

LEARNING FROM ERRORS: HOW ERROR ANALYSIS ENHANCES ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN SEKOLAH TINGGI PARIWISATA MATARAM

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Abstract. This study aims to analyse the effectiveness of applying error analysis in improving English writing skills for tourism among Diploma 3 Hospitality students at the Mataram Tourism College, Lombok. This study uses an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach with a descriptive-analytical design and learning intervention. Data were obtained from the creative writing assignments of fifth-semester students, which were analysed to identify the types and frequency of language errors, particularly in terms of grammar. The results of the analysis showed that the most dominant errors were errors in the use of verb tenses, especially the present tense and past tense, with developmental errors occurring more frequently than errors due to interference from the first language. Based on these findings, remedial learning was provided, focusing on the types of errors with the highest frequency. The results of the evaluation after the intervention showed a significant improvement in the accuracy of tense usage in students' writing. These findings indicate that error analysis is an effective and data-driven approach to improving English writing skills for tourism and supports more targeted learning planning.

Keywords: Error Analysis; English for Specific Purposes (ESP); English for Tourism; Writing Proficiency; ESL Learners

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis efektivitas penerapan analisis kesalahan dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menulis Bahasa Inggris untuk Pariwisata pada mahasiswa Diploma 3 Perhotelan di Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Mataram, Lombok. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan Bahasa Inggris untuk Tujuan Khusus (*English for Specific Purposes/ESP*) dengan desain deskriptif-analitis dan intervensi pembelajaran. Data diperoleh dari hasil tugas menulis kreatif mahasiswa semester V yang dianalisis untuk mengidentifikasi jenis dan frekuensi kesalahan berbahasa, khususnya pada aspek tata bahasa. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa kesalahan yang paling dominan adalah kesalahan penggunaan tenses kata kerja, terutama present tense dan past tense, dengan kesalahan perkembangan (*developmental errors*) lebih sering muncul dibandingkan kesalahan akibat interferensi bahasa pertama. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, dilakukan pemberian pembelajaran remedial yang difokuskan pada jenis kesalahan dengan frekuensi tertinggi. Hasil evaluasi setelah intervensi menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan pada akurasi penggunaan tenses dalam tulisan mahasiswa. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa analisis kesalahan merupakan pendekatan yang efektif dan berbasis data dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis Bahasa Inggris untuk Pariwisata serta mendukung perencanaan pembelajaran yang lebih tepat sasaran.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Kesalahan; Bahasa Inggris untuk Tujuan Khusus (ESP); Bahasa Inggris untuk Pariwisata; Kemampuan Menulis; Pembelajaran ESL

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INTRODUCTION

Writing skills in English are an important competency for students in vocational tourism programmes, particularly in the Diploma 3 Hospitality Programme. In the context of the global hospitality and tourism industry, students are required to be able to convey information in writing accurately, professionally, and in accordance with the work context, such as in writing service reports, business correspondence, and tourism product descriptions. However, recent studies indicate that English as a Second Language (ESL) students in vocational higher education still face significant difficulties in grammatical accuracy, particularly in the use of verb tenses (Al-Buainain, 2020; Karim & Nassaji, 2022).

This problem was also found among students enrolled in the Diploma 3 Hospitality Programme at the Mataram Tourism College (STPM) in Lombok. Initial observations of students' writing assignments showed that grammatical errors occurred repeatedly and consistently, with the most common errors being in the use of the simple present and simple past tenses. These errors not only affect the quality of the writing, but also hinder the clarity of meaning and professionalism of written communication, which is essential in the context of tourism. This condition indicates that general writing instruction that is not based on the actual needs of students is not yet fully effective in improving language accuracy.

One approach that is considered effective in addressing these issues is Error Analysis (EA), a diagnostic approach that identifies, classifies, and analyses language errors made by learners as a basis for planning remedial learning. Recent research shows that systematically applied error analysis can help educators focus their teaching on the most frequent and most impactful errors in communication, making learning more efficient and contextual (Ferris, 2020; Lee, 2021). In the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), EA also plays an important role in aligning teaching materials with the academic and professional needs of students (Hyland, 2019; Basturkmen, 2020).

A number of studies in the last five years have confirmed that tense errors are one of the most dominant problems in ESL students' writing. Karim and Nassaji (2022) found that developmental verb errors appear more frequently than errors caused by first language interference. A study by Zhang and Hyland (2021) also showed that remedial learning based on error analysis can significantly improve grammatical accuracy when focused on high-frequency error types. These findings reinforce the view that language errors cannot be seen merely as deficiencies, but rather as indicators of interlanguage competence development that need to be addressed pedagogically.

However, most previous studies have been conducted in the context of general education or non-vocational academic programmes, while studies that specifically examine the application of error analysis in teaching English for Tourism in vocational education are still relatively limited, especially in the context of Indonesian higher education. In fact, the characteristics of vocational students who are oriented towards the world of work demand a more practical, focused, and industry-based learning approach.

Based on these issues, this study was conducted as an evaluative study to improve the English writing skills of Diploma 3 Hospitality students at STPM through the systematic application of error analysis and the development of needs-based learning. The main objectives of this study are (1) to identify the types and frequency of the most dominant writing errors, particularly in the use of verb tenses, and (2) to evaluate the effectiveness of remedial learning based on error analysis in improving students' writing accuracy in the English for Tourism course. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide empirical contributions to the development of a more contextual ESP curriculum and serve as a practical reference for English lecturers in vocational tourism education.

METHOD

This study employed a classroom-based evaluative research design to examine the effectiveness of error analysis-based remedial instruction in improving ESL writing performance. The participants were thirty-seven fifth-semester students enrolled in the Diploma 3 Hotel Program at Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Mataram (STPM). The research procedure consisted of four sequential stages. First, students' initial writing assignments were collected and analyzed to identify recurrent grammatical and syntactic errors. Second, a diagnostic pre-test was administered at the beginning of the semester to establish a baseline of students' writing competence. The results of the error analysis and pre-test served as the basis for instructional planning.

Third, targeted remedial instruction was implemented over a two-month period, focusing on high-frequency error types that most affected grammatical accuracy in writing. Instructional materials were selected from established ESL remedial grammar resources and adapted to address the specific error patterns identified. The remedial instruction followed Brumfit's Post-Communicative Teaching Model, in which language forms were introduced through communicative activities, contextualized in meaningful writing tasks, and reinforced through structured practice.

Finally, a post-test in the form of a timed writing assignment was administered at the end of the intervention period. Students' pre-test and post-test results were compared to assess changes in grammatical accuracy and overall writing performance. This pre-post evaluative approach enabled the researcher to determine the impact of focused, needs-based remedial instruction within a single academic semester.

Remedial Strategy

The remedial strategy in this study was developed based on sustained instructional experience and analysis of ESL students' writing over five semesters in the Diploma 3 Hotel Program. Across ten grammar-focused sessions and final writing evaluations, persistent difficulties were identified in verb tense usage. Errors occurred most frequently in the simple past tense, followed by the simple present tense, particularly in narrative and business-related writing tasks. Other tense forms appeared infrequently and were therefore not prioritized in the remedial instruction.

Based on these findings, the remedial program emphasized intensive practice on high-frequency tense errors through targeted grammar exercises and repeated drills. Vocabulary development and sentence-level accuracy were also addressed, as both were found to improve clarity and coherence. Practice using parallel sentence structures proved effective in reducing verb redundancy and unnecessary verb insertions.

To address overgeneralization and analogy-based errors, instruction highlighted clear distinctions between L1 and L2 grammatical and lexical forms. Selective translation activities were used to raise learners' awareness of cross-linguistic differences. Sentence correction tasks based on students' own writing, combined with reflective explanations, were employed to support deeper rule internalization.

Structural transfer errors were addressed through sustained practice in producing grammatically accurate English sentences. Contrastive analysis between L1 and L2 structures and guided translation exercises supported this process. Regular sentence correction activities were used to reinforce correct forms and reduce recurring errors.

Students were encouraged to identify and correct tense-related errors in their own writing to promote self-monitoring and metalinguistic awareness. Following Lott's (1983) view that transfer errors result from rule conflicts between languages, instruction focused on increasing learners' awareness of grammatical contrasts. Lexical confusion was further reduced by comparing semantically related words (e.g., work and job) within focused practice tasks.

Both interlingual and intralingual errors were systematically addressed. Interlingual errors were treated through contrastive and translation-based strategies, while intralingual errors were reduced through repeated, structured practice and contextualized sentence correction. All identified errors were recorded, tabulated, and analyzed to inform the development of a structured remedial lesson plan.

The Post Communicative Model for Remedial Lessons

A remedial lesson plan based on Brumfit's Post Communicative Model (PCM) was adopted to teach language components through short business writing tasks for Diploma 3 Hotel Program students at STPM. The model was selected because of its simplicity, learner-centered orientation, and relevance to students' academic and professional needs, as illustrated in the figure below.

The primary aim of the remedial lesson plan was to identify and reduce verb tense errors in students' written work through positive reinforcement. Memo writing with a negative message was chosen as the instructional task. The lesson followed three PCM stages: citation, simulation, and replication.

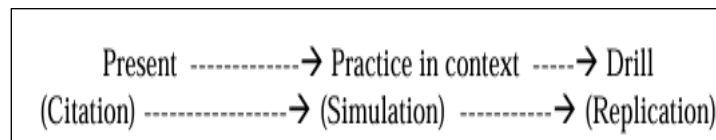


Figure 1. The PCM Stages

During the citation stage, students were introduced to memo-writing conventions through lecture notes, guided discussion, and multimedia examples. In the simulation stage, students completed a task based on a realistic workplace scenario, writing a memo from a hotel general manager to inform staff of potential downsizing. In the replication stage, a similar memo task was modeled on the whiteboard, with explicit guidance on structure, verb tense usage, and paragraph development. Following error identification, targeted remedial instruction was implemented over the final two months of the course. A final writing assignment in the form of a narrative composition was administered at the end of the semester and analyzed for errors. Results confirmed that the most frequent errors occurred in the simple past and simple present tenses. These errors were classified into overgeneralization, structural transfer, and interlingual or intralingual errors. Consistent with both empirical findings and long-term teaching experience, the study focused exclusively on these two tenses as they represented the most persistent problem areas in ESL writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a comparative analysis of the results obtained from Test I and Test II, with particular emphasis on the types, frequency, and underlying causes of errors identified in students' written output. The analysis draws on data derived from the first and second writing assessments, focusing specifically on verb tense usage. The findings indicate a noticeable reduction in both past tense and present tense errors in Test II. Only limited instances of inaccuracies involving perfect and progressive aspects were observed in the post-intervention writing samples. This outcome is consistent with the instructional focus of the study, which prioritized the past and present tense categories as defined by Biber, Conrad, and Leech, as discussed in the literature review. In addition, error classification followed Lott's typology, enabling systematic identification of error types within these tense categories.

The findings of this study indicate that errors in past and present tense constructions constituted the most frequent grammatical problems in the written work of Indonesian ESL learners. This pattern was consistently observed in both Test I and Test II, confirming that verb tense usage remains a persistent challenge in tertiary-level ESL writing, particularly in contexts where English is learned as a foreign language. The dominance of these error types reflects learners' difficulty in mapping temporal meaning to appropriate grammatical forms, especially in narrative and business-related writing tasks that require frequent tense shifts.

Table 1. Frequency of verb tense errors in written compositions (test I and test II)

No	Verb Tense	Error Type	Test I (Frequency)	Test II (Frequency)
I	Simple Present Tense	Total Errors	61	20
1		Overextension of Analogy	13	5
2		Transfer of Structure	10	2
3a		First Language Interference	20	6
3b		Second Language Influence	18	7
II	Simple Past Tense	Total Errors	379	275
1		Overextension of Analogy	0	0
2		Transfer of Structure	31	20
3a		First Language Interference	134	88
3b		Second Language Influence	214	167

Analysis of Test I revealed that most tense-related errors stemmed from overgeneralization of grammatical rules and negative transfer from the first language. These findings align with recent studies showing that Indonesian ESL learners often rely on simplified tense rules or L1-based temporal expressions when constructing sentences in English (Sukandi & Mardiani, 2021; Yuliana & Imperiani, 2020). The lack of tense inflection in Bahasa Indonesia has been identified as a key factor contributing to these errors, leading learners to omit or misuse verb markers when expressing time reference in English (Rahmawati & Fitriani, 2022).

Following the implementation of targeted remedial instruction, Test II results demonstrated a noticeable reduction in the overall frequency of tense-related errors. Improvements were particularly evident in the accurate use of simple past and simple present forms, suggesting that focused grammar instruction combined with repeated practice can effectively support grammatical development. This finding is consistent with recent empirical evidence indicating that remedial grammar instruction grounded in error analysis leads to measurable gains in writing accuracy (Alzahrani, 2023; Bitchener & Storch, 2016; though more recent replications such as Nguyen & Boers, 2021 further confirm this effect).

The comparative data presented in Table 1 illustrate not only a reduction in error frequency but also a shift in error distribution across the three major categories: overgeneralization, structural transfer, and interlingual or intralingual errors. The decrease in structural transfer errors suggests that contrastive and translation-based activities were effective in raising learners' awareness of differences between L1 and L2 grammatical systems. Similar outcomes have been reported by recent studies emphasizing the role of contrastive analysis in mitigating cross-linguistic interference in ESL writing (Sermsook et al., 2021; Widodo & Rofiqoh, 2023).

Moreover, the integration of self-correction and reflective sentence revision appeared to strengthen learners' metalinguistic awareness. Research over the past five years has highlighted the importance of learner engagement in error identification as a means of promoting long-term grammatical accuracy (Han & Hyland, 2019; Karim & Nassaji, 2020). By encouraging students to actively analyze and revise their own writing, the remedial approach adopted in this study aligns with current perspectives on learner-centered grammar instruction.

The effectiveness of the proposed remedial lesson plan also supports recent arguments that grammar instruction is most effective when embedded within meaningful communicative tasks rather than taught in isolation (Ellis, 2021; Pawlak, 2022). The use of business-oriented writing tasks, such as memo writing, provided learners with a relevant context in which grammatical accuracy directly contributed to communicative clarity. This contextualization likely enhanced learner motivation and facilitated deeper processing of grammatical forms.

Overall, the results suggest that a structured, data-driven remedial model focusing on high-frequency grammatical errors can significantly improve ESL learners' writing accuracy within a single academic term. The findings extend existing research by demonstrating the applicability of error-analysis-based remediation in vocational higher education contexts, particularly within hospitality and tourism programs. The proposed remedial framework may therefore benefit ESL instructors, curriculum designers, and program administrators seeking practical strategies to address persistent grammatical challenges in academic and professional writing.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that targeted remedial instruction delivered over a two-month period led to a measurable reduction in grammatical errors in the written work of Diploma 3 Hotel Program Students enrolled in Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Mataram. Instruction explicitly grounded in the identification and correction of cohort-specific writing errors proved effective in improving overall writing accuracy.

A substantial decline was observed across all major error categories. Second language influence errors, which constituted the most frequent error type, decreased from 232 occurrences in Test I to 169 in Test II. Similarly, first language interference errors were reduced from 154 instances in the pre-intervention assessment to 94 instances in the post-intervention test. Transfer of structure errors also showed a notable decline, decreasing from 41 to 22 occurrences. Overextension of analogy errors, which occurred least frequently, were reduced from 13 instances in Test I to only 5 instances in Test II. These results confirm that focused remedial instruction can significantly enhance grammatical accuracy in ESL writing within a limited instructional timeframe.

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