

ERROR ANALYSIS OF COUNTABLE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT AT FIRST GRADE

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji jenis dan frekuensi kesalahan siswa dalam menggunakan countable dan uncountable noun dalam penulisan teks deskriptif. Penelitian ini dilakukan di SMK IT Insan Kreatif Tanjung Morawa, dengan fokus pada siswa kelas satu. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah: (1) mengidentifikasi jenis kesalahan tata bahasa yang dilakukan siswa dalam menerapkan countable dan uncountable noun, dan (2) menentukan jenis kesalahan yang paling dominan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, dan partisipan terdiri dari 28 siswa dari kelas X-A. Data diperoleh dari teks deskriptif tertulis siswa, yang kemudian dianalisis berdasarkan Surface Strategy Taxonomy oleh Dulay, Burt, dan Krashen (1982). Analisis mengungkapkan bahwa empat jenis kesalahan utama terjadi: penghilangan (41,46%), kesalahan urutan (24,39%), penambahan (21,95%), dan kesalahan pembentukan (12,19%). Di antara semua itu, kesalahan penghilangan merupakan kesalahan yang paling dominan. Kesalahan-kesalahan ini terjadi karena beberapa faktor, termasuk kurangnya pemahaman tentang aturan klasifikasi kata benda, keterbatasan kosakata, dan kurangnya pemahaman tentang penggunaan yang benar dalam konteks. Selain itu, banyak siswa yang salah mengartikan kata benda yang tidak dapat dihitung dengan kata benda jamak yang dapat dihitung, sehingga mengakibatkan penggunaan penentu dan bentuk kata kerja yang tidak tepat. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa guru bahasa Inggris perlu menekankan instruksi yang terarah pada kata benda yang dapat dihitung dan tidak dapat dihitung, mengintegrasikan umpan balik korektif, dan memberikan praktik kontekstual untuk membantu siswa memahami struktur tata bahasa yang benar

Kata Kunci:*Kata Benda yang Dapat Dihitung dan Tidak Dapat Dihitung, Teks Deskriptif, Analisis Kesalahan*

Abstract

Grammar serves as the foundation for effective communication in writing. One of the critical grammatical comp. This study aims to examine the types and frequency of students' errors in using countable and uncountable nouns in descriptive text writing. The research was conducted at SMK IT Insan Kreatif Tanjung Morawa, focusing on first-grade students. The objectives of the study are: (1) to identify the types of grammatical errors made by students in applying countable and uncountable nouns, and (2) to determine the most dominant type of error. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method, and the participants consisted of 28 students from class X-A. The data were obtained from students' written descriptive texts, which were then analyzed based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). The analysis revealed that four main types of errors occurred: omission (41.46%), misordering (24.39%), addition (21.95%), and misformation (12.19%). Among these, omission errors were the most dominant. These errors occurred due to several factors, including a lack of understanding of noun classification rules, limited vocabulary, and insufficient exposure to correct usage in context. Additionally, many students confused uncountable nouns with plural countable nouns, resulting in inappropriate use of determiners and verb forms. The findings of this study suggest

that English teachers need to emphasize targeted instruction on countable and uncountable nouns, integrate corrective feedback, and provide contextualized practice to help students internalize correct grammatical structures. This research also contributes to the broader field of English language teaching by offering insights into common learner difficulties in grammar, which can be addressed through enhanced pedagogical strategies.

Keywords: Countable and Uncountable Nouns, Descriptive Text, Error Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Language is a crucial medium for communication, and in the context of learning a foreign language, mastery of the fundamental components of language becomes essential. English, as a global language, plays an increasingly important role in various sectors such as education, business, technology, and international relations. Among the four core language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing writing is often regarded as the most complex. Writing requires not only vocabulary and grammar knowledge but also the ability to organize ideas and express them in a coherent and structured manner. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, mastering writing skills, particularly grammatical accuracy, remains a significant challenge (Anggara & Wennyta, 2018).

Grammar serves as the foundation for effective communication in writing. One of the critical grammatical components in English is the correct use of nouns, especially countable and uncountable nouns. Nouns form the basis of sentence construction, and understanding their classification directly influences a student's ability to construct grammatically correct sentences. In English, countable nouns refer to items that can be counted individually, such as "book," "apple," and "car," while uncountable nouns refer to substances or concepts that cannot be counted individually, such as "water," "sugar," and "information." The distinction between these two categories is essential for learners, as it affects article usage, pluralization, and subject-verb agreement (N.K, P, & A.P.S, 2019).

Despite the importance of understanding countable and uncountable nouns, many Indonesian students continue to face difficulties in applying these concepts in their writing. Errors often occur in areas such as article usage ("a," "an," "the"), the use of quantifiers ("many," "much," "some," "any"), and the selection of correct verb forms. For instance, students may write incorrect sentences like *"I have many sugar"* or *"He gave me an information."* These errors demonstrate a lack of understanding of noun types and their grammatical implications. Moreover, such errors are not only frequent but also persistent, indicating a deeper issue in the students' internalization of English grammar rules.

Error analysis plays a vital role in identifying and understanding these recurring mistakes. According to James (Sukmawati, Setiawati, & Asmawi, 2022) error analysis is the process of observing, analyzing, and classifying the deviations students make in a second language. It provides valuable insights into the learners' interlanguage—the transitional linguistic system constructed by learners on their path to full proficiency. By analyzing the types and sources of errors, educators can better understand the learners' difficulties and adapt teaching strategies to address these issues effectively.

In this context, the present study focuses on identifying the types of errors made by students in using countable and uncountable nouns in descriptive text writing. Descriptive texts

are chosen because they are frequently used in educational settings and require learners to describe people, objects, places, or events using clear and precise language. Writing descriptive texts also demands an accurate application of grammar, especially the proper use of nouns, articles, and modifiers. Therefore, this genre serves as an appropriate medium to assess students' understanding and application of countable and uncountable nouns (Amelia, Rachmajanti, & Anugerahwati, 2021).

The research is conducted at SMK IT Insan Kreatif Tanjung Morawa, an Islamic vocational high school that emphasizes both religious and academic education. The participants are first-grade students who have learned basic English grammar, including the classification of nouns. During the teaching practice program, the researcher observed that many students encountered difficulties in using countable and uncountable nouns correctly in writing assignments. These difficulties manifested in various forms, such as the omission of necessary articles, incorrect pluralization, or misuse of quantifiers (Siadari, Tampubolon, & Silitonga, 2023).

For example, students often wrote sentences like *"There are many furniture in the room"* or *"She needs a sugar for the recipe,"* which indicate confusion between countable and uncountable nouns (Nurlaili & Juliana, 2021). These examples reveal that even after formal instruction, students still struggle with the fundamental rules governing noun usage. This situation raises critical questions about the effectiveness of current teaching methods and the depth of students' grammatical understanding (Muis, 2019).

Several factors may contribute to these persistent errors. One major factor is the influence of the students' first language (L1), Bahasa Indonesia, which has different grammatical structures from English. In Bahasa Indonesia, most nouns do not change form to indicate pluralization, and there is no equivalent article system as in English. This structural difference can lead to negative language transfer, where students apply rules from their L1 to English, resulting in errors. Another factor is the limited exposure to authentic English usage. Many students learn English primarily through textbooks and classroom instruction, with minimal practice in real-life contexts. This lack of exposure hampers their ability to internalize grammatical rules and apply them correctly in writing.

Moreover, the traditional focus on rote memorization rather than communicative competence may also hinder students' language development. In many cases, students are taught grammar rules in isolation without sufficient opportunities to apply them in meaningful communication. As a result, they may know the rules theoretically but fail to use them correctly in context. This gap between knowledge and application underscores the importance of integrating grammar instruction with practical writing activities that encourage students to use the language actively and reflectively (Ahmada, 2020).

The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable input for English teachers, curriculum developers, and education practitioners. By understanding the specific types of errors students make and their underlying causes, educators can design more effective instructional materials and interventions. For instance, teachers can incorporate more focused grammar exercises, use visual aids to illustrate noun classifications, and provide corrective feedback that targets common errors. Additionally, incorporating authentic texts and

communicative writing tasks can help students develop a deeper understanding of how grammar functions in real-world communication (Purba, 2022).

In summary, this research seeks to address the gap in students' understanding of countable and uncountable nouns by identifying the types of errors they commonly make and analyzing the frequency of these errors. The study applies the Surface Strategy Taxonomy by Dulay et al. (Andansari, Sari, & Murwantono, 2020), which categorizes errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. By using this framework, the research aims to provide a detailed and systematic analysis of student errors and offer practical recommendations for improving grammar instruction in EFL classrooms.

Based on the researcher's observations, preliminary data, and theoretical framework, the following research questions are formulated:

1. What types of errors do first-grade students at SMK IT Insan Kreatif Tanjung Morawa make in using countable and uncountable nouns when writing descriptive texts?
2. What is the most dominant type of error found in students' use of countable and uncountable nouns in descriptive texts?

The answers to these questions will contribute to a better understanding of student difficulties in grammatical usage and inform future teaching practices aimed at minimizing such errors (Sitorus & Sipayung, 2018). Through careful analysis and reflection, this study aspires to enhance the overall quality of English language education and support learners in developing more accurate and effective writing skills

METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative design to analyze students' errors in the use of countable and uncountable nouns within descriptive text writing. The qualitative method was selected because it allows for an in-depth exploration of linguistic phenomena as they naturally occur in students' writing (Fitria, 2020). This method is appropriate for identifying, categorizing, and interpreting various grammatical errors without manipulating variables (BERUTU, 2022). The central aim was not to test a hypothesis quantitatively but rather to describe and interpret the errors to better understand the learners' interlanguage development and grammatical competence (Pohan, 2018).

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at SMK IT Insan Kreatif Tanjung Morawa, a private vocational high school located in Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. This school was chosen due to its emphasis on both general education and character-building, as well as the availability and willingness of students to participate in the research. The population of this study consisted of all first-grade students (X) in the academic year 2024/2025. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, targeting one class that had been actively engaged in English writing tasks involving descriptive texts. The researcher selected Class X-A, which consisted of 28 students, as the sample. These students were chosen because they had recently been taught countable and uncountable nouns and were assigned a descriptive text writing task as part of their English curriculum. The class was considered representative of the broader student population in terms of academic ability and English proficiency level (Talan, 2020).

Data Collection Technique

The primary data of this study were obtained from students' written descriptive texts. To collect the data, the researcher administered a writing task in which students were instructed to compose a descriptive paragraph of at least 100–150 words, focusing on describing a place, person, or object. They were instructed to incorporate both countable and uncountable nouns in their writing. The writing task was conducted in the classroom during a regular English lesson to ensure a natural writing environment (Talan, 2020).

The students' writings were collected and compiled for analysis. Each paper was numbered and anonymized to maintain confidentiality. The researcher made photocopies of all texts and retained both the originals and duplicates for data processing. No dictionaries or electronic devices were allowed during the writing session to ensure the authenticity of the students' language use and to avoid external grammar corrections (Manik, Manurung, Barus, & Padang, 2022).

Data Analysis Technique

After collecting the students' descriptive texts, the researcher analyzed the errors using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (Tri, Roemintoyo, & Yamtinah, 2018). This taxonomy classifies errors based on how surface structures are altered and includes four main types:

1. Omission – where necessary items are absent.
2. Addition – where unnecessary items are added.
3. Misformation – where incorrect forms are used.
4. Misordering – where elements are in incorrect order.

Each student's text was read carefully, and every error related to countable and uncountable nouns was identified and categorized. Errors unrelated to noun use, such as those involving verb tense or punctuation, were excluded from the analysis. For each error identified, the researcher provided the original sentence, the corrected version, and the type of error based on the taxonomy.

The frequency of each error type was then calculated to determine which type occurred most often. The percentage of each category was also computed to support the quantitative representation of qualitative data. This helped to answer the second research question regarding the most dominant error type (Amelia et al., 2021).

To ensure validity and reliability, the analysis was verified by a peer reviewer another English teacher at the same institution—who independently reviewed the classified errors. Any discrepancies in categorization were discussed and resolved through consultation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were upheld throughout the research process. Permission was obtained from the school principal and English teacher before the data collection took place. All students participated voluntarily and were informed that their work would be used for academic research purposes only. Names and identities were kept anonymous in all stages of the study, and the students' scores or performance results were not affected by their participation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the research based on the analysis of students' written descriptive texts. The data were collected from 28 students in class X-A of SMK IT Insan Kreatif Tanjung Morawa. The findings are organized into three main subsections: (1) the types of errors found in the students' writings, (2) the frequency and percentage of each type of error, and (3) examples of each error type along with analysis. The classification of errors is based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (Satif, 2021) which includes omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

Types of Errors in Using Countable and Uncountable Nouns

Based on the analysis of 28 student texts, four major types of grammatical errors related to countable and uncountable nouns were identified:

1. Omission
2. Addition
3. Misformation
4. Misordering

Each of these categories is explained in detail below.

Omission Errors

Omission occurs when necessary grammatical items are left out of a sentence. In the context of countable and uncountable nouns, this includes the omission of articles (a, an, the), quantifiers (some, many, much), or plural markers (such as -s or -es).

For example:

"I buy apple from market."

→ Correct: *"I buy an apple from the market."*

"She drink milk every morning."

→ Correct: *"She drinks milk every morning."*

In these sentences, the absence of the article "an" before the countable noun *apple*, and the omission of the plural *s* or proper subject-verb agreement, results in grammatically incomplete expressions. Such errors indicate that students are not yet fully aware of the syntactic structures that accompany noun types.

A recurring pattern in the data showed that many students omitted determiners before singular countable nouns, possibly because Bahasa Indonesia does not require articles, and this language transfer interferes with their English grammar.

Addition Errors

Addition errors occur when an element is inserted where it is not necessary. This commonly includes unnecessary use of articles or plural markers with uncountable nouns.

For example:

"He gave me an information."

→ Correct: *"He gave me information."*

"I have many sugars at home."

→ Correct: *"I have much sugar at home."*

The above examples show that students wrongly applied the rules for countable nouns to uncountable nouns. This suggests that learners either overgeneralized grammar rules or failed to recognize the nature of the noun in use.

Another form of addition involves redundant use of quantifiers:

"There are some many students in the class."

→ Correct: *"There are many students in the class."*

Such errors reflect a misunderstanding of how determiners and quantifiers function differently depending on the noun classification.

Misformation Errors

Misformation refers to the use of an incorrect form of a word or structure. In relation to countable and uncountable nouns, misformation errors include using incorrect plural forms of uncountable nouns or applying incorrect quantifiers (Nurlaili & Juliana, 2021).

Examples include:

"She gave me two advices."

→ Correct: *"She gave me two pieces of advice."*

"There are less students today."

→ Correct: *"There are fewer students today."*

In these examples, the uncountable noun *advice* is mistakenly pluralized, and the quantifier *less* is used instead of *fewer*, which is the correct form for countable nouns.

Another misformation issue observed is related to irregular noun forms:

"The childrens play outside."

→ Correct: *"The children play outside."*

This reflects a lack of vocabulary knowledge and morphological awareness among the students. It also suggests insufficient exposure to written and spoken English in authentic contexts.

Misordering Errors

Misordering errors involve the incorrect placement of words or morphemes in a sentence. While less frequent than other types, these errors still occurred, especially in phrases that included quantifiers and nouns.

Examples include:

"I have sugar much in the jar."

→ Correct: *"I have much sugar in the jar."*

"Information the teacher gave is important."

→ Correct: *"The information the teacher gave is important."*

Such errors often result from direct translation from the students' mother tongue, where sentence structure differs significantly from English.

Frequency and Percentage of Each Error Type

From the 28 texts analyzed, a total of 41 noun-related grammatical errors were found and categorized as follows:

Table. 1 Frequency and Percentage of Each Error Type

Error Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Omission	17	41.46%
Misordering	10	24.39%
Addition	9	21.95%
Misformation	5	12.19%
Total	41	100%

These findings indicate that omission is the most frequently occurring error type, followed by misordering, addition, and misformation.

Analysis of Examples and Causes

Omission Analysis

Omission errors were often associated with:

Lack of article usage before singular countable nouns (e.g., “*I saw dog*” instead of “*I saw a dog*”).

Missing plural markers on countable nouns (e.g., “*She has three book*” instead of “*She has three*”).

Omitted quantifiers before uncountable nouns (e.g., “*He needs water*” without context).

The cause of these errors can be traced to the influence of the first language (Bahasa Indonesia), which does not use articles or distinguish plural forms in the same way as English (Mubarak & Santoso, 2023).

Addition Analysis

Addition errors were primarily caused by overgeneralization. Students often added articles like “a” or “an” to uncountable nouns, mistakenly treating them as countable. For instance, students assumed that nouns such as *information, furniture, sugar, and equipment* could be pluralized.

This suggests the need for focused instruction on noun categorization and the appropriate quantifiers for each.

Misformation Analysis

Misformation errors showed that students were often unaware of irregular noun forms and lacked morphological knowledge. This included the inappropriate pluralization of uncountable nouns or incorrect quantifier use.

For example:

“*Newses*” for “*news*”,

“*a feedback*” instead of “*feedback*”.

These errors reveal a superficial understanding of word forms and limited vocabulary reinforcement in classroom instruction.

Misordering Analysis

These errors were strongly influenced by the structure of Bahasa Indonesia, in which word order can be more flexible or completely different. Many students translated phrases word-for-word without adjusting to English syntax.

Such errors emphasize the need for contrastive analysis teaching, where students are made aware of the structural differences between L1 and L2.

Detailed Error Patterns Based on Individual Student Samples

To provide a more granular view of the findings, this section presents selected student writing samples that illustrate typical error patterns across different types. These examples are anonymized and labeled (e.g., Student A, B, C) for confidentiality.

Student A

Sentence: *"My sister gives me a money to buy something."*

Error Type: **Addition**

Explanation: The article "a" is incorrectly used before the uncountable noun "money." This reflects a common assumption among students that all singular nouns require an article, regardless of countability.

Sentence: *"She always bring milk from market."*

Error Type: **Omission**

Explanation: Missing plural determiner ("the") before "market" and lack of subject-verb agreement.

Student B

Sentence: *"There are furnitures in my house."*

Error Type: **Misformation**

Explanation: "Furniture" is an uncountable noun and does not take a plural "-s." The student appears unaware that some mass nouns are always singular in form, even if referring to multiple items.

Sentence: *"I have sugar much for the cake."*

Error Type: **Misordering**

Explanation: The placement of "much" after the noun is incorrect. The correct phrase is *"I have much sugar for the cake."* This shows confusion in syntactic order of quantifiers and noun heads.

Student C

Sentence: *"He gives some informations about the meeting."*

Error Type: **Misformation + Addition**

Explanation: The pluralization of "information" and the use of the plural quantifier "some" show confusion over the uncountable status of the noun.

Sentence: *"I need a oil."*

Error Type: **Addition**

Explanation: Use of indefinite article "a" with uncountable noun "oil" reflects overgeneralization of rules about singular noun modification.

These samples are illustrative of the broader patterns found across the 28 students, and they reinforce the earlier statistical conclusion that omission and misordering dominate in terms of frequency (Siregar, 2021a).

Cross-Linguistic Interference as a Factor

A strong contributing factor to the errors observed is **interlingual interference**, i.e., the influence of the students' native language (Bahasa Indonesia). In Bahasa Indonesia:

Articles such as “a”, “an”, and “the” do not exist. This leads to omission or misuse of these in English.

There is **no grammatical pluralization** using suffixes; thus, students often omit plural “-s” in English.

Quantifiers may come **after** or **before** the noun in more flexible ways.

This structural difference in grammar and word order leads to *interference-based misordering errors* like:

“Water much is needed” → instead of “Much water is needed.”

In addition, students rely heavily on **direct translation** strategies when writing. Without adequate contextual exposure or feedback, such errors persist.

Pedagogical Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study suggest several important implications for English teachers:

Explicit Grammar Instruction is Essential

Many students do not fully grasp the differences between countable and uncountable nouns, particularly their grammatical behavior in sentences. Teachers need to provide **focused grammar instruction** with clear and repeated examples.

Contrastive Analysis-Based Teaching

Introducing students to the **contrast** between English and Bahasa Indonesia grammar may reduce interference. For example, showing that “information” is uncountable in English but often treated as countable in Bahasa Indonesia.

Integration of Contextual Usage

Students tend to memorize rules but fail to apply them in writing. Using **authentic reading materials** and encouraging students to **highlight noun usage** in context can help bridge this gap.

Emphasis on Article and Quantifier Use

Errors involving articles and quantifiers made up the largest proportion of mistakes. Teachers should design exercises focusing solely on appropriate usage of:

“a / an / the”

“some / any / many / much”

countable vs. uncountable plural markers

Peer Review and Guided Correction

Encouraging students to work in pairs to edit one another’s writing can be beneficial. Teachers can provide correction codes (e.g., “OM” for omission, “MF” for misformation) so that students learn to recognize and repair their own errors.

General Indications of Learners’ Grammatical Competence

Based on the pattern and frequency of the errors, the following conclusions can be drawn about the students’ grammatical proficiency regarding countable and uncountable nouns:

Conceptual Understanding is Incomplete: While most students understand that nouns can be counted or not, they lack the deeper syntactic knowledge necessary to use them accurately in writing.

Article Usage is the Most Affected Area: The dominant omission of articles (especially “a” and “the”) suggests that article usage is the most difficult area in English noun grammar for these learners.

Grammar Transfer from L1 is Strong: Learners continue to rely on first-language rules when uncertain, leading to repeated patterns of error (NANDINI, Thooyibah, & Irianti, 2022).

Contextual Weakness: Students write grammatically incorrect but semantically understandable sentences. This implies their communicative competence may be higher than their grammatical competence, a common finding in early-stage EFL learners.

Summary of Findings

To summarize, the major findings of this research include:

1. Students made **41 errors** in their descriptive texts related to countable and uncountable nouns.
2. **Omission errors (41.46%)** were the most frequent, followed by misordering, addition, and misformation.
3. The most common issues involved article usage, noun pluralization, and inappropriate quantifier selection.

Errors stemmed primarily from:

1. Negative language transfer from Bahasa Indonesia,
2. Lack of explicit grammar instruction,
3. Insufficient exposure to contextual examples.

The results indicate a **need for improved grammar pedagogy** focused on practical application, article training, and awareness of L1 interference. These findings serve as a foundation for the next section, which will provide a deeper theoretical and pedagogical interpretation of the data in the Discussion.

Discussion

This section interprets the findings presented earlier in light of existing theories and previous studies. It aims to explain the significance of the results, explore the reasons behind the error patterns, and suggest how these insights contribute to improving English language teaching and learning, particularly in relation to the use of countable and uncountable nouns in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms.

The Dominance of Omission Errors: Grammatical Blind Spots

The findings of this study revealed that omission errors were the most frequent type (41.46%). These errors primarily involved the omission of necessary articles (“a,” “an,” “the”), plural markers, or quantifiers. This is consistent with the findings of Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (Siregar, 2021b) who observed that learners often struggle with function words more than content words. Articles, in particular, are often treated as secondary or even invisible in a learner’s mental grammar.

This high frequency suggests that learners do not fully internalize the grammatical rules governing noun modification. In languages like Bahasa Indonesia, articles are not used, and nouns do not require pluralization with an “-s” or “-es.” As a result, EFL students frequently omit

such features, not because they are unaware of their existence, but because their first language does not require them, leading to negative language transfer.

The omission of articles and determiners is particularly problematic in writing, as it can make a sentence grammatically incorrect and sometimes ambiguous. For example, “*She saw cat on street*” is understandable, but grammatically incomplete in English. The persistent occurrence of this pattern suggests a **grammatical blind spot**—a rule that learners fail to notice, remember, or apply.

Misordering and Transfer from L1 Structure

Misordering was the second most frequent error (24.39%), often observed in noun phrases where quantifiers or modifiers were placed incorrectly. This is clearly indicative of **interlingual interference**. As Ellis (Nurinsani, Herdiawan, & Rofi'i, 2022) points out, second language learners tend to transfer grammatical structures from their first language into the target language when they lack sufficient L2 competence.

For example, the sentence “*I have sugar much*” mimics the Indonesian structure “*Saya punya gula banyak*”, which is grammatically correct in Bahasa Indonesia but violates English word order. Learners instinctively translate sentence patterns from their native language, resulting in syntactic errors in English.

These errors emphasize the importance of contrastive grammar instruction in the classroom. Teachers need to highlight differences explicitly between English and Bahasa Indonesia sentence patterns, particularly concerning word order in noun phrases.

Overgeneralization in Addition and Misformation Errors

Addition (21.95%) and misformation (12.19%) errors often stem from overgeneralization, a phenomenon in which learners apply a rule universally, without regard to exceptions. For instance, students may assume that all nouns can be made plural by adding “-s” (e.g., *furnitures, informations*) or that all singular nouns must have an article (*a milk, an advice*).

According to Richards and Schmidt (Gultom & Barus, 2020) overgeneralization is a natural part of language acquisition, especially in the early stages. While these errors demonstrate that students are actively applying learned rules, they also reflect insufficient awareness of exceptions and irregularities in English grammar.

Such findings highlight the need for differentiated instruction and greater emphasis on **irregular nouns** and **exceptions** in English, especially when it comes to uncountable nouns. Teachers must go beyond basic rules and explore edge cases that challenge learners' assumptions.

Conceptual Challenges of Countable vs. Uncountable Nouns

Countable and uncountable nouns present a **semantic and grammatical challenge** for EFL learners because classification often depends on abstract categories or cultural framing. For example, “coffee” is uncountable when referring to the substance (*I drank some coffee*) but countable when referring to servings (*I ordered two coffees*).

Learners who do not grasp this conceptual fluidity are prone to making either omission or addition errors. This suggests that instruction should not treat countable/uncountable

classification as fixed or binary, but rather context-dependent and semantically motivated (Amartya, Nugraha, & Ridwan, 2022).

Furthermore, the distinction between these noun types affects not only pluralization but also article use, verb agreement, and choice of quantifiers. Therefore, instruction must be **integrated** and **holistic**, showing how one grammatical feature influences others.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The results of this study are in line with other research findings. For instance, Fitriani (Dewi, Hernawan, & Apsari, 2019) found that omission and addition were the most common error types in students' use of articles with nouns. Similarly, Sari & Setiawan (Erlinda, 2020) observed that students often struggled to distinguish between uncountable and countable nouns, especially in writing genres that required descriptive details.

Moreover, this study supports James (Felanie, 2021) who emphasized that learner errors are valuable indicators of learning processes and can serve as diagnostic tools for improving instruction. The patterns identified in this study reinforce the idea that grammatical errors, particularly in noun use, are systematic and predictable.

Pedagogical Insights and Recommendations

Given the observed error patterns, several recommendations can be made for classroom practice:

Targeted Grammar Instruction:

Lessons should be designed to explicitly address the most common errors identified—especially omission of articles and plural markers. Teachers can use gap-fill exercises, sentence reordering, and correction tasks to focus on these points.

Use of Corpora and Authentic Texts:

Exposure to natural examples of countable and uncountable noun usage through authentic materials (e.g., short stories, news articles) can enhance learners' intuitive grasp of usage.

Visual Grammar Aids:

Charts, diagrams, and tables showing countable vs. uncountable noun rules and exceptions can serve as helpful memory tools for learners.

Contrastive Analysis Activities:

Tasks that compare sentence structures between Bahasa Indonesia and English can help raise learner awareness about syntactic differences and prevent negative transfer.

Error Correction Strategies:

Teachers should give **coded corrective feedback** (e.g., "OM" for omission, "AD" for addition) rather than direct corrections to encourage learners' metalinguistic thinking.

Contextual Writing Practice:

Assignments should be designed so that learners practice grammar in meaningful writing tasks (e.g., describing a favorite place using specific grammar rules).

The Role of Metalinguistic Awareness

One key insight from this study is the lack of **metalinguistic awareness** among students. Metalinguistic awareness refers to the ability to reflect on and manipulate language as a system. Learners who lack this awareness often use grammar unconsciously and are unable to explain why a particular structure is correct or incorrect (Trisnawati, Bunau, & Susilawati, 2019).

Promoting metalinguistic thinking—through teacher questioning, peer correction, and reflection tasks—can lead to greater long-term retention of grammatical rules. Students should be encouraged to ask “why” questions about grammar and to see grammar not as a set of disconnected rules, but as a system of meaning and structure.

Limitations of the Study

While the findings are robust, this study is limited in several ways:

1. The sample size (28 students) may not be representative of all EFL learners at the same level.
2. The data were collected from a single writing task in one genre (descriptive text), which may limit generalizability to other writing types (narrative, argumentative, etc.).
3. The focus on noun errors excludes other grammatical areas that may also contribute to writing difficulty.

Nonetheless, the insights gained offer a valuable starting point for future research and classroom-based intervention.

Summary of Discussion

In conclusion, the discussion reveals that:

1. Students face consistent challenges in mastering countable and uncountable nouns due to L1 interference, overgeneralization, and conceptual misunderstanding.
2. Omission and misordering are the most frequent errors, often rooted in syntactic transfer and limited awareness of article and quantifier rules.
3. Instructional approaches that are contrastive, contextualized, and reflective can reduce these errors and improve learners’ grammatical accuracy.

These findings align with broader research in applied linguistics and contribute to ongoing conversations about how best to support EFL learners in grammar acquisition

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to analyze and classify the types of grammatical errors made by students in the use of countable and uncountable nouns when writing descriptive texts. The study also aimed to determine the most dominant error type committed by first-grade students at SMK IT Insan Kreatif Tanjung Morawa. The Surface Strategy Taxonomy by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), which includes omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, was used as the analytical framework.

The findings revealed a total of 41 grammatical errors across 28 student texts. Among the four types of errors, omission errors were the most prevalent, accounting for 41.46% of all mistakes. These were followed by misordering errors (24.39%), addition errors (21.95%), and misformation errors (12.19%). The high occurrence of omission errors—such as missing articles or plural markers—indicates that students struggle with fundamental grammar structures that are not present in their first language, Bahasa Indonesia. This supports the claim that negative language transfer plays a significant role in shaping second-language learners’ error patterns.

The results also show that students often overgeneralize grammar rules. For example, they apply article use to uncountable nouns (“*a sugar*”, “*an information*”), or pluralize nouns

that should remain singular (*“furnitures”, “advices”*). This indicates a gap between memorized grammar rules and actual understanding of their application in various contexts. Misordering errors, often due to literal translations from Indonesian, further reveal how first language syntax can distort English grammatical structure when not properly mediated by instruction.

Based on these findings, several key conclusions can be drawn:

1. **The primary source of grammatical errors is a lack of mastery in differentiating between countable and uncountable nouns.** This includes the inability to recognize which nouns require plural markers, which are uncountable by nature, and which determiners or quantifiers should be used accordingly.
2. **Omission and misordering are the dominant error types**, indicating that students often fail to supply necessary grammatical components or arrange them correctly in the sentence. These types of errors can compromise the clarity and accuracy of their written communication.
3. **The influence of the mother tongue (L1) is significant**, especially in omission and misordering errors. Bahasa Indonesia’s structural differences—such as the absence of articles and flexible word order—lead to repeated transfer errors when students write in English.
4. **Students demonstrate partial understanding of grammar rules but lack deeper, functional knowledge.** They know certain rules in theory but are unable to apply them consistently in writing. This is seen in their misapplication of rules and failure to distinguish between similar grammatical items (e.g., “much” vs. “many,” “a” vs. “an,” or the use of plural for uncountable nouns).
5. **The teaching of countable and uncountable nouns needs to be contextualized, contrastive, and practice-based.** Students must be exposed not only to the rules, but also to the contextual situations where those rules apply. Grammar instruction should be integrated with writing tasks, rather than treated as isolated drills.

In light of these conclusions, several practical implications arise. English teachers are encouraged to:

1. Reinforce article usage and quantifier rules through targeted practice and repetition.
2. Emphasize the difference between countable and uncountable nouns with clear examples and classification tasks.
3. Use contrastive analysis to make students aware of the differences between Bahasa Indonesia and English structures.
4. Incorporate corrective feedback that encourages students to recognize and fix their own errors, promoting greater metalinguistic awareness.
5. Design classroom activities that require students to apply grammar rules in real writing contexts, such as descriptive paragraphs, peer feedback, and self-editing checklists.

Furthermore, this study opens avenues for future research, such as exploring the effectiveness of corrective feedback strategies on reducing noun-related grammatical errors or examining similar error patterns across other genres of writing (e.g., narrative, argumentative). Expanding the sample size and applying longitudinal methods could also provide richer insights into the developmental aspects of grammar acquisition among EFL learners.

In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of understanding learner errors not as mere failures, but as evidence of language development in progress. By identifying, analyzing, and addressing these errors, educators can more effectively guide students toward greater grammatical accuracy and confidence in their English writing

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