations of Damaiyanti (2021) and Sermsook et al. (2017), this study demonstrates that grammatical errors can reflect developmental challenges in EFL writing and highlight areas where instructional support is needed.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the grammatical errors committed by male and female EFL students across different mother-tongue backgrounds to identify how linguistic and gender factors shape accuracy in English writing. The findings revealed that mother tongue exerts the strongest influence on learners' error patterns, as seen in the varying distribution of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering errors across the Makassarese, Bugis, and Javanese groups, while gender acted only as a secondary factor that does not consistently predict grammatical performance. These results underscore the developmental nature of interlanguage and affirm that grammatical errors reflect learners' ongoing hypothesis-testing rather than inability, thereby highlighting the importance of incorporating students' linguistic backgrounds into pedagogical decision-making. Although the study provides meaningful insights into the interplay of L1 and gender in shaping grammatical accuracy, its scope is limited to a small sample from three ethnic groups and to a single writing task, which constrains the generalizability of the results. Future research may expand the number of participants, include additional mother-tongue backgrounds, or employ longitudinal and mixed-method designs to capture the dynamic progression of learners' grammatical development and to further explore how instructional interventions may reduce error tendencies across diverse linguistic profiles.

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