



IMPLEMENTING SURFACE STRUCTURE TAXONOMY IN ANALYZING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' BUSINESS E-MAIL ERRORS

Laila Desnaranti^{1(*)}, Febby Pratama Putra²
Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jakarta, Indonesia¹²
lailad.unindra@gmail.com¹, febby1988@gmail.com²

Abstract

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Because of technological advancements, email (electronic mail) has become a common tool for business communication and transactions. That is why, one of the topic that undergraduate students learn in business English course is how to write formal email. Error analysis plays a vital function in assisting lecturers in identifying the kind of errors that undergraduate students make most frequently in their writing as well as the reasons behind those errors. Based on the issues that have been discussed before, the researchers would like to investigate what are the errors in the formal email that the undergraduate students write. The researchers also want to determine which kind of errors that the undergraduate students most and least produce. This research use surface structure taxonomy to explore errors that undergraduate students made in their formal business emails. Following extensive deliberation and meticulous examination of data from 68 formal emails written by undergraduate students, the researcher found that there are 27 (39,7%) omission errors, 19 (27,9%) addition errors, 12 (17,6%) misformation errors, and 10 (14,7%) misordering errors. From the analysis result, the most errors which is done by the undergraduate students in their formal email is omission error and the least is misordering errors.

Keywords: Business English; E-mail; Error Analysis

(*) Corresponding Author: Desnaranti, lailad.unindra@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

English is the language of the world which is vital in communicating and interacting with people worldwide. English has evolved into a widely spoken daily conversation language across borders, with speakers in every nation. English also has a significant part in international relations, including science, economics, diplomacy, trade, politics, and more, because it is an international language. In Indonesia, English has long been encouraged at all educational levels. English is used in college courses and will be used in various job in the future. The demand for communication in the business sector is continual. Communicating currently is a vital component of all business transactions and necessary for success in the industry. Interaction between people is impossible without communication. English has become increasingly important as more people learning second languages recognize its relevance as a necessary tool for communication in the global arena.

In the business environment, written communication is the interchange of ideas and information through corporate documents. Business writing is a form of communication

that presents the message clearly, accurately, and concisely (Arputhamalar, 2014). It is a communication medium utilized by organizations to achieve their goals, whatever they may be. English is used by business professionals as a shared communication code to communicate, discuss, and negotiate meaning (Jain & Mukherji, 2012). Formality is related with business writing. All business documents must be written in a formal tone. All official correspondence should be exact and precise. The corporate world expects its employees to be good writers (Arputhamalar, 2014). Today, a lot of undergraduate students have graduated, and they are the business world's most promising employees. The question of whether they are truly employable arises when it comes to communication skills, sometimes they fail badly.

Businesses and corporations now exchange billions of ideas and information through extensive communication. Most communication takes place through the use of the four language skills. Effective communication between the parties involved in negotiations is essential in these expanding marketplaces across the world. This calls for sufficient verbal and nonverbal communication abilities, cultural awareness, adaptability, patience, tolerance, and understanding (Juneja & Mujumdar, 2010). A lot of commerce is done on the internet, which necessitates the ability to write. Business writing is straightforward, to-the-point, and precise (Arputhamalar, 2014). Therefore to keep within bounds, it adheres to the set format and presents the idea briefly. Jain & Mukherji (2012) said that a good business writer must first understand the audience's needs and then write to meet those needs. Writing, whether internal or external, must build corporate relationships. Business documentation must be accurate, brief, clear, and concrete.

The business sector expects its staff to excel at writing business documents. They want staff to understand the intricacies of good and effective writing. The writing style should be appealing to the readers, and the message should be conveyed clearly. Formal business documents should be encouraged for undergraduate students to write. It is critical that undergraduate students learn to write in formal language (Arputhamalar, 2014). Nowadays, English is learned in college as a second language and also will be used in the future at various workplace. Out of the four English language skills, writing is one that the undergraduate students did not truly master because of their limited vocabulary and literary pattern. Research on English as a foreign language taught in Indonesia has revealed that many students struggle to put their thoughts and opinions into written form.

Professional work increasingly demand people to lead "connected lives" or "mobile lives" (Elliott & Urry, 2010) arguably as a result of the global advancement of communication technology. These forms of communication include synchronous face-to-face conversations, telecommunication, web chat, asynchronous e-mail communication, document sharing, and contacts. Over the past 20 years, asynchronous email has emerged as one of these most effective and prevalent communication tools (Guffey, 2010). In international email correspondence, among numerous other languages, English is the common language to use when sending an email. These days, email is one of the most popular communication tools, and its user base has grown significantly (Ahmed, 2020). It will keep doing so because email is a vital business communication tool and because recent developments in mobile technology have made it possible to access email from anywhere at any time. Email explained by Oxford Dictionary (2012) is a system for sending messages from one computer to another to send a message. Email also defined as a message that is written on one computer and sent to another (Oxford, 2012). The use of email as a tool of communication is also increased in the business sector. That is why, one of the topic that undergraduate students learn in business English course is how to write formal email.

Email has grown in popularity for a variety of reasons. For starters, it can be saved as a record, preserved, and later viewed. Second, it may store attachments that include not

only text files but also photos, music files, and video files. Third, it is a low-cost mode of communication when compared to other options. Fourth, it is adaptable; it may be sent to practically anyone and accessed at any moment (Iliescu, 2014). Finally, it is quick. It is, in fact, one of the quickest communication methods, making it a suitable choice for formal letters when the message is urgent (Williams in Ahmed, 2020). The main components of a formal email are subject, greeting, main body, closing and signature (Hopkins, 2018). Firstly, the subject of an email should be clear, meaningful, and gives the reader an idea about email content. Secondly, the greeting of formal email should start with 'Dear' followed by a title (e.g., Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr, Professor, etc.) and their last name not the first name. Thirdly, acceptable closings of formal and academic email include 'Best wishes', '(Kind/Best) Regards', and 'Sincerely' (Bailey, 2011). Finally, for the signature, it is replace with the sender's full name, title and the sender office or business name. Another requirement for formal email is a clear and straightforward topic that addresses the reader's worries and issues; a subject that is brief and relevant to the email's content (Smith, 2016). It is crucial to proofread emails for spelling and grammar errors and being efficient also to the point improves the effectiveness of the email.

It has become highlighted repeatedly and reiterated by the government that future university graduates will be required to engage in daily tasks of conducting formal written correspondence, i.e., including an e-mail, fax or other forms of e-communication (Shaitan et al., 2021). Checking the grammar and the spelling of an email is important (Nisa, 2018). If the grammar is not appropriate, it can lead to a miscommunication. Miscommunication is easy to occur due to cultural differences, especially in writing when we can't see each other's body language" (Smith, 2016). Writing is an important skill to master because it is one of the student's productive skills that may produce diverse texts to convey any information that is legible to everyone. However, it appears to be one of the most challenging in college courses (Richard and Renandya in Firharmawan & Komariyah, 2021). Writing is challenging because it requires undergraduate students to generate and organize their own thoughts in addition to converting them into a readable narrative. Undergraduate students must simultaneously compose words, sentences, paragraphs, and lengthy compositions.

Writing is a talent that can be utilized to express such thoughts and feelings. Writing requires a variety of supporting potential, thus achieving it requires seriousness, hard work, learning, and constant exercise over a lengthy period of time. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that cultivating a writing culture will promote a person to be more creative, active, and intelligent (Marita, 2020). Some undergraduate students are struggling with writing. Hence, if undergraduate students wish to write anything, they should have wide information because it will support their writing. Gaith (in Firharmawan & Komariyah, 2021) also highlighted that writing is a sophisticated process that enables authors to investigate concepts and ideas and give them a visible, tangible form. It implies that in order to produce quality writing, students must take into account a variety of factors when writing. As a result, some English language learners may make several mistakes in their writing. This is a result of the rules of the language being learnt by the learners differing from those of their original tongue.

In order to produce a decent piece of writing, one must consider the topic as well as the written composition's concepts, grammatical proficiency, paragraph unity, writing substance, and background knowledge. This explains why writing ranks as the hardest skill to master as it is intricate and requires careful thought. Grammatical errors are a common writing process issue that students encounter. They are unable to correctly use the structures. Students who make errors in their writing are caused by their inability to apply the rules of the language (Ramadhani, 2020).

Errors in language acquisition have long been the focus of attention, and grammatical knowledge has become one of the most actively debated topics in language and literacy instruction. According to Richards and Sampson (as cited in Nisa, 2018), learner-errors can be influenced by social conditions as well as the learner's values and attitudes. Learner errors indicated the genuine condition of foreign language learners' proficiency of the new language they are studying at a given point in time. An error represents a partial or faulty understanding of a word, speech act, or grammatical concept (Richards et al. in Ariffin et al., 2021). Error analysis plays a vital function in assisting lecturer in identifying the kind of errors that undergraduate students make most frequently in their writing as well as the reasons behind those errors. By providing undergraduate students with comprehensive information regarding writing faults, the lecturer could enhance their pedagogical approach and prevent mistakes. Reynolds et al., (2009) found in his research result that students in Taiwan done common errors as they write business letter such as application letter, inquiry letter, response letter, sales letter, and offer letters. Therefore, one goal of this research is to assist lecturers in identifying writing errors made by undergraduate students in their formal email.

According to James (2013) the process of determining the occurrence, type, causes, and effects of unsuccessful language is known as error analysis. In other words, the goal of the implementation error analysis is to identify undergraduate students' errors. Errors are a result of the constant challenges associated with learning a second language. Since the structure of a first language differs from the target language during the learning process, making mistakes can result from initial negative transfer. It can be ensured as an integral part of language acquisition that is not avoidable (Suhono, 2016). Making errors is, in some ways, an essential part of learning a new language. It means that lecturers can utilize the information from the errors to assess undergraduate students' writing proficiency. Furthermore, identifying undergraduate students' writing challenges paves the path for lecturers to unfold relevant answers to the problems.

Language learners start learning it in their mother tongue first when studying a foreign language. The students may make mistakes or make errors a lot of the time. The difficulties of the continual learning process force second language learners to make mistakes (Suhono, 2016). The two major sources of errors in learning a second language are interlingual and intralingual errors (Brown, 2007). Interlingual errors come from interference from the first language which includes grammar rules and vocabulary. Intralingual errors, on the other hand, occur when language learners produce the language using their own hypotheses of the target language (Ariffin et al., 2021).

Dulay et al., (1982) proposed a frame work to analyze error which called surface structure taxonomy. It concerns on how surface structure is altered by the learners that eventually cause the errors. Dulay et al., (1982) also explained surface strategy taxonomy is the way surface structure is altered. According to this theory, four types of errors can be identified, namely, omission, addition, misformation and misordering. English language learners may omit necessary items or add unnecessary ones. Besides, they may also misform items and misorder them.

Omission refers to the absence of major item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. The omission can be in terms of content such as a missing noun, and grammatical which involves the omission of grammar items. Contrastingly, addition refers to the presence of the element that should not appear in well-formed utterance. It can be further subdivided into double marking which occurs due to the failure to omit particular element in linguistics formation, regularization which is the wrong application of the class of exceptions, and simple addition which involves adding unnecessary morpheme to a word/sentence. Misformation errors are committed because of the utilization of wrong

morpheme and structure in the sentence. It can be subcategorized into regularization occur when a regular marker is used for irregular one, archi-forms which wrongly deal with demonstrative, and alternation that is related to archi-forms that give way to free alternation. As for misordering, this type of error points out the incorrect arrangement or order of the morphemes in an utterance. The surface structure proposes that learners might omit necessary items, add unnecessary items, misform the items, or disorder the items.

Error analysis plays a vital function in assisting lecturers in identifying the kind of errors that undergraduate students make most frequently in their writing as well as the reasons behind those errors. By providing undergraduate students with comprehensive information regarding writing faults, the lecturers could enhance their pedagogical approach and prevent mistakes. Therefore, one goal of this research is to assist lecturers in identifying common writing errors made by undergraduate students. Because of the issues that have been discussed before, the researchers would like to investigate what are the errors in the formal email that the undergraduate students made. The researchers also want to determine which kind of errors that the undergraduate students most and least produce. This research use surface structure taxonomy to explore errors that undergraduate students made in their formal business emails. As the research result will help the English business lecturers determine which kind of errors that the undergraduate students made and to improve their teaching technique also teaching resources in order to minimize the errors which is done by undergraduate students in writing formal business email.

METHODS

The qualitative method was applied in this research. According to Bodgan and Taylor (as in Moelong, 2014) qualitative technique is a research procedure that collects descriptive data such as written or spoken words from people or activities that can be witnessed. According to Ritchie, et.al (2003) qualitative research is a naturalistic, interpretative technique concerned with understanding the meaning that individuals give to occurrences (actions, decisions, attitudes, values, and so on) in their social context. In this study, the researchers discovered and identified the sorts of errors in undergraduate students' business formal email writing and conducted an analysis to find out which error they do the most and least using the surface structure taxonomy given by Dulay et al., (1982).

According to Lofland (in Moelong, 2014), in a qualitative study, the major source of data is words and actions, whereas the test is supplementary data such as documents. The data in this study were created by students in the form of words, phrases, and paragraphs. Moelong (2014) explained that data analysis is the act of organizing and categorizing data into patterns, classifications, and basic description units so that it can be found and articulated into a working hypothesis based on the data. The researcher examined undergraduate students' formal email writing errors utilizing the surface strategy taxonomy.

The error analysis procedure that used by the researchers in this research is proposed by Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005). The procedure comprises the following five steps. The steps are data collection, errors identification, errors description, errors explanation, and errors evaluation. The explanation of the process are:

1. Data collection. The researchers collected the undergraduate students' email writing to be analyzed according to Dulay's and Burt's theory. The undergraduate students asked to write email based on a topic. After that, they sent the emails to their lecturers. Then, the researchers asked the emails from the lecturers for analyzing them.

2. Errors identification. The errors were classified into four subcategories based on surface strategy taxonomy by selecting and identifying the errors in undergraduate students' email.
3. Errors description. The data were interpreted and described methodically based on the categories of errors. The researchers try to explain clearly so that others can grasp the research findings.
4. Errors explanation. The fourth was explaining the errors according to surface taxonomy strategy. The errors were identified and classified into the subcategories of surface taxonomy strategy, they are; omission, addition, misformation and misordering.
5. Errors evaluation. The last step was errors evaluation by tabulating the errors to get the percentage of each subcategory. In this step, the frequency of errors were identified and the number of errors were presented in the forms of tables and chart. In calculating the number and frequency of errors, the authors employed the statistical calculation by Walizer and Wiener (as cited in Dewi et al., 2021), as follows: $P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$. Where P is the percentage of errors, F is the frequency of errors and N is the total number of samples

The population of this research is undergraduate students that majoring in economic education which took business English course. Based on Arikunto (2012) if the population of a research is more than 100 people, it can be taken 10-15 % as a sample. The undergraduate students' total number are 672, so the researcher took 10% from the number. Therefore the sample of this research is 67,2 undergraduate students and then the researchers round it up to 68 undergraduate students.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

The researchers collect the data by asking the undergraduate students to write formal email. After that the next process followed the procedures which have been explained above. The researchers started to identify and analyze the errors using surface strategy taxonomy which is proposed by Dulay et al., (1982). The kind of error are omission, addition, misformation and misordering. Below is the explanation and some example of omission error which is done by the undergraduate students in their formal email:

Table 1.
The Omission Error

	Undergraduate Students' Writing	Researchers Corrections
The Omission Error	I writing to schedule a meeting to discuss the preparation	I am writing to schedule a meeting to discuss the preparation
	I would appreciate you let me know that you are available that day	I would appreciate if you let me know that you are available that day
	For you attention and for the time we thak you	For your attention and for the time we thank you
	Will be held on Thursday 19 th May 2022	It will be held on Thursday 19 th May 2022

Source: Analyze by researchers (2023)

Omission error is when a learner left out a structure or item in a sentence that should have been required and should have appeared in a well-done utterance. From the 68 formal

email which have been written by the undergraduate students, the researchers found that there are 27 omission errors. It is 39,7% from overall formal email sample.

The next error that analyzed was addition error. Addition error is items that should not appear in well-done sentence based on grammar or vocabulary rules. Below are some example of the addition errors which is done by the undergraduate students in their formal email:

Table 2.
The Addition Error

	Undergraduate Students' Writing	Researchers Corrections
The Addition Error	It is an honor for use to have you attend this meeting	It is an honor for us to have you attend this meeting
	I am writing to ask for you about I want to make an appointment with you	I am writing to ask you about I want to make an appointment with you
	I will looking forward to you as soon as possible	I will look forward to you as soon as possible
	It would be an honor for us if you and the rest of the team attended the event	It would be an honor for us if you and the rest of the team attend the event

Source: Analyze by researchers (2023)

From the 68 formal email which have been written by the undergraduate students, the researchers found that there are 19 addition errors. It is 27,9% from overall formal email sample.

After the addition error, researchers analyzed the misformation error which the undergraduate students done in their formal emails. Below are some example of the misformation errors:

Table 3.
The Misformation Error

	Undergraduate Students' Writing	Researchers Corrections
The Misformation Errors	The meeting well be held at: I would like to have an appointment for discussed about preparation.....	The meeting will be held at: I would like to have an appointment for discussing about preparation.....
	I am writing this email to invited Ms. Claire West for meeting	I am writing this email to invite Ms. Claire West for meeting
	The meeting will take place in Thursday , 15 th July 2022	The meeting will take place on Thursday, 15 th July 2022

Source: Analyze by researchers (2023)

Misformation error is distinguished by the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. From the 68 formal email which have been written by the undergraduate students, the researchers found that there are 12 misformation errors. It is 17,6% from overall formal email sample.

The last error that the researchers analyzed is misordering. Misordering error is the incorrect placement of either a morpheme or a group of morphemes in a sentences. The

result of this error make the sentence become ungrammatical. The table below is some example from the misordering error which made by the undergraduate students in their formal email:

Table 4.
The Misordering Error

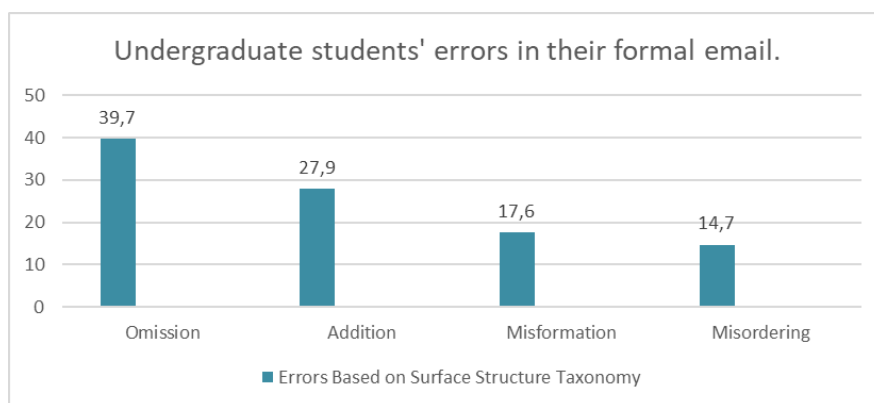
	Undergraduate Students' Writing	Researchers Corrections
The Misordering Errors	It located at mall Grand Indonesia	It located at Grand Indonesia mall
	the meeting place we proposed is at Leza restaurant	We proposed the meeting place is at Leza restaurant
	You can contact me if you have any questions or plan changes.	You can contact me if you have any questions or change of plan.
	I am Dafi, marketing manager of the company Fazt Respond	I am Dafi, marketing manager of the Fazt Respond company

Source: Analyze by researchers (2023)

From the 68 formal email which have been written by the undergraduate students', the researchers found that there are 10 misordering errors. It is 14,7% from overall formal email sample.

Discussion

Based on the formal email which written by the undergraduate students, the researchers analyzed the errors. The researchers use surface structure taxonomy in analyzing the errors. In surface structure taxonomy there are omission, addition, misformation and misordering errors. The researchers found that there are 27 (39,7%) omission errors, 19 (27,9%) addition errors, 12 (17,6%) misformation errors, and 10 (14,7%) misordering errors from overall email sample. Below is a chart that give a further more description about the errors that undergraduate students did in their formal email:



Picture 1.
Undergraduate Students' Formal Email Errors Graph
Source: Based on researcher's analyze result (2023)

From the chart above the researcher find out that the most error which the undergraduate students did in their formal email is Omission. This omission error happen

because the undergraduate students have limited proficiency in the target language which is further complicated by the interference from their native language. Omission errors is the highest error if we compare it with other types of errors. This was also stated by research which is done by Susanto (2016) that shows that because undergraduate students are pressed on time and tend to concentrate more on the content than the grammar, omission is the most common form of error they make.

The next error which analyze by the researchers is addition error. This error appear because undergraduate students do not know well about English vocabularies. They do not how to spell the word which result in they are not able to write a word in the correct way. It is possibly caused by the carelessness of the undergraduate students, which based on Meilia et al., (2013) research that this error happen relates to learners' lack of motivation in writing. The addition of letter may lead a misunderstanding in the message the email writer wants to convey.

Misformation error is a misspelled verb in each sentences. Some sentences are unmatched which are categorized to the misformation from the tense in grammar rules because the undergraduate students use the wrong formation of the word which is not suitable with the grammar rules. Sychandone (2016) said that learner chose the wrong words because the characters of the letter are similar. The undergraduate students appear to be perplexed with the English grammar rules and not able to distinguish character in English words. This is explained in Maolida & Hidayat (2021) research which mention that the students are unaware of the existence of different rules in using English, especially in the written form.

The least errors which done by the undergraduate students in their formal email is misordering error. Misordering error happen when undergraduate students incorrectly place a morpheme or a group of morphemes in their sentences. This error occurred because the undergraduate students do not know well about how to write a good sentence structure. This is likely to happen related to the sentences structure influence of their first language (L1) which is the sentence structure of Indonesian language. According to Corder (2000), errors in the second language acquisition are primarily due to native language interference.

Writing might start with a short essay and progress to a more complex piece. It covers how words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are arranged. Because of the undergraduate students limited knowledge of the target language, lack of target language vocabularies and grammar rules also the interference of their first language (L1), errors in their formal email writing occurred. All of these have to be brought to the English lecturers' attention especially to who are teaching business English, therefore the lecturers can help undergraduate students minimize errors in writing formal emails

CONCLUSION

Communicating currently is a vital component of all business transactions. Because of the technology advances, a lot of communication and transaction in business world have been done using email (electronic mail). That is why, one of the topic that undergraduate students learn in business English course is how to write formal email. Based on the previously mentioned reasons the researchers would like to investigate the error which is done by undergraduate students who take business English course in their formal email. The emails errors are analyzed using surface structure taxonomy.

Following extensive deliberation and meticulous examination of data from 68 formal emails written by undergraduate students, the researcher determines that there are 27 (39,7%) omission errors, 19 (27,9%) addition errors, 12 (17,6%) misformation errors, and

10 (14,7%) misordering errors from overall formal email sample. The most errors which is done by the undergraduate students in their formal email is omission error and the least is misordering errors. Refer to the formal emails analysis result, the undergraduate students done the errors because they have limited proficiency of the target language, lack of target language vocabularies and grammar rules also the interference of their first language (L1).

Error analysis has a very significant role to help the lecturers to find out what kind of errors that mostly the undergraduate students done in writing their formal emails and the cause why they do the errors. With the result of this research hopefully the lectures of English business could improve their teaching method by not only teaching how to write a good formal email but also about grammar rules and vocabularies. With identifying undergraduate students writing problems, the lecturers will able to use the information to find out appropriate solution. For the undergraduate students, they should be more careful in writing formal email especially regarding the grammar and writing rules of target language. The undergraduate students also have to aware their mother tongue differences with English grammar by that they will not literally transfer their L1 grammar to the L2. This will help to reduce the influence of their first language when they are writing formal email.

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