

## AN ANALYSIS OF ARTICLE ERRORS IN STUDENTS' WRITING

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### Abstract

Writing is not an easy skill for students' especially the use of article. It being problematic to use definite and indefinite article. Finding and elaborating the article error in students' writing, this study is projected to examine the problems in syntactical error. While, to examine the problems in article error, the theories of the problems in article error resulted from the Omission of "the", "the" used instead of Ø (zero), "a" used instead of "the" and "a" instead of Ø (zero), omission of a before a singular noun define by an adjective proposed by Richards (1971) are applied. Then, qualitative method is used to analyze the data. The results of this study show that there are fifteen Omission of "the", six "The" used instead of Ø/addition and two "a" instead of "the"/misuse found in the students' writing. The implication of this study is that the teachers and the lecturers of academic writing will have barometer to teach the students to produce good, and readable written text to academic writing. Besides, they will also have describing in identifying the problems occurring in the article error of students' academic writing.

**Key words:** Article Error, Syntactical Error, Writing.

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### INTRODUCTION

English as an international language has been become a regular subject for Indonesian students' to take in the school, since this subject had taught from elementary school until college with its role as Indonesian foreign language (Wahyudin, 2015). However, there are still many students' cannot write and speak English well. Furthermore, English subject becomes a big problem when it comes to practice through four skills, those are Listening (Kuswoyo & Wahyudin, 2017), (SARI, 2013), (Puspita, 2021), (Agustin & Ayu, 2021), (Berlinda, 2015), Speaking (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020b), (Z. F. Pratiwi & Ayu, 2020), (Oktaviani, 2017), (Kardiansyah & Qodriani, 2018), (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020a), Reading (Pustika & Wiedarti, 2019), (Sasalia & Sari, 2020), (Septiyana & Aminatun, 2021), (Pustika, 2018), (D. I. Pratiwi et al., 2020), and Writing (Gulö & Rahmawelly, 2019), (Putri & Aminatun, 2021), (Wahyudin, 2018), (Aminatun et al., 2019), (Kuswoyo & Susardi, 2016). Writing and Speaking have the same role in language which are stated as active skill, meanwhile listening and reading are as passive skill. Writing activity is not an easy task since it is not only to write but also to produce language systematically in order to make the reader understand the content or message (Wahyudin & Sari, 2018), (Ayu &

Zuraida, 2020), (Handayani & Aminatun, 2020), (Suprayogi Suprayogi & Novanti, 2021), (Afrianto, 2017).

Writing is interpreted as the production of written form of language and it should comprehend through reading in order to communicate (Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020). From writing, the researchers can communicate what they think or feel about something and express their opinion on their way. Writing is important skill that usually used in life to transfer the understanding between one to another, it can be found in many aspect in life such as articles, news (Fadilah & Kuswoyo, 2021), (Wahyudin, 2016), (S Suprayogi & Pranoto, 2020), invitation, announcement, report (Puspita, n.d.), etc. In order to make the reader understand what the researchers means. In learning English, they should understand how to write many kinds of writing such as narration, report, argumentation (Unggul & Gulö, 2017), (Sari, 2017), and description. Every types of writing has their organization, function, and also rule to create good and proper text. Although the types of writing had learned in their school before, making a sentence, create a story, answer the question based on what they read and paraphrase the text with their own language. Many of them are not really mastered in produce writing form by themselves.

Conducting error analysis is one of the best ways to describe and explain the errors made by ESL (English as a second language) / EFL (English as a foreign language) learners. This kind of analysis can show the sources of the errors and also the frequent of the error occur. English articles are difficult for EFL/ESL learners, particularly for those whose native languages do not have articles in the daily language. It means that for them, English is so hard to learn especially for EFL. The abstractness of article concept being the main problem of students' error. Articles is not the obstacle to understanding a sentence, for oral communication, they are generally unstressed and almost unheard. Meanwhile in writing it being the most reader focusing on. But the fact, that is the most frequent error in English that done among students', that is the most significance that university students' must have some control of their language usage.

It was very difficult to acquire not only for ESL learners but also certainly for EFL learners in learning English. In other words, English articles system is one of the most difficult parts of English grammar for the EFL/ESL learners. It is so hard to catch the knowledge about the rules of articles. This study can reveal the article error that learner made. For example:

^Book on ^table (the article "the" is omitted)

We can see from the omission “*the*” before “*book*” and “*table*”. In the first language (Bahasa Indonesia) learners there is no article in its pattern of sentence “*buku ada diatas meja*”. Article error being the crucial problem that students’ face, especially for students’ that take English literature as their major of study. Hopefully this research could help the students’ to understand related to English article.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Error Analysis**

Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focusing on the errors that learners make (Puspita, 2019). It consists of comparison between the errors made in the source language and the target language. Pit Corder as the “father” of error analysis changed the previous linguist idea that error should be solved. Errors are important for learners themselves. Errors are important, because making error can be a material the learner in order to learn. The researchers regards the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. It is a way the learner has, of testing his hyporesearch about the nature of the languages he is learning. Based on the explanation of corder, it implies that the hyporesearch testing is so important in the learning process, students must be allowed to use such a device to discover by themselves the right form of the sentences. Mistakes and error is one of the most inhibiting factors that appear in the class of English as a foreign language. They make errors as a sign that the students have not yet mastered the rules of the language that they have learned. Learning language as any other human learning, it involves making mistakes and errors. The learners trying to acquire something by making mistakes and errors. Because from the error we know the correct if we know the mistakes/error. The same as a child that learns his native language makes frequently mistake with his linguistic knowledge. Then gradually he can manages to produce acceptable language then reduce the error.

In other hand an error is different from mistake, it is crucial to differentiate both of them. “an error is typically produced by people who do not yet fully command some institution a listed language system”. Errors are breaking the role, due to lack of competences such as knowledge of the language, which may be unconcious. That is the cause they do the error in the language. While, a learner makes a mistake when they write or speak because of lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspects of performance. Mistakes can be

self corrected when they aware on the language. In other words, a mistake is a small failed that the learner actually can be corrected by themselves after the language is being produced. Based on those definitions, the researchers can also conclude that a mistake is just a small failure that the learner forgets which the right forms. Meanwhile, an error is a deviation made by the learner because he/she does not know the rule and will make it frequently.

### **Syntax**

In linguistics, syntax is the set of rules, principles, and processes that govern the structure of sentences in a given language, specifically word order. The term syntax is also used to refer to the study of such principles and processes. In mathematics, it refers to the rules governing the behavior of mathematical systems, such as formal languages used in logic. Syntax is the science how to structuralize the sentence based on the rules and processed. Language can be understandable when the role of syntax applied appropriately. Syntax is simply the way words are organized structurally. This can be either grammatically correct or incorrect, it is still syntax. Sometimes, in a grammatical analysis, linguists might refer to an ‘underlying syntax’, which would be a normalized structure of the words in a sentence, and not necessarily the actual structure used.

Meanwhile grammar refers to the sets of rules that are used regarding how syntax should be structured. This is typically divided into proscriptive grammar (dictating/enforcing arbitrary rules for how to ‘correctly’ organize a sentence) or descriptive grammar (an analysis of how speakers actually structure the language). Some examples of grammar would be the rule “the verb should always follow the subject”, or ” the ‘to’ in an infinitive verb construction must always be followed immediately by the verb”. Grammar might also have a relatively larger scope, since it would include the rules for any lexical variations (differences in spelling of the same base word), as well as rules for capitalization, punctuation, etc. Syntax usually involves only the structure of various types of words in relation to one another.

### **Article**

Article is part of grammar. In English there are three articles *a*, *an* and *the*. There are three English articles: *a*, *an*, and *the*. Most article usage just around these two kinds, the researchers often faces the difficulties to explain why they use and do not use an article.

Syntactically, the articles perform the function in the language, which is that of conferring a status of either definiteness/indefiniteness to the noun they precede. The use or non-use of an article depends on the type of noun that is the head of a noun phrase; which article – definite, indefinite or zero - can be used is, in turn, determined by reference. Therefore, articles cannot be studied in isolation and the class noun is also treated to the extent that it is relevant to the purpose of the study. *a/an* and *the* have certain condition to be used:

- a. Article ‘*a/an*’ is used when the speaker is not thinking of one particular thing, the speaker usually used it when it is the first time the speaker talk about it.

For example: he sat on *a* chair (perhaps one of many chairs in the room)

- b. Article ‘*the*’ is used when the speaker mentioning of one particular thing, the speaker has already know this ‘thing’ clearly.

For example: he sat on the chair nearest the door (a particular chair).

## **METHOD**

Generally, research design is divided into two they are qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research deals with the true environment/situation in the society about certain phenomenon. It means that qualitative research is based on human perception and understanding. To explain the idea of this research, researchers applies descriptive qualitative method. The aim of qualitative research is to help the researchers to understand the reason why nowadays society still produces an article error. The researchers uses this method to describe the types of article error. Data are the information that used to be analyzed and to answer the problem formulation. Data can be numbers, images, words, figures, facts or ideas. Data are used to develop concepts and theories that help the researchers to understand the social world.” In this research, the data of the analysis is all the article errors in the quiz of students’ from the class of writing five. Data source is one of the most important aspect of every research to be analyzed and interpreted to get information. The data source of this research is the first quiz of students’ academic writing class. This quiz has done in the beginning of November 2016 in a class and approximately there are 40 students’. The topic of this quiz is related with the abstract of scientific paper made by students’ of academic writing class.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Omission of Article “the”**

The word "the" is one of the most common words in English. It is the only definite article. Definiteness is a measure of uniqueness within the minds or whoever is speaking and whoever is listening, even in the case of writing and reading. Nouns in English are preceded by the definite article when the speaker believes that the listener already knows what he or she is referring to. In this case, the researchers are students', who did not use the definite article in front of a noun where they believe that it can make the readers know exactly what their writing is referring to. The article *the* used for particular thing speakers referring to.

### Before Unique Nouns

Datum	Before unique nouns	Frequency
1	"..taken from ^^ Jakarta Post."	3
2	"..the text for analyzed already posted in ^^ Jakarta Post."	1
3	"..news item taken from ^^ Jakarta Post."	2

Those sentences above indicates as the types of article error of omission definite article "the" before unique noun. The students' who write those (part of) sentences are omitting definite article *the* before *Jakarta Post*. Unique in so many cases means the one and only in the universe or as sole, in this phrase, unique noun means that the noun is the only one or considered as sole. As same as The Jakarta Post, this is the one and only newspaper that use English language in Indonesia. Unique noun here is The Jakarta Post. Other examples of unique nouns are *the sun*, *the moon*, *the Borobudur* temple, and many others, but it is not for all countries (can be used only for certain country). Based on the researchers's datum, the context of this statement is considered as the student (the researchers of this datum) is taking a data in the form of text from The Jakarta Post newspaper. From the sentence "...taken from ^^ Jakarta Post." it should be "...taken from The Jakarta Post."

The datum number 1 to 3 above is included in the types of omission definite article "the". All of them omitting definite article *the* before the unique noun. Unique noun means the noun is only the one in the world and universe, for example the moon, the President of Indonesia 2007-2012. According to the data, the unique noun is The Jakarta Post, since The Jakarta Post is the only newspaper that published in Indonesia that uses English language. The using of article *the* in this case, means the researchers believes that the reader know about what is the noun try to assists. In addition, the researchers finds out that

those data are quite wrong not only because based on the theory from Richard, but also since the researchers find the fact that originally, the headline from the newspaper is using article *the* in the “The Jakarta Post”. Moreover, the context from those 4 data is quite similar. All of the students’ where in this case are also the researchers of each datum, is try to get the datum in the form of text in The Jakarta Post newspaper.

### “The” used Instead of Ø (Addition)

Also known as zero article, the zero article is the absence of an article. In language having a definite article, the lack of an article specifically indicates that the noun is indefinite. In this case, the zero article rather than the indefinite is used with plurals and mass nouns. Zero article or also called zero determiner, is generally used to express non-specificity.

### Before Abstract Noun

An abstract noun is a type of noun that refers to something with which a person cannot physically interact. A noun is a person, place or even a thing, however, in many cases, the "thing" itself might be an intangible concept - which means it is an abstract means to exist apart from concrete existence. A noun that is abstract is an aspect, concept, idea, experience, state of being, trait, quality, feeling or other entity that cannot be experienced with the five senses.

Datum	Before abstract noun	
12	“the news was constructed and experiential <b>the</b> meaning of the author”	1
13	“The interpretation of <b>the</b> transitivity system..”	1

The sentence above classified as the types of definite article “the” used instead of Ø (zero) before abstract noun. In the last sentence *the meaning of the author*, the word *meaning* of the author is an abstract noun. The sentence in the datum 12 is, “the news was constructed and experiential **the** meaning of the author” it should be “the news was constructed and experiential meaning of the author”.

As seen in the sentence previously in the table, the datum 13, it indicates as the types of article error adding article *the* before noun in the sentence meanwhile it should be Ø (zero) before an abstract noun. The sentence “The interpretation of **the** transitivity system..” it should be changed into “The interpretation of transitivity system..” The abstract noun in

that sentence is *transitivity system*. The datum 18 and datum 19 show an unnecessary addition of the definite article *the*. This omission classify in types of “the” used instead of Ø (zero) before an abstract noun, because the students’ adding *the* before a noun. Meanwhile it should not be added by definite article *the* before the abstract noun. Since “abstract” itself is known as something that cannot be seen or touch by five senses of human being, therefore there is no needed to add definite article *the* before an abstract noun.

### “a” Instead of “the” (Misuse)

An indefinite article (a/an) indicates that its noun is not a particular one identifiable to the listener. It may be something that the speaker is mentioning for the first time, or its precise identity may be irrelevant or hypothetical or the speaker may be making a general statement about any such thing. The uses indefinite article a/an in English is from the Old English forms of the number "one". The indefinite article "an" is used before words that begin with a vowel sound (such as hour, umbrella) and the form of "a" before words that begin with a consonant sound (such as cat, jet).

### Before Superlatives

Superlative or also known as superlative adjective are adjectives that describe the attribute of a person or thing that is the highest or even the lowest in degree compared to the members of noun's group. This superlative adjective is similar to comparative adjective, except they express the most extreme degree of comparison, they are only used when talking about groups of three or more people or things. In the form of superlative adjective, there will be an additional suffix "-est" or additional word "most" before the adjective.

Datum	Before superlative	Frequency
16	“..is <u>a</u> greatest way to analyze.”	1
17	“...become <u>a</u> greatest concern..”	1

Based on the part of sentence above, it implies as the types of indefinite article error “a” used instead of definite article “the”. Superlatives means the most, it must be added by definite article *the* before superlative adjective. Meanwhile in the sentence “..is a greatest way to analyze” the word *greatest* that including in superlatives added by indefinite article *a*, according to theory by Richard, it is wrong. Then it should be added by definite article



*the*. Therefore, it must be changed into “..is the greatest way to analyze.” This part of sentence is include in the types of article error on misuse the indefinite article *a* instead of definite article *the*. Before superlative adjective, it should be added by definite article *the*. That is the rule of grammar. The word *greatest* is in the form of superlative adjective, so before superlative word, it should be added by definite article *the*. The part of sentence above stated that “...become a greatest concern..” but it should be “...become the greatest concern..”.

In this point, those sentences or so far also known as part of sentences are including in the types of students’ misuse to apply the indefinite article “a” instead of definite article “the”. Further the researchers also can say that the students’ are need to be more careful in making sentence whether it must added by indefinite article “a” or definite article “the”. Since there is a difference between both of them. Definite article “the” as the researchers explained before, is used before noun that has uniqueness and specific. Meanwhile article “a/an” or also known as indefinite article, is used to describe object in general or still unknown.

The result of this chapter describes the article error from the students’ writing are: Omission of “the” (25 error), “The” used instead of Ø (zero article)/addition (4 error) and “a” instead of “the”/misuse (2 error). The highest number frequency of error is the omission of “the”. There was the frequency of error and the explanation. Finally, the researchers concludes that when there is a singular countable noun (excluded an abstract noun) it cannot stands alone without article (a/an/the). In the perspective of the researchers itself, the omission, adding and misuse of the article occur because the students’ mostly still do not know how to use definite and indefinite article in proper way.

## CONCLUSION

Writing is the highest skill in learning language, does not matter what kind of language that we are trying to learn, but writing is the only one that requires accuracy in structure, grammar and diction. It is also an important part of communication. Good writing skills allow the researchers (either he or she) to communicate their message with clarity and ease to a far larger audience than through face-to-face or telephone conversation. By writing skill, people can measure others in the way their thinking in giving argument or even a statement. Different level of the understanding of grammar and diction will produce

different result in writing. The higher someone's grammatical and structural level in writing, better works it will become. Correct grammar, punctuation and spelling are key in written communications. The reader will form an opinion of the researchers or author, based on the content and presentation. Even so, errors are likely to lead them to form a negative impression. The case is like what are the researchers discuss in this paper, where the researchers finds out that the students'' from academic writing class need more practice in sharpening their writing skill. However, the researchers did not analyze the whole students' writing structurally and grammatically, but only focus on their definite and indefinite article error.

After analyzing the data by using Richards theory in students' writing from academic writing class and referring to the finding that have been elaborated in the previous chapter, the researchers found 31 data, the kinds of article error appeared in the students'' writing, 25 Omission of definite article "the", 4 "The" used instead of Ø/(zero) addition or zero article and 2 "a" instead of "the"/misuse. Yet, the error that appeared mostly is Omission of definite article "the". The students' need to learn more about grammatical rule especially the uses of definite article "the". Therefore, it can be concluded that the main problem from the research is the students'' learning strategy.

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