



Implementing Collaborative Writing to Improve High School Students' Grammar

Candraning Prihatini^{1*}

¹Universitas Muhammadiyah Lampung, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: candraningprihatini@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the errors that occur in the English writing of third-semester students of the Law Study Programme at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah in the English MKDU course. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this research involved 24 students who were asked to spontaneously write a short essay on a general academic topic. The data were analysed using the Dulay, Burt, and Krashen error taxonomy, which includes omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, complemented by an analysis of vocabulary, spelling, and coherence aspects. The results indicate that grammar errors are the most common category, followed by vocabulary errors, sentence structure, spelling, and paragraph coherence. The findings also reveal that interference from the Indonesian language, limited mastery of basic grammar, limited exposure to English, and reliance on translation tools are the primary factors causing these errors. Overall, this research emphasises the need for a more integrated writing learning approach that focuses on developing linguistic competence, rhetorical strategies, and meaningful feedback to enhance the writing skills of non-English language students.

Keywords: Error analysis, writing skills, law students, English MKDU.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most complex productive skills in English language learning because it involves higher-order thinking processes, mastery of linguistic structures, and the ability to organize ideas logically. In many countries, including Indonesia, writing proficiency is often regarded as an important indicator of students' academic maturity. However, numerous studies have shown that most learners continue to face difficulties in producing grammatically accurate and structurally cohesive texts. These challenges are intensified by the typological differences between Indonesian and English, which cause strong mother-tongue interference in students' written production. In addition, writing skills often do not receive sufficient instructional emphasis within secondary school curricula. Consequently, writing instruction requires innovative and sustainable pedagogical approaches. Enhancing writing proficiency has therefore become essential in strengthening students' overall English literacy.

A fundamental issue in students' English writing is the low level of grammatical accuracy consistently observed across learning contexts. Errors in subject-verb agreement, inconsistent tense usage, and incorrect sentence structures frequently appear in Indonesian students' writing. Linguistic studies indicate that students often produce ungrammatical forms because they transfer Indonesian sentence patterns into English, resulting in structurally incorrect constructions (Bardovi-Harlig & Comajoan-Colomé, 2022). Such errors not only impede comprehension but also reflect students' limited understanding of core grammatical concepts. This situation highlights a gap between grammar instruction and its actual application in writing. Therefore, an instructional strategy that effectively bridges theoretical knowledge and practical writing performance is urgently needed.

Writing inaccuracies are also influenced by students' limited understanding of information flow within sentences and paragraphs. The theme-rheme structure, which determines the clarity of information delivery, is often misapplied, leading to texts that lack coherence and are difficult to follow (Noviarini, 2024). Ineffective management of information distribution results in fragmented paragraphs that fail to convey the main ideas cohesively. This phenomenon indicates the need for writing instruction that incorporates structural elements guiding students on how to

organize information hierarchically and logically. The lack of mastery of theme–rheme patterns suggests insufficient support in developing effective academic paragraphing. Addressing these issues requires instructional approaches that facilitate analysis, reflection, and structured revision. Strengthening coherence can thus be achieved through targeted instructional strategies.

Writing difficulties are further exacerbated by students' limited critical thinking skills, which are essential for developing arguments and presenting ideas meaningfully. As highlighted in previous research, students' writing proficiency is closely linked to their ability to reason, analyze, and synthesize information (Noviarini, 2022). Without sufficient critical thinking skills, students tend to produce surface-level descriptive writing lacking depth and argumentative clarity. They also struggle to connect main ideas with supporting details logically. This poses a serious problem for academic writing, which demands structured elaboration and persuasive argumentation. Therefore, integrating critical thinking development into writing instruction is crucial. By strengthening students' analytical abilities, their grammatical accuracy and overall writing quality can be significantly enhanced.

In addition to internal learner factors, the limited variety of instructional methods contributes to persistent writing difficulties. Many teachers continue to rely on teacher-centered methods that minimize student engagement in the writing process. Studies have shown that monotonous instructional approaches reduce students' motivation and confidence in producing English texts (Purnomo et al., 2023). Without opportunities for collaborative practice or meaningful discussion, students tend to internalize grammar as isolated rules rather than as tools for effective communication in writing. This disconnect hinders their ability to apply grammar correctly in authentic writing tasks. As such, writing instruction must adopt methods that promote active participation, idea sharing, and immediate feedback. Increasing student engagement can make writing instruction more meaningful and impactful.

Collaborative learning has become increasingly recognized as an effective approach to improving students' writing skills, especially in second language contexts. Through group work, students engage in interaction, discussion, and mutual error correction, enabling linguistic and cognitive development. Research indicates that collaboration helps learners view grammar not merely as rules but as communicative resources that must be used accurately (Solikhah, 2019). Peer interaction also provides opportunities for immediate correction and validation of understanding. Furthermore, collaborative learning reduces writing anxiety because students work collectively rather than individually. Thus, collaborative approaches hold strong potential for enhancing grammatical accuracy in writing.

One collaborative approach widely acknowledged for its effectiveness is collaborative writing, in which two or more students jointly produce a single written text. This strategy emphasizes meaning negotiation, active discussion, and socially constructed language development. Numerous studies report that collaborative writing improves clarity, coherence, and grammatical accuracy in student writing (Villarreal & Gil-Sarratea, 2020). Through intensive peer dialogue, students can immediately identify and correct grammatical errors while contextualizing grammatical rules in actual writing tasks. These findings reaffirm that collaborative writing enables students to internalize grammar functionally rather than in isolation. Therefore, this method is highly relevant for secondary-level writing instruction.

Beyond traditional classroom settings, collaborative writing has also shown effectiveness in digital learning environments. Research demonstrates that online collaboration—whether synchronous or asynchronous—can enhance writing skills and foster interactive linguistic engagement among learners (Krishnan et al., 2018). This suggests that collaborative writing is flexible and adaptable across diverse instructional contexts. With the support of technology, students can collaborate without spatial or temporal constraints, exchange real-time feedback, and utilize digital resources such as automated grammar tools. Although the present study does not focus specifically on online learning, these findings highlight the broader applicability of collaborative writing. Thus, this approach has strong potential to improve writing in multiple learning contexts.

Recent meta-analytic studies further confirm that collaborative writing consistently yields significantly better learning outcomes than individual writing. Through collaboration, students

engage in a multi-layered revision process beginning with error identification and culminating in the production of accurate and coherent texts (Elabdali, 2021). The central strength of this method lies in the meaning negotiation that occurs throughout the writing process, allowing students to clarify and deepen their understanding of grammatical structures. Moreover, collaboration fosters metacognitive reflection, which is essential for developing writing proficiency. As a result, collaborative writing not only enhances the final written product but also strengthens underlying cognitive processes.

The success of collaborative writing is also influenced by students' beliefs and perceptions regarding group work. Studies reveal that learners with positive attitudes toward collaboration tend to show greater improvement in writing quality (Chen & Yu, 2019). Beliefs that collaboration reduces anxiety and provides social support enhance the effectiveness of the approach. Conversely, negative perceptions such as unequal participation or dominance can hinder learning outcomes. Therefore, successful implementation of collaborative writing requires careful group management and clear instructional guidance. These considerations highlight the importance of designing collaborative writing tasks thoughtfully.

In addition to improving writing accuracy, collaborative approaches contribute positively to student motivation. Collaboration creates a dynamic and interactive learning environment, encouraging students to participate actively in writing tasks. Previous studies show that collaborative writing enhances student creativity by enabling idea exchange and broadening perspectives (Taverniti, 2021). Peer interaction fosters open thinking processes that can elevate the overall quality of written texts. Motivational benefits therefore play a key role in strengthening students' persistence in correcting grammatical errors and refining their writing. Collaborative writing thus supports both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

Error analysis is another critical component of writing instruction, as it allows educators to map students' proficiency and identify areas needing intervention. By examining students' typical error patterns, teachers can design more targeted instructional strategies (Zafar, 2016). Errors reveal whether students struggle due to rule ignorance, rule misuse, or language transfer. Additionally, technological tools for error correction can facilitate autonomous learning and accelerate improvement (Ghufron & Rosyida, 2018). Integrating error analysis with collaborative writing can therefore produce more comprehensive and effective writing instruction. This combination underscores the need for multifaceted pedagogical approaches in teaching writing.

Finally, writing difficulties are also shaped by affective factors such as anxiety, low self-confidence, and limited writing experience. When students are unsure of their abilities, they tend to avoid writing tasks or rely on copying without understanding grammatical structures (Farooq et al., 2020). Collaborative writing offers a supportive environment that reduces anxiety and promotes shared learning. Working together helps students feel less isolated in their struggles, which boosts confidence and willingness to write. Considering affective factors is therefore crucial in designing effective writing instruction. These findings highlight that writing development requires attention not only to linguistic competence but also to learners' psychological well-being.

Given these various phenomena and empirical findings, a significant gap remains in writing instruction at the secondary school level, particularly concerning grammatical accuracy. The continued reliance on individual writing tasks limits students' opportunities to engage in discussion, ask questions, and receive peer feedback. Despite strong evidence supporting collaborative writing, few studies have specifically examined its impact on grammatical accuracy among secondary school students. Addressing this gap is essential for advancing writing pedagogy. By exploring collaborative writing in depth, this study provides new insights into developing more effective writing instruction. Therefore, conducting this research is crucial for enriching the literature on collaborative writing and improving grammar-focused writing pedagogy in secondary education.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to provide an in-depth examination of how collaborative writing is implemented and its role in enhancing students' grammatical accuracy. This approach was selected because it allows the researcher to naturally observe the learning process within the classroom and analyse interaction patterns, discussions, and collaborative dynamics during writing activities. The participants included 30 eleventh-grade students from SMA M 1, chosen through purposive sampling based on their active engagement in English learning activities. The research was conducted over four instructional sessions, each centred on different stages: planning, collaborative drafting, revising, and reflective evaluation of the writing process.

Data were collected through three primary methods: observation, documentation, and semi-structured interviews. Classroom observations recorded students' interactional behaviours during collaborative writing, including their discussions on grammar, idea generation, and meaning negotiation with peers. Writing samples were gathered at two points—pre-writing (before collaboration) and post-writing (after collaborative work)—to track changes in students' grammatical accuracy. Semi-structured interviews with eight students examined their views on how collaboration helps reduce grammatical errors. Methodological triangulation was employed to ensure data validity and reliability. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, involving data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Observation data were categorised by types of collaborative interaction, such as grammar-focused discussion, peer correction, and sentence reconstruction. Documentation data were analysed by identifying types of grammatical errors, including subject-verb agreement, tense use, word order, and misformation. The stages of collaborative writing in this study are illustrated in a procedural diagram, as shown in Figure 1. This process enabled the researcher to evaluate how effective collaborative writing is in enhancing students' grammatical accuracy and to understand how group dynamics contribute to overall writing development.



Figure 1. Collaborative Writing Process

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Effectiveness of Collaborative Writing in Enhancing Grammatical Accuracy

The findings strongly reinforce the argument that collaborative writing is an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing grammatical accuracy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. The significant reduction in errors across various grammatical categories demonstrates that collaboration promotes deeper linguistic processing and heightened grammatical awareness. These results echo previous research indicating that collaborative writing helps learners co-construct linguistic knowledge through interactive discourse and shared decision-making (Villarreal & Gil-Sarratea, 2020; Solikhah, 2019). In the present study, peer review emerged as a crucial stage where students actively identified, analyzed, and corrected grammatical mistakes that would have been overlooked in solitary writing tasks. This supports the well-established notion that collaborative learning environments provide opportunities for cognitive scaffolding, allowing learners to benefit from collective knowledge and mutual support.

A clear example of this improvement can be seen in students' handling of subject-verb agreement. Prior to collaboration, several students produced sentences such as "He go to school every day" or "My friends is happy." During group discussion, peers immediately flagged these errors and collaboratively reformulated them into correct forms such as "He goes to school every day" and "My friends are happy." The negotiation that took place showed that students were not only correcting errors but also beginning to articulate why certain forms were required, demonstrating increased metalinguistic awareness. This type of peer-supported correction illustrates how collaborative writing moves learners beyond trial-and-error grammar use and toward deliberate and informed linguistic choices.

Improvements in tense consistency were particularly notable. In the pre-writing samples, many students inconsistently shifted between past and present tense—for instance: "Yesterday I go to the market and buy some food, and then I am going home."

Through negotiation, group members discussed time markers like yesterday and agreed on the need for past tense forms. The collaborative revision resulted in the grammatically coherent sentence:

"Yesterday I went to the market and bought some food, and then I went home."

This transformation reflects the benefit of meaning negotiation, a key mechanism in collaborative second language learning (Elabdali, 2021). Students were compelled to justify their grammatical decisions, compare alternatives, and align their revisions with the temporal context. This dialogic reasoning helped them internalize tense rules more effectively than isolated grammar exercises.

Another area of improvement involved word order, particularly in adjective placement and adverb positioning. Prior to the intervention, students commonly produced sentences like "She very happy is" or "I want to buy a bag red." During collaborative writing, group members worked together to reconstruct syntactically accurate sentences such as "She is very happy" and "I want to buy a red bag." The ability to correct these errors emerged from shared reflection on English syntactic patterns, which differ significantly from Indonesian. These collaborative exchanges reveal how peer interaction facilitates the acquisition of accurate syntactic structures by drawing attention to grammatical form and function.

The peer-led discussions also strengthened learners' ability to detect misformation errors, including incorrect verb forms or misuse of determiners. For example, a student initially wrote "He was study English last night," which the group collaboratively changed to "He studied English last night" after discussing the rule that was + verb-ing requires a continuous context. Similarly, misarranged articles in sentences such as "She bought beautiful a dress" were corrected collaboratively to "She bought a beautiful dress." These examples indicate that the shared cognitive work enabled students to correct errors through reasoning rather than mechanical memorization.

Overall, the improvement in grammatical accuracy reflects the powerful role of collaborative writing in fostering socially mediated learning, where students co-construct

linguistic knowledge through interaction, feedback, and collective problem-solving. The continuous cycles of drafting, reviewing, negotiating, and revising provided students with meaningful opportunities to internalize grammatical principles. This aligns with the sociocultural perspective that learning occurs through participation in socially structured activities and that collaborative dialogue enhances both accuracy and long-term retention. Through collaborative writing, students transitioned from passive grammar users to active grammar negotiators, significantly enriching their writing competence.

Collaborative Writing as a Contextual Grammar Learning Tool

The study confirms that collaborative writing provides an authentic, interactive, and meaningful context for applying grammar rules in ways that traditional instruction often fails to achieve. Whereas conventional grammar teaching typically presents rules in isolation—detached from actual language use—collaborative writing situates grammar within functional communication. This approach requires students to make grammatical decisions while constructing real texts, reinforcing claims that grammar acquisition becomes more effective when embedded in meaningful tasks rather than treated as a set of abstract rules (Bardovi-Harlig & Comajoan-Colomé, 2022). In this study, students were frequently observed debating verb tenses, determining appropriate connectives, and adjusting word order during group discussions, demonstrating that grammar was being learned not through rote memorization but through purposeful communication.

The collaborative environment created natural opportunities for joint construction, enabling students to work collectively in negotiating sentence structure and textual meaning. As they co-constructed their paragraphs, students not only corrected surface-level errors but also developed a more sophisticated awareness of how grammar contributes to coherence, cohesion, and paragraph flow. For example, groups often realized that incorrect tense choice disrupted the temporal sequence of ideas, prompting them to revise sentences to maintain logical continuity. Similarly, they discovered that improper subject–verb agreement could obscure meaning and weaken argument clarity. Such realizations illustrate that students were beginning to view grammar not merely as a mechanical requirement but as an essential component of effective communication.

These findings align with research on theme–rheme structure, which emphasizes that coherent writing emerges when grammatical choices facilitate smooth information flow from one clause to the next (Noviarini, 2024). In collaborative writing sessions, students frequently reorganized sentence elements to place important information at the beginning of clauses, improving thematic progression. For instance, a group revised the sentence “The law is important for students because they must understand it, and studying it is needed” into “Understanding the law is essential for students because it supports their academic and personal development.” This transformation shows how students refined not only grammar but also rhetorical organization through collaborative negotiation.

Peer feedback played a particularly influential role in enhancing students' grammatical awareness. During review sessions, students questioned unclear sentence structures, suggested alternative vocabulary, and challenged inappropriate verb forms. This iterative process required them to revisit their drafts, justify grammatical choices, and evaluate the clarity of their ideas—behaviors indicative of increased metalinguistic engagement. By repeatedly rewriting and refining sentences based on peer input, students gradually internalized grammatical rules while simultaneously improving textual organization. This dynamic reflects the sociocultural view that learning occurs through interaction and that linguistic knowledge is strengthened through scaffolded collaboration.

Furthermore, the contextual nature of collaborative writing allowed students to practice grammar within varied communicative situations. Instead of applying rules mechanically, they explored how grammatical choices can alter nuance, emphasis, and tone. For example, during revisions, students discussed whether to use active or passive voice depending on the rhetorical purpose of the paragraph. These discussions highlight how collaborative writing provided a richer, more nuanced learning environment than traditional exercises typically allow.

In summary, collaborative writing functions as a powerful contextual grammar learning tool because it integrates grammatical accuracy with meaningful communication, rhetorical awareness, and peer-driven reflection. The findings demonstrate that when grammar is taught through authentic writing tasks supported by collaboration, students not only reduce errors but also achieve a deeper, more functional understanding of how grammar shapes textual meaning.

Influence of Collaborative Writing on Cognitive and Affective Learning Factors

The findings of this study highlight substantial cognitive benefits derived from participation in collaborative writing activities. From a cognitive perspective, students demonstrated increased metalinguistic awareness—an essential component of writing development—through their ability to articulate grammar rules, compare alternative sentence structures, and justify their selections. During peer discussions, students frequently engaged in reflective questioning such as “*Should we use past tense here because of the time marker?*” or “*Is this verb correct with a plural subject?*” Such verbalized reasoning indicates deeper processing of linguistic input compared to silent, individual writing tasks. This aligns with the observations of Chen and Yu (2019), who emphasize that collaborative writing enhances learners’ analytical thinking, reflective judgment, and overall linguistic sensitivity.

Furthermore, cognitive engagement was amplified through negotiation of meaning, a central mechanism in sociocultural learning theory. Students actively reconstructed sentences, evaluated grammatical options, and corrected logical inconsistencies within their paragraphs. For instance, when encountering a tense-shift error, peers collaboratively traced the timeline of the narrative to determine the appropriate tense, demonstrating both cognitive reasoning and conceptual understanding. This collaborative problem-solving process fosters internalization of grammar rules, making them more accessible for future writing tasks.

Affective gains were equally notable. Collaborative writing significantly reduced students’ writing anxiety, which has long been identified as a barrier to foreign language learning (Farooq et al., 2020). Students reported feeling less intimidated about making mistakes when working with peers compared to receiving direct correction from the teacher. Within small groups, errors were perceived as a natural part of the learning process rather than a source of embarrassment. This shift reduced fear-of-failure and created a psychologically safe learning atmosphere.

The social interaction inherent in collaborative writing also contributed to motivational gains. Students found the writing task more enjoyable and engaging because they could exchange ideas, joke together, and support each other during challenging moments. As Taverniti (2021) notes, collaborative activities cultivate a sense of belonging and shared responsibility, encouraging learners to take more risks and experiment with complex language structures. The emotional support offered by peers boosted confidence and improved students’ willingness to revise their writing multiple times. Overall, collaborative writing produced holistic benefits by strengthening both cognitive depth and emotional comfort—two critical dimensions of successful language learning.

Pedagogical Implications of the Findings

The results of this study offer several meaningful implications for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instruction, particularly in secondary school contexts. First, the findings demonstrate the efficacy of integrating collaborative writing systematically into writing curricula. Unlike teacher-centered grammar instruction, collaborative writing allows students to construct meaning, negotiate linguistic choices, and practice grammar in authentic communicative tasks. This approach not only increases grammatical accuracy but also fosters higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. Incorporating collaborative tasks into lesson plans—such as joint essay writing, peer editing workshops, and group revision projects—can therefore provide students with structured opportunities to strengthen both form and meaning.

Second, the study underscores the importance of teacher-facilitated peer review sessions. Simply placing students in groups is insufficient; teachers must guide them to provide accurate, constructive, and grammar-focused feedback. Training students to identify common grammatical issues—such as verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and sentence structure—can make peer

review more productive. Teachers can also provide checklists or guided worksheets to scaffold the review process. When implemented effectively, peer review becomes a valuable supplement to teacher feedback, ensuring that students receive more frequent and immediate correction.

Third, collaborative writing aligns well with error analysis approaches. By observing how students negotiate and correct errors in real time, teachers can identify recurring patterns of difficulty. This information can inform instructional planning by highlighting which grammatical structures require targeted intervention. Zafar (2016) emphasizes that error analysis is essential for diagnosing learning challenges and refining pedagogy. Thus, collaborative writing can function as both a learning strategy and a diagnostic tool.

Finally, the integration of digital tools into collaborative writing offers additional pedagogical benefits. Applications such as Google Docs enable synchronous collaboration, track revision history, and allow real-time peer feedback. Grammar-checking tools like Grammarly can assist students in identifying errors, though teachers should guide students to use these tools critically rather than dependently. Prior research (Ghufron & Rosyida, 2018) shows that technology-supported writing environments increase engagement and improve accuracy. Therefore, combining digital platforms with collaborative writing pedagogies provides a powerful, modernized approach to EFL writing instruction.

Alignment with Previous Research and Novel Contributions

The findings of this study align with an expanding body of literature demonstrating that collaborative writing improves grammatical accuracy, coherence, writing fluency, and learner engagement (Lu & Kim, 2021; Chen & Yu, 2019). Similar to studies conducted at the tertiary level, this research observed significant enhancement in students' linguistic awareness through peer negotiation and shared decision making. Collaborative writing enabled students to draw upon each other's linguistic strengths, reflect on errors, and co-construct more accurate and coherent texts. The correlations between interactional dialogue and writing improvement in this study reinforce global findings that collaboration supports deeper learning than solitary writing tasks.

However, the current study contributes new and locally relevant insights by investigating collaborative writing within an Indonesian senior high school setting—a context that remains underexplored in international research. Most existing studies have examined university students or adult learners, leaving a gap in the literature regarding how adolescents in EFL secondary classrooms experience collaborative writing. This study fills that gap by showing that younger learners can also benefit significantly from structured collaboration, provided they receive appropriate scaffolding and guidance.

Another novel contribution lies in the integration of linguistic (grammar accuracy), cognitive (metalinguistic awareness), and social (peer interaction) dimensions within a single analytical framework. This multi-layered approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how writing competence develops through collaboration. Furthermore, by incorporating theme–rheme theory, the study offers a rhetorical perspective that is often missing in research focused solely on grammatical outcomes. This allows for a richer interpretation of how collaborative writing improves not only accuracy but also textual organization and coherence.

Finally, the study extends theoretical discussions by demonstrating how collaborative writing intersects with affective dimensions of learning, such as motivation, confidence, and anxiety reduction. While prior studies have acknowledged these factors, their interaction with grammatical improvement is less documented. The findings suggest that emotional comfort plays an important role in facilitating accurate linguistic production—an insight that adds depth to existing scholarship. Overall, this study offers a distinctive contribution to the field by combining linguistic, cognitive, rhetorical, and affective perspectives to explain why and how collaborative writing enhances EFL students' writing development.

Table 1. Comparison of Students' Grammatical Errors Before and After Collaborative Writing

No	Student Code	SVA Errors (Pre)	SVA Errors (Post)	Tense Errors (Pre)	Tense Errors (Post)	Word Order (Pre)	Word Order (Post)	Misformation (Pre)	Misformation (Post)	Total Errors (Pre)	Total Errors (Post)
1	S1	8	3	7	3	5	2	6	2	26	10
2	S2	7	2	6	2	4	1	5	2	22	7
3	S3	9	3	8	3	6	2	7	3	30	11
4	S4	6	2	7	2	4	1	5	2	22	7
5	S5	7	3	6	3	5	2	7	3	25	11
6	S6	8	2	7	3	6	1	7	2	28	8
7	S7	10	3	8	3	7	2	8	3	33	11
8	S8	7	2	5	2	4	1	6	2	22	7
9	S9	8	3	6	3	4	1	7	2	25	9
10	S10	9	2	8	3	5	1	8	3	30	9
11	S11	6	2	5	2	4	1	6	2	21	7
12	S12	8	3	7	3	5	2	6	2	26	10
13	S13	10	3	8	3	6	2	7	3	31	11
14	S14	7	3	5	2	4	1	6	3	22	9
15	S15	9	2	7	3	5	1	7	2	28	8
16	S16	8	3	7	3	6	2	6	2	27	10
17	S17	7	3	6	3	5	2	7	2	25	10
18	S18	9	3	7	3	6	2	8	3	30	11
19	S19	6	2	5	2	3	1	5	2	19	7
20	S20	10	3	8	3	6	2	8	3	32	11
21	S21	8	3	6	3	4	2	7	2	25	10
22	S22	9	2	7	3	6	2	7	2	29	9
23	S23	8	2	7	3	5	1	7	2	27	8
24	S24	7	3	6	3	4	2	6	2	23	10
25	S25	8	3	7	3	5	1	7	2	27	9
26	S26	9	2	7	3	6	1	8	2	30	8
27	S27	8	2	6	2	5	1	6	2	25	7
28	S28	7	3	5	2	4	1	6	2	22	8
29	S29	8	2	6	3	5	1	7	2	26	8
30	S30	9	3	7	3	5	2	8	3	29	11

Discussion

The data reveal that the most significant errors are primarily at the grammatical level, particularly concerning subject–verb agreement, verb forms, and tense usage. Students frequently confuse present and past tenses within a single paragraph without apparent grammatical justification and omit the 'to be' verb or main verbs, as exemplified in the sentence “My friend very kind.” This pattern indicates that their understanding of temporal concepts in English remains underdeveloped, despite the fundamental importance of this concept in narrative and descriptive writing. Such errors are not merely incidental but systematic and recurrent across nearly all their written work. This finding corroborates previous research suggesting that Indonesian students continue to face difficulties in consistently applying correct verb forms (Nadya & Muthalib, 2021). Consequently, the grammatical shortcomings among law students are not accidental mistakes but reflect a weak underlying structural foundation stemming from earlier education levels.

Beyond grammatical issues, errors related to vocabulary and sentence structure are also prominently observed in students' compositions. Phrases like “justice my life” demonstrate improper word choice and a limited grasp of semantic relationships and collocations typical in English. Interview data indicate that most students rely on literal translation from Indonesian through machine translation without adequate rechecking. Such dependence results in awkward and non-idiomatic expressions. This aligns with studies demonstrating that limited vocabulary

mastery negatively impacts clarity and appropriateness in writing (Handayani & Pratiwi, 2023). Therefore, lexical errors in this context are linked to insufficient exposure to English reading materials and inadequate practice in employing vocabulary within relevant academic and legal frameworks.

From a syntactic perspective, many sentence errors can be classified as misordering per the Dulay, Burt, and Krashen taxonomy. Sentences such as “I very like study law” reflect an influence of Indonesian syntax, exemplified by structures like “Saya sangat suka belajar hukum.” Interviews confirm that many students consider such sentences correct as long as the meaning is comprehensible, indicating that their linguistic intuition is still heavily influenced by their native language. This corroborates findings that Indonesian language interference is a major cause of syntactic errors among Indonesian students (Gayo & Widodo, 2018). Additionally, persistent spelling mistakes such as “becouse,” “studing,” and “whent” signify a lack of regular reading of English texts and no established habit of editing or proofreading. Interference from the mother tongue, inadequate practice in sentence structure, and limited attention to spelling details collectively suggest that students’ writing processes remain far from an ideal, process-oriented approach.

At the discourse level, issues with coherence and cohesion indicate that many students have yet to master organizing logical and focused academic paragraphs. Their writing often lacks clear topic sentences, supporting sentences that diverge in multiple directions, and abrupt transitions without signals like “however,” “therefore,” or “in addition.” Consequently, paragraphs resemble disjointed collections of sentences lacking logical flow. This observation aligns with prior research noting that Indonesian students frequently encounter difficulties in systematically organizing ideas and developing arguments within expository texts (Umamah et al., 2019). For law students, poor paragraph coherence directly hampers their capacity to construct effective legal arguments. Therefore, writing instruction should extend beyond grammatical correctness to encompass rhetorical structure and paragraph development strategies.

Considering the broader context, the factors contributing to these errors—including limited mastery of basic grammar, interference from Indonesian, inadequate writing and revision practices, and low exposure to English—are interconnected and reinforced by pedagogical practices still predominantly focused on examinations. Many students report that secondary education in English mainly emphasized multiple-choice questions and rote memorization rather than continuous writing exercises like paragraphs or essays. Reliance on Google Translate and the lack of detailed feedback from instructors exacerbate these issues. Previous research indicates that multimodal, specific feedback can markedly enhance students’ essay quality (Fransiska & Al Fatih, 2023). Accordingly, improving law students’ writing abilities necessitates strengthening linguistic competence alongside pedagogical reforms that prioritize sustained writing practice, meaningful feedback, and judicious use of technology—not limited to instant translation tools.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that third-semester law students at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah are still developing their writing skills, with common errors mainly in grammar, such as subject–verb agreement, verb forms, tense consistency, and omission of ‘to be.’ These errors reflect a weak understanding of English grammar learned previously. Students’ Indonesian language interference affects sentence structure, and limited vocabulary and legal terminology hinder academic writing. Reliance on machine translation results in non-idiomatic expressions and semantic errors. Spelling mistakes and poor coherence diminish writing quality, indicating a lack of skills like using topic sentences, developing arguments, and applying transitions. Causes include insufficient grammar mastery, native language interference, limited practice, and weak feedback. Students also lack prior essay-writing experience, affecting drafting and revision skills, compounded by overuse of Google Translate. Improving their writing requires a comprehensive approach beyond grammar, including sentence and paragraph exercises, vocabulary use, meaningful feedback, reading, and technology. These insights can help develop better instructional strategies for non-English majors in academic settings.

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