

# An Analysis of Error in Undergraduate Students' Argumentative Essay Writing

Ariyani Fatimah<sup>1\*</sup>, Hasbullah<sup>2</sup>, Miftahulfadlik Dabamona<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup> Institut Agama Islam Negeri Sorong. e-mail: [ariyani.fatimah@gmail.com](mailto:ariyani.fatimah@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Institut Agama Islam Negeri Sorong. e-mail: [hasbullah@iainsorong.ac.id](mailto:hasbullah@iainsorong.ac.id)

<sup>3</sup> Institut Agama Islam Negeri Sorong. e-mail: [miftahulfadlik@iainsorong.ac.id](mailto:miftahulfadlik@iainsorong.ac.id)

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Error Analysis, Surface Strategy Taxonomy, Undergraduate Students.</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.22437/langue.v4i1.50247">https://doi.org/10.22437/langue.v4i1.50247</a></p> <p><b>Received:</b> December 5, 2025</p> <p><b>Reviewed:</b> January 4, 2026</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> January 21, 2026</p>	<p>The main objective of this research is to know the common errors that the students in the batch 2020 of the English Education Department of Tarbiyah Faculty at IAIN Sorong made in Argumentative essay Writing. Theoretically, this research intends to identify, define, classify, and finally explain the cause of errors. The writer used the qualitative method in this research, where the researcher analyzed the students' writing to know the types of errors they make most in their writing grammatically and to know the causes of errors. After that, the writer described the number of errors that the students made. For this research, the writer analyzed each student's writing, finds out and classifies the errors he or she made, and lists them in tables. Furthermore, from those errors, the writer concluded what the causes of those errors are. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that there are four types of errors made by the students to Dulay's Theory. First, the errors of Omission with a percentage of 39%, followed by Addition with a percentage of 19%, the errors of misformation with a percentage of 41%, and the last misordering with a percentage of 2% of 100% from all errors made by the students.</p>

## 1. Introduction

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most challenging productive skills for EFL learners because it requires the integration of linguistic knowledge, critical thinking, and the ability to present ideas coherently. In academic settings, writing becomes even more essential since university students are expected to produce various forms of academic texts, including reports, essays, and scientific research. Previous scholars such as Brown and Frazier have argued that writing involves complex cognitive processes of planning, organizing, drafting, and revising—skills that many EFL learners do not naturally acquire. Consequently, studies show that EFL students often encounter difficulties in producing well-structured and grammatically accurate texts, particularly when constructing argumentative essays that demand logical reasoning and strong linguistic control (Fitrawati, Safitri, 2021; Puspita et al., 2021)

Among various academic writing genres, the argumentative essay is considered one of the most intellectually demanding forms because students must develop a clear stance, support claims with evidence, and present arguments coherently. As Setiati et al (2025) and Puspita et al (2021) notes, an argumentative essay requires the writer to evaluate evidence, anticipate

counterarguments, and justify a particular position in a persuasive manner (Setiati et al., 2025; Tita Puspita et al., 2021). In the Indonesian EFL context, especially at tertiary institutions, argumentative writing is a compulsory component of academic writing courses and is closely linked to students' ability to complete their undergraduate thesis. Thus, mastering argumentative writing is a crucial competency for English Education students.

However, despite its importance, many EFL students continue to struggle with grammatical accuracy in argumentative writing. Studies in various contexts—including those by Irawansyah (2024), Saputro et al. (2022), and Setiati et al. (2025)—have consistently shown that learners frequently produce errors related to omission, addition, misformation, and misordering of linguistic elements (Irawansyah, 2024b; Saputra, 2022; Setiati et al., 2025). They displayed it in detail using a graphic table and also attached the mistakes they made starting from misordering, misformation, addition and omission. It is just that they do not explain in detail what the taxonomy they use is the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. Nevertheless, these studies have tended to focus on different taxonomies, sample groups, or genres, leaving limited insight into how undergraduate EFL students in Eastern Indonesia, particularly at IAIN Sorong, perform when constructing argumentative essays. Furthermore, few studies explicitly link the identified errors to their underlying causes using a combined framework of Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy and Hubbard's classification of error sources.

To address these gaps, the present study analyzes the grammatical errors found in the argumentative essays written by undergraduate students of the English Education Department at IAIN Sorong. Employing Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy, the study identifies and classifies errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering (Alka et al., 2023; Fahri Haswani, 2018). Moreover, the study explores the possible causes of students' errors based on Hubbard's theory, focusing on mother-tongue interference and overgeneralization (Corder, 1975; Sari et al., 2022). By doing so, this research provides a comprehensive description of students' challenges in argumentative essay writing within the local EFL context.

This study contributes to existing literature by offering empirical evidence from a less-studied region that is Papua Barat Daya and by combining two theoretical lenses in analyzing errors and their sources. The findings are expected to assist lecturers in designing more targeted instructional strategies for improving students' grammatical accuracy in academic writing. Additionally, the study serves as a reference for future research on EFL writing development in similar educational settings across Indonesia.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Writing**

Writing, as a productive skill in EFL contexts, is a complex and multifaceted activity that involves more than simply transferring ideas onto paper; it requires mastery of content, organization, grammatical correctness, appropriate vocabulary, and rhetorical discourse strategies (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Knoch et al., 2014; Richard & Renandya, 2002). Writing ability therefore demands the integration of cognitive processes such as planning, drafting, revising, and linguistic resources, including grammar, vocabulary, and discourse-level competence (Isgiarno et al., 2020). A writing activity that includes several important elements of writing. So not just pour ideas, but also follow other elements such as studying in terms of speech, tools, and arrangements. What is meant by the idea is the opinion, experience, and knowledge of the author. Either obtained in the past from their own experience or in the present through a literature review. Meanwhile, what is meant by speech is an effort to

express ideas by paying attention to the language of delivery, for example, by wanting to use descriptive language, narration, persuasion, exposition, or argumentation. What is meant by the element of order is to pay attention to diction or language selection. Of course, when you write, you don't just write; there is also the art of assembling the writing or something so that the spelling is used correctly. While the tools are seen in terms of grammar, rhetoric, or vocabulary.

## **2.2 Error Analysis**

In parallel, the field of error analysis (EA) provides a systematic framework to examine how learners' interlanguage develops and deviates from target-language norms; the approach aims to "determine the incidence, nature, causes, and consequences of unsuccessful language and to reveal recurring patterns in learners' written (or spoken) output (Corder, 1971; Dulay & Burt, 1972, 1973; Zheng & Park, 2013). Among the taxonomies developed in EA, the Surface Strategy Taxonomy (SST) which classifies errors into omission, addition, misformation (substitution), and misordering remains widely used in studies of EFL writing (e.g., (Saputra, 2022). Empirical investigations consistently show that misformation (e.g. incorrect verb forms, wrong morphology) and omission (e.g. missing articles, auxiliaries) are among the most frequent error types in descriptive, narrative, and argumentative texts written by Indonesian EFL learners (Handayani et al., 2019; Nadya & Muthalib, 2021; Setiati et al., 2025; Suniaderi & Parmawati, 2022; Tita Puspita et al., 2021). By incorporating both the theoretical understanding of writing as a complex skill and empirical findings from error-analysis studies, research on EFL writing can reveal not only what learners struggle with, but also why—which, in turn, can inform more effective pedagogical interventions to enhance writing accuracy and fluency in EFL settings.

In the context of second-language acquisition and EFL writing research, the term error refers to a systematic deviation from the target language norms, rather than a mere accidental slip or performance lapse often labeled as a "mistake." According to Carl James (2013), analyzing such deviations through Error Analysis entails "determining the incidence, nature, causes, and consequences of unsuccessful language" that is, identifying when and how learners consistently deviate from correct forms, what kinds of deviations occur, why they occur, and what their impacts are on learners' interlanguage development (James, 2013). Meanwhile, Stephen Corder (1975), one of the foundational figures in EA, emphasized that learner errors should not be dismissed as mere performance failures, but rather treated as windows into the learner's developing competence (Corder, 1975). Through systematic error classification, for example via the widely used Surface Strategy Taxonomy (omission, addition, substitution/misformation, misordering), researchers can expose recurring patterns and systematic deviations in learner output (Dulay & Burt, 1972, 1973). Thus, error analysis does not simply catalogue mistakes, but it also reveals the underlying interlanguage system learners are constructing, helping researchers and educators understand what learners struggle with and why, which in turn can inform targeted pedagogical feedback and instruction.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed qualitative research. Researcher analyzed the errors of students in writing essays. According to Nassaji (2015), Qualitative is often called naturalistic research because the study is conducted in a natural setting and it is involved various data sources to gain a deeper understanding of subjects" including perspectives, opinions, and attitudes of the subject. The researcher used qualitative research because the researcher wanted to see in

detail through the students' argumentative essay what errors they often do in writing essay. When viewed from the qualitative design, this research is included in a case study. The researcher described the errors in each sentence and did an analysis.

The researcher utilized documentation to obtain the information. Data were gathered by the researcher from writing an argumentative essay by students. The writer revised the work and gives it back to the students so they may determine whether there are any errors or mistakes. Following Dulay's idea or surface strategy taxonomy, the gathered errors were evaluated to discover the different categories of errors (Dulay & Burt, 1973). The four types of mistakes in this context are omission, addition, disinformation, and misordering. The data is next computed to determine the overall number of errors, and the researcher subsequently gave a descriptive interpretation of the data. Finally, the researcher could draw a conclusion from the sum of the errors made by the students. The information was examined for potential sources of inaccuracies using Hubburb's theory.

### **3.2 Participants**

The participants of this study comprised all students from the 2020 cohort (batch 2020) of the English Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah, at IAIN Sorong. In total, 14 students participated in the study: 9 female and 5 male students, with an average age of 20 to 21 years old. From this group, the researcher employed a purposive/document-based selection of written essays: only those argumentative essays that met the criteria of argumentative writing (i.e., containing the necessary elements of argumentative text) and written in English were selected for analysis. Essays deemed unsuitable, for instance, those too short (only two lines) or written in Indonesian, were excluded.

The sampling technique, therefore, can be described as purposive sampling (non-probability sampling), common in qualitative research when the goal is to obtain "information-rich" cases relevant to the research questions (Andriani et al., 2025). Using this approach ensures that the sample consists of participants whose output (essays) can validly inform the study of common error patterns in EFL argumentative writing.

### **3.3 Instruments**

In this study, the principal instrument is document analysis of students' argumentative essays. The researcher collected written essays submitted by the batch-2020 students of the English Department at IAIN Sorong and treated these essays as naturalistic data produced in the ordinary course of their academic writing assignment rather than elicited under experimental or test conditions. Document analysis is particularly appropriate in this context because it allows the researcher to examine learners' actual written production without interfering with or influencing their writing process (Bowen, 2009). By analyzing the essays, the researcher is able to identify, categorize, and interpret patterns of writing errors that occur under authentic conditions.

The essays were reviewed thoroughly: each sentence was read carefully to detect deviations from accepted English grammar, structure, and usage; identified deviations were then classified according to the framework of the Surface Strategy Taxonomy (omission, addition, misformation/substitution, misordering). After classification, the researcher counted the total number of errors in each category across all essays, thereby producing a descriptive profile of error distribution. Finally, the researcher interpreted the data, describing the frequency and types of errors, and analyzed possible sources of the errors in light of theoretical considerations from error-analysis literature.

Using documentation in this way conforms with standard qualitative research practice: documents are social artefacts produced independently of the research, and document analysis enables systematic, rigorous investigation of such artefacts for empirical insight especially in case-study designs where rich, naturally occurring data are preferred over contrived or test-based data (Al-Shehri, 2025; Bowen, 2009). Thus, the students' essays served as a valid and reliable source for exploring the nature of EFL writing errors in a real academic context.

### **3.4 Data Analysis Procedures**

The data analysis in this study followed a systematic and iterative process appropriate for qualitative document-based research. First, all collected argumentative essays from the selected participants were assembled and reviewed as the corpus for analysis. This initial familiarization involved reading each essay thoroughly to gain an overall sense of the data and to become immersed in the students' writing patterns.

Following familiarization, the researcher conducted initial coding: each sentence (or clause) in the essays was examined and any deviation from standard English whether in grammar, syntax, morphology, word order, or other structural features was marked. The coding scheme was based on the framework of the Surface Strategy Taxonomy (SST) developed by Heidi Dulay, Marina Burt & Stephen Krashen, which classifies errors into four main categories: omission, addition, misformation (substitution), and misordering. After coding individual errors, codes were grouped into categories corresponding to the SST taxonomy. The researcher then counted the number of errors in each category across the entire dataset, producing a quantitative distribution of error types (e.g. how many omissions, additions, misformations, misorderings occurred).

Once error counts were established, the researcher interpreted the distribution descriptively, describing which error types were most frequent, in what contexts (e.g. particular sentence structures or grammatical constructs), and noting recurring patterns or common error sources. Finally, the researcher analyzed possible error sources by relating the observed error patterns to theoretical considerations from error-analysis literature (e.g. influence of L1, overgeneralization, pedagogical factors). Throughout the process, the researcher documented all analytic steps (coding decisions, classification criteria, counts) to maintain transparency and ensure dependability.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1. Research Finding**

#### **4.1.1. The surface strategy taxonomy findings about students' errors in argumentative essay writing**

The researcher detected and distributed the mistakes made by 8 students in their argumentative essay writing. The findings showed 211 errors, including 82 omissions, 41 additions, 86 misformations, and 2 misordering errors. Misformation errors accounted for the majority of errors, with 86 or 41% of all errors. Additionally, omission errors were 39%, addition errors were 19%, and misordering errors were 1%.

Table 1 The Percentage of Students' Errors

Types of Errors	Total of Error	Percentage (%)
Omission	82	39%
Addition	41	19%

Misformation	86	41%
Misordering	2	1%
Total	211	100%

**a. Omission Error**

Based on the research, it was determined that omission is the second most prevalent error committed by students when composing argumentative essay writing. Specifically, the researcher identified 82 instances of omission, which constituted 39% of all errors. Omission refers to the absence of a critical element within a sentence. In most cases, students erred by neglecting to include a necessary letter for a morpheme to be complete.

Table 2 The Percentage of Error in Omission

Type of Errors	Indicators	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Omission	Omission of Article	22	27%
	Omission of Punctuation	11	13%
	Omission of -s Noun Inflection	31	38%
	Omission of Preposition	6	7%
	Omission of Conjunction	1	1%
	Omission of -s Verb Inflection		
	Omission of Verb To Be	4%	
	Omission of Pronoun	1	1%
	Omission of Verb Form	1	1%
	Omission of Gerund	2	2%
Total		82	100%

Based on the data presented in Table 2, the following are examples of omission errors made by students.

**1) Omission of Article**

- a) “In    technology era there are so many app in our life,” (Student 1, number of error (1)).
- b) “If we search in TikTok about    job.” (Student 2, number of error (15)).
- c) “one of the technology is    mobile phone,” (Student 3, number of error (4)).
- d) “because of    covid-19 era.” (Student 5, number of error (3)).

In the examples above, the student did not add an article to refer to what noun they meant. The errors made by students above are classified to be the “Omission of Article”. The correct sentences should be:

- a) “In the technology era, there are so many apps in our lives,”
- b) “If we search on TikTok for the job.”
- c) “one of the technologies is the mobile phone,”
- d) “because of the Covid-19 era.”

## 2) Omission of Punctuation

- a) "There are also bad information, bad video like sex, violence    and video that make us have bad mindset." (Student 1, number of error (22)).
- b) "In this era    the use of technology" (Student 3, number of error (1)).
- c) "Such as comedy, education, tips & tricks, cooking and diy videos" (Student 6, number of error (19)).
- d) "Through the apps people using hastag" (Student 8, number of error (9)).

The example above showed that students did not use punctuation (,) to separate three or more consecutive items, separate two or more ideas in a sentence, or separate adverbial conjunctions. The correct sentences should be:

- a) "There is also bad information, bad video like sex, violence, and video that makes us have a bad mindset."
- b) "In this era, the use of technology."
- c) "Such as comedy, education, tips & tricks, cooking, and DIY videos."
- d) "Through the apps, people use hashtag."

## 3) Omission of –s Noun Inflexion

- a) "there are so many app   in our life," (Student 1, number of error (3)).
- b) "we can get many job  ." (Student 2, number of error (14)).
- c) "TikTok have many positif impact    in our life." (Student 4, number of error (24)).
- d) "There are 3 positive impact   of TikTok." (Student 7, number of error (6)).

From the examples, the student did not add suffix –s in the plural noun, that errors classified to be the "Omission of –s Noun Inflexion". The correct sentences should be:

- a) "There are so many apps in our life."
- b) "We can get many jobs."
- c) "TikTok has many positive impacts in our life."
- d) "There are three positive impacts of TikTok."

## 4) Omission of Preposition

- a) "the app can help us to communication    each other and get more information." (Student 1, number of error (5)).
- b) "religion, jokes and other depend    ourself." (Student 4, number of error (17)).
- c) "TikTok is an application that is currently is great demand by the public    Indonesia." (Student 7, number of error (2)).
- d) "TikTok has be used    of error (8)).

After reviewing the mistakes made by the students, it appears that they did not include prepositions in their writing. Prepositions are essential because they are used for conjunctions about the position, direction, time, or place of a noun. The correct sentences should be:

- a) "The app can help us to communicate with each other and get more information."
- b) "Religion, jokes, and others depend on us."
- c) "TikTok is an application that is currently in great demand by the public in Indonesia."
- d) "TikTok has been used by people to showcase their skills."

#### **5) Omission of Conjunction**

- a) "we can get good information about politic, religion, sport,    food." (Student 1, number of error (10)).

From the error above it can be seen that students did not add conjunctions that function to connect words, phrases, or clauses with clauses. The correct sentence should be:

- a) "We can get good information about politics, religion, sports, and food."

#### **6) Omission of -s Verb Inflexion**

- a) "we can found more information that include    our daily life" (Student 2, number of error (29)).
- b) "because this app provide  " (Student 7, number of error (7)).

Based on the aforementioned errors, it is apparent that the students neglected to include the suffixes "s/es" to indicate the third person singular (i.e. "she," "he," "it") that follows the verb. The correct sentences should be:

- a) "We can find more information that includes our daily life."
- b) "...,because this app provides"

#### **7) Omission of Verb To Be**

- a) "Sometimes I know an update news through this application because this application   really uptodate." (Student 5, number of error (24)).

Based on the error above, it seems that the students neglected to include the verb "To Be". "To Be" is commonly utilized to express the presence or incidence of something, as well as to describe the characteristics or identity of the subject. Additionally, it can indicate the location of the subject. The correct sentence should be:

- a) "Sometimes I know an update news through this application because this application is up-to-date."

#### **8) Omission of Pronoun**

- a) "TikTok is a platfrom provided many tools," (Student 6, number of error (5)).

based on the error above, the student did not add a relative pronoun (that) to provide additional information on nouns (which include people, things, or animals). The correct sentence should be:

- a) "TikTok is a platform that provided many tools,"

#### **9) Omission of Verb Form**

- a) "TikTok has be used people to showcase their skills" (Student 8, number of error (7)).

The errors above it show that student did not write down the verb form completely where there was a reduction in the words in the verb they used so that the error was classified as "Omission of Verb Form". The correct sentences should be:

- a) "TikTok has been used people to showcase their skills"

**10) Omission of Gerund**

- a) "But, we can also have to limit our time using this application, so we are not get too addicted with TikTok." (Student 6, number of error (23)).
- b) "TikTok is improve11 speaking skills and ekspress opinion." (Student 7, number of error (11)).

The errors above show that students omitted the use of gerunds, it is necessary to append the suffix "-ing" to change verbs into nouns. The correct sentences should be:

- a) "But, we can also have to limit our time using this application, so we are not getting too addicted with TikTok."
- b) "TikTok is improving speaking skills and express opinion."

**b. Addition Error**

Errors of addition involve the inclusion of an extra element that should not be present in a properly structured statement. In the course of this study, the author discovered 41 instances of addition errors, comprising 19% of all errors. These addition errors were classified into different types, including the addition of -ing, -s, or -ed after a modal, the addition of verb or noun inflections, the addition of conjunctions, and the addition of auxiliary verbs. Among these, the most common types of addition error made by the students were the "Addition of Article", which accounted for 10 errors or 23% of all addition errors.

Table 3 The Percentage of Error in Addition

Type of Errors	Indicators	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Addition	Addition of Conjunction		
	Addition of Punctuation	4	
	Addition of Preposition	10%	
	Addition of Article	2	5%
	Addition of Adjective	6	15%
	Addition of s Verb	10	24%
	Inflexion	2	5%
	Addition of s Noun		
	Addition of Gerund	9	22%
Total		41	100%

**1) Addition of Conjunction**

- a) "But we to have to take care when we use one of some application because not only Good information but in TikTok." (Student 1, number of error (20)).
- b) "we can found more information that include our daily life, as like as job, receipt and etc." (Student 2, number of error (32)).

- c) *“such as funny video, video that show how to make some food, information video and etc.”* (Student 5, number of error (12)).

Based on the errors above, students added conjunctions that shouldn't have been added to the sentences. This was because the conjunctions they used did not match the intended function. The correct sentences should be:

- a) *“But we to have to take care when we use one of some application because not only good information **but** on TikTok.”*
- b) *“we can found more information that include our daily life, as like as job, receipt **and** etc.”*
- c) *“such as funny video, video that show how to make some food, information video **and** etc.”*

## **2) Addition of Punctuation**

- a) *“So as a good student, or a human that have technology,”* (Student 1, number of error (23)).
- b) *“TikTok is a platfrom provided many tools, and special effects”* (Student 6, number of error (7)).

Based on the errors above, it appears that the student may have made errors while adding punctuation. The correct sentences should be:

- a) *“So as a good student, or a human that have technology,”*
- b) *“TikTok is a platform provided many tools, and special effects”*

## **3) Addition of Preposition**

- a) *“most of people using TikTok for their daily life.”* (Student 2, number of error (4)).
- b) *“Most of people, from children to adult using this application for daily activities,”* (Student 6, number of error (1)).

Based on the errors above, it can be seen that students added prepositions in the wrong position, due to the use of prepositions only when they are needed to show relationships between nouns and other words in the sentence.

- a) *“Most **of** people using TikTok in their daily lives.”*
- b) *“Most **of** people, from children to adults use this application for daily activities,”*

## **4) Addition of Article**

- a) *“TikTok has a many possitive impacts.”* (Student 2, number of error (8)).
- b) *“The another example is like cooking.”* (Student 2, number of error (19)).
- c) *“TikTok is an application that is currently is great demand by the public Indonesia.”* (Student 7, number of error (2)).

The error above shows that the student added an article in the wrong position. As a general rule, articles are utilized in reference to nouns. The correct sentences should be:

- a) *“TikTok has **a** many positive impacts.”*

- b) “**The** Another example is like cooking.”
- c) “TikTok is an application that is currently in great demand by **the** public in Indonesia.”

#### 5) Addition of Adjective

- a) “*a favorite apps because the impact of this apps are really much,*” (Student 3, number of error (14)).
- b) “*Sometimes I know an update news through this application because this application really uptodate.*” (Student 5, number of error (25)).

The error above indicates that the student included an unnecessary adjective. Therefore, the correct sentence should not include it.

- a) “a favorite app because the impact of this app is **really** much.”
- b) “Sometimes I know the update news through this application because this application **really** up-to-date.”

#### 6) Addition of –s Verb Inflexion

- a) “*a lot of funny video and it can makes you in a good mood.*” (Student 5, number of error (30)).
- b) “*that can helps us making something using simple tools.*” (Student 6, number of error (20)).

The error indicates that the student added the suffix "s" to the verb following the modal, which is classified to be the "Addition of s Verb Inflexion". The correct sentence should be:

- a) “A lot of funny videos and they can make you in a good mood.”
- b) “...that can help us make something using simple tools.”

#### 7) Addition of –s Noun Inflexion

- a) “*Everyone used TikTok young and adult people used this apps because this apps have a lot of positive impact for our life.*” (Student 3, number of error (7 and 8)).

The error mentioned above indicates that the student added the suffix "s" to the singular noun, which is classified to be the "Addition of s Noun Inflexion". The correct sentence should be:

- a) “Everyone used TikTok, young and adult people used this app because this apps have a lot of positive impacts on our lives.”

#### 8) Addition of Gerund

- a) “*most of people using TikTok for their daily life.*” (Student 2, number of error (5)).
- b) “*TikTok itself can make us watching much videos that entertain us with many types of videos*” (Student 4, number of error (3)).
- c) “*TikTok is a platform provided many tools, and special effects to help the users making their video*” (Student 6, number of error (9)).

Based on the errors above, it can be seen that the students added -ing to the wrong pattern because students should have continued to use verbs without adding -ing after the subject. The correct sentences should be:

- a) “Most people using (use) TikTok in their daily life.”
- b) “TikTok itself can make us watching (watch) many videos that entertain us with many types of videos.”
- c) “TikTok is a platform that provides many tools and special effects to help users making (make) their video.”

**c. Misformation**

The occurrence of errors in misformation can be attributed to the misuse of morphemes or structural components. Researcher was conducted on argumentative essay writing of students, wherein misformation errors were identified and analyzed. The results revealed a total of 86 misformation errors, which percentage for 41% of all errors. Among these errors, the majority (29 errors comprising 34% of all misformation errors) were found to be related to spelling errors.

Table 4 The Percentage of Error in Misformation

Type of Errors	Indicators	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Misformation of Word Choice	3	3%
	Misformation of Capitalization	7	8%
	Misformation of Quantifiers	1	1%
	Misformation of Subject Verb Agreement	6	7%
Misformation	Misformation of Preposition	16	19%
	Misformation of Article	3	4%
	Misformation of Spelling	29	34%
	Misformation of Verb Form	8	9%
	Misformation of Pronoun	3	4%
	Misformation of Verb To Be	10	12%
	Total	86	100%

**1) Misformation of Word Choice**

- a) “and the app can help us to communication each other and get more information.” (Student 1, number of error (4)).
- b) “everyone being addict because this app provide a lot of video.” (Student 5, number of error (6)).
- c) “Many users have shared messages of hope and inspiration, as well as funny and motivation content to help boost people's spirits.” (Student 8, number of error (13)).

Based on the errors made by students in choosing words they should not use, these errors were categorized as "misformations of Word Choice". The correct sentences should be:

- a) “and the app can help us **to communicate** each other and get more information.”
- b) “everyone is **addicted** because this app provide a lot of video.”
- c) “Many users have shared messages of hope and inspiration, as well as funny and **motivational** content to help boost people's spirits.”

## 2) Misformation of Capitalization

- a) “*TikTok is Very usefull to improve our general knowledge*” (Student 1, number of error (11)).
- b) “*TikTok is the one of applicationl that we can use to share information, daily life, jokes, business, etc. most of people using TikTok for their daily life.*” (Student 2, number of error (3)).
- c) “*This application being famous because of covid-19 era. everyone being addict because this app provide a lot of video.*” (Student 5, number of error (4)).

The errors mentioned indicate that some students did not use capital letters correctly after periods (.). Additionally, there was the student who used capital letters where they were not needed. The correct sentences should be:

- a) “TikTok is **very** useful to improve our general knowledge”
- b) “TikTok is the one of applications that we can use to share information, daily life, jokes, business, etc. **Most** of people using TikTok for their daily life.”
- c) “This application being famous because of the covid-19 era. **Everyone** being addict because this app provide a lot of video.”

## 3) Misformation of Quantifiers

- a) “*TikTok itself can make us watching much videos that entertain us with many types of videos.*” (Student 4, number of error (4)).

Based on the error above, it appears that the student incorrectly used quantifiers. To be more precise, "many" should be used for items that can be counted, while "much" should be used for items that cannot be counted. The correct sentence should be:

- a) “TikTok itself can make us watching **many** videos that entertain us with many types of videos.”

## 4) Misformation of Subject Verb Agreement

- a) “*So as a good student, or a human that have technology,*” (Student 1, number of error (24)).
- b) “*Therefore TikTok have positif*” (Student 4, number of error (8)).

From the errors above, the student made errors in the use of have and has, where have should be used when the subject (I, we, you, & they) and other plural subjects, while has is used when the subject (He, She & It). The correct sentences should be:

- a) “So as a good student or a human that **has** technology,”
- b) “Therefore TikTok **has** positive”

### 5) Misformation of Preposition

- a) *“but it depends of your mindset.”*
- b) *“the receipt in TikTok”*
- c) *“so many positive impact for our life”*

Based on the errors above, it appears that students incorrectly used prepositions. The correct sentences should be:

- a) *“but it depends **on** your mindset.”*
- b) *“the receipt **on** TikTok”*
- c) *“so many positive impact **on** our life”*

### 6) Misformation of Article

- a) *“you will use TikTok in the bad way.”* (Student 1, number of error (31)).
- b) *“TikTok has the positive benefit for us.”* (Student 6, number of error (25)).

From the errors above, it seems that the students have misused articles. The word “the” is a definite article, implying certainty. On the other hand, “a” and “an” are indefinite articles, indicating uncertainty or generality. 'The' is used when we want to express certainty. The correct sentences should be:

- a) *“you will use TikTok in **a** bad way.”*
- b) *“TikTok has **a** positive benefit for us.”*

### 7) Misformation of Spelling

- a) *“TikTok is Very usefull to improve our general knowledge”* (Student 1, number of error (31)).
- b) *“possitive9 impacts”* (Student 2, number of error (9)).
- c) *“Another positif impact”* (Student 4, number of error (19)).

From the errors above it can be concluded that the student made errors in spelling. The error is classified as "Misformation of Spelling". The correct sentences should be:

- a) *“TikTok is very **useful** to improve our general knowledge”*
- b) *“**positive** impacts”*
- c) *“Another **positive** impact”*

### 8) Misformation of Verb Form

- a) *“The application of TikTok is important for our life so we can found more information”* (Student 2, number of error (27)).
- b) *“There’s a lot of video tells about news that don’t show on television.”*  
(Student 5, number of error (23)).

Based on the errors mentioned above, it appears that students made errors with verb forms. Specifically, they are using the verb 2 when they should be using the verb 1 and using "don't" for subjects "She, He, and It." The errors classified to be “Misformation of Verb Form”. The correct sentences should be:

- a) "The application of TikTok is important for our life so we can **find** more information"
- b) "There"s a lot of video tells about news that **doesn't** show on television."

**9) Misformation of Pronoun**

- a) "TikTok also watch the video how to cook that make it easily." (Student 2, number of error (22)).
- b) "The positif impact of TikTok is we can entertain ourself14 with videos on TikTok." (Student 4, number of error (14)).

Based on the errors mentioned above, it appears that students made errors with the use of pronouns. the correct sentences should be:

- a) "TikTok also watch the video how to cook **which** make it easily."
- b) "The positif impact of TikTok is we can entertain **ourselves** with videos on TikTok."

**10) Misformation of Verb To Be**

- a) "The conclusion if this argument is in TikTok there's so many positive impact" (Student 1, number of error (24)).
- b) "There's a lot of video" (Student 5, number of error (19)).

Based on the errors mentioned above, it appears that students made errors with the use of the Verb To Be because students wrote "There Is" for a plural noun. The correct sentences should be:

- a) "The conclusion of this argument is that TikTok **there are** so many positive impact."
- b) "**There are** a lot of videos."

**11) Misordering Error**

**a. Misordering of Sentence Pattern**

- a) "But if we not do that" (Student 4, number of error (29)).
- b) "we also can earn money" (Student 6, number of error (21)).

The correct sentences should be:

- a) "But if we **do not** that"
- b) "we **can also** earn money"

Table 5 The Percentage of Error in Misordering

Type of Errors	Indicators	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Misordering	Misordering of Sentence Pattern	2	100%
Total		2	100%

**5. Discussion**

The analysis of students' argumentative essays revealed 211 total errors across four categories defined by the Surface Strategy Taxonomy (SST), with misformation errors being the most

frequent (86 errors, 41 %), followed by omission (82 errors, 39 %), addition (41 errors, 19 %), and misordering (2 errors, ~1 %). This distribution suggests that the learners' principal difficulty lies not in omitting or adding elements per se, but rather in using incorrect forms or structures — a pattern that resonates with findings of similar studies in EFL contexts.

First, the dominance of misformation errors corroborates results from several previous studies. For example, *An Error Analysis of Students' Writing as EFL: A Descriptive Qualitative Research* found misformation to be the predominant error type among Indonesian students, comprising 75 % of all errors identified (Irawansyah, 2024b). Similarly, in a study of descriptive-essay writing by students of senior high schools, researchers reported misformation as the highest error category, followed by omission and addition (Saragi et al., 2025). These parallels suggest that structural/morphological difficulties are a common challenge for Indonesian EFL writers, possibly rooted in interference from the native language and insufficient internalization of English grammatical rules.

Second, the relatively high proportion of omission errors (39 %) especially in articles, prepositions, subject-verb inflection, and verb forms reflects recurring challenges in areas where English diverges significantly from Indonesian grammar. The frequent omission of articles or verb inflections may be explained by negative transfer from Indonesian, which does not require articles similarly, nor distinguishes singular/plural inflections in the same way. This observation aligns with accounts in previous error-analysis literature that attribute omission (and misformation) to L1 interference among EFL learners. For instance, a study on descriptive-text writing by EFL junior high school students found omission and misformation among the common error types due to learners' tendency to transfer Indonesian structures into English writing (Saragi et al., 2025).

Third, although addition errors accounted for a smaller share (19 %), their presence, such as unnecessary articles, redundant conjunctions, inappropriate inflections, suggests overgeneralization or uncertainty in applying English grammar rules. These kinds of errors often emerge when learners attempt to “fill in” grammatical elements but misapply rules, perhaps due to overgeneralization of patterns or overcorrection. Several prior studies report similar phenomena: In analysis of paragraph writing among high-school EFL learners, both omission and addition errors appeared alongside misformation, indicating that the writing difficulties are not limited to one kind of error but span different levels of linguistic competence (morphology, syntax, punctuation) (Puspita et al., 2021).

Fourth, the very small proportion of misordering errors (~1 %) suggests that, for this group of learners, problems of word order or morpheme placement are comparatively less problematic than morphological or form-related issues. This may indicate that students, perhaps due to prior exposure to English writing, have some intuitive grasp of English syntactic order, even if they struggle with details like inflection, agreement, or article usage. This tendency is also visible in other studies: while misordering sometimes appears, it generally has lower frequency compared to misformation or omission (Kusumaning Tyas et al., 2025).

In light of these findings, several implications emerge. The predominance of misformation and omission errors underscores the need for explicit grammar instruction focused on morphological markers (plural *-s*, subject-verb agreement), article use, and verb forms — areas where Indonesian EFL learners frequently falter. Additionally, awareness-raising activities that contrast English and Indonesian grammar structures may help students avoid negative transfer. Meanwhile, since addition errors occur less frequently but still notably, instructors should also address overgeneralization tendencies, perhaps through corrective

feedback and targeted exercises that refine learners' grammar intuition. Finally, because misordering is relatively rare, teaching efforts might prioritize form and morphology over syntactic ordering, although continued monitoring is still recommended, especially in more complex writing tasks.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study has investigated the grammatical errors made by undergraduate EFL students of the 2020 cohort at the English Department of IAIN Sorong in their argumentative essays, using the framework of the Surface Strategy Taxonomy (SST). The analysis identified 211 errors from eight students' essays: misformation errors were the most prevalent (41 %), followed by omission (39 %), addition (19 %), and misordering (1 %). These results indicate that Indonesian EFL learners in this context struggle most with morphological and form-based aspects (verb forms, subject–verb agreement, article use, spelling), rather than primarily with word order.

The findings confirm that writing in English especially academic argumentative writing remains challenging for learners whose first language does not encode features such as articles, verb inflections, or morphological agreement in the same way. The high frequency of misformation and omission errors highlights persistent difficulties in internalizing English morphological and grammatical rules, likely reflecting negative transfer from their mother tongue as well as incomplete internalization of target-language norms. Moreover, this study suggests that EFL writing instruction in similar contexts should emphasize explicit, targeted grammar instruction (particularly on inflection, agreement, articles, noun/verb forms), combined with frequent writing and revision exercises. Teachers should also provide corrective feedback aimed at recurring error patterns and foster contrastive awareness between the learners' L1 (Indonesian) and English structures.

For future research, a broader sample size possibly including multiple cohorts and diversifying writing genres could provide a more generalizable understanding of error patterns in Indonesian EFL academic writing. Additional investigations might also explore the effectiveness of grammar-focused interventions or instructional strategies in reducing misformation and omission errors over time.

By documenting and analyzing the specific error patterns among English-department students in a relatively under-studied regional context, this study contributes empirical evidence to the body of EFL writing research in Indonesia, and offers practical recommendations for improving academic writing pedagogy in similar settings.

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