

An Analysis of Grammatical Error in Writing Skill

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Abstract: This research was to find out the kinds of grammatical errors made by the students in writing undergraduate theses and to find out the most common error made by the students. The population of this research was the English students' undergraduate theses. This research used cluster random sampling technique. The researchers chose 20 backgrounds of undergraduate theses as the sample. The result of this research found eight kinds of grammatical error made by the students namely Article, Verb Tense, Subject-Verb Agreement, Singular/Plural, Word Class, Sentence Structure, Spelling, and Punctuation. The most common grammatical error made by the students in writing undergraduate theses is error in Verb Tense with 86 errors (27.65%). The next is Word Class with 55 errors (17.68%), Sentence Structure with 42 errors (13.50%), Article with 37 grammatical errors (11.89%), Punctuation with 28 errors (9%), Singular/Plural with 24 errors (7.71%), Spelling with 21 errors (6.75%), and Subject-Verb Agreement with 18 errors (5.78%).

Keywords: Grammar, Grammatical Error, The Introduction of Undergraduate Thesis

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the ways to transfer knowledge and it should be learnt seriously and appropriately. The knowledge that have been written and spread will be consumed by many various people over the world. Using a good grammar in writing can make the reader easier to understand the purposes of the writing and vice versa. As a matter of fact, by using a bad grammar in writing, the reader potentially makes the worst interpretation of the writing (Maming, Irmayanti, and Nur 2019). It is certain and understood that learners make errors in the process of learning. Learning a language is

actually a process of trial and error, in which the students form a hypothesis and later on prove it.¹ Doing errors is a natural part of learning a language.² It is essential for learners to make errors in the process

¹ Munawir. *Error Analysis in English Abstracts of Theses and Dissertations of Post Graduate Program of Universities in Makassar* (Makassar: State University of Makassar, 2014), p. 1.

² Bena Florita Krisetyawati. *An error Analysis on the Translation of English Noun Phrases into Indonesian of the Fifth Semester Students of the English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty* (Surakarta: Sebelas Maret University, 2010), p. 4.

of language learning.³ English students of State Islamic Institute of Parepare (IAIN Parepare), for getting their first academic degree, they are required writing their undergraduate thesis by using English Language. The ability to write an academic work by using English can be a true measurement to surmise that the students able to use English, especially in writing though they still make some errors. In writing skill, the most potential error is the error in applying the rules of language. The error is happened because of the lack of the students' mastery about the rules of English language (Yasim, Hasnawiah, and Roni 2018). Based on the preliminary studies done by reading some students' undergraduate thesis and discussing with the undergraduate thesis supervisors, the error of applying the English rules in writing undergraduate thesis is still done.

This research was a descriptive quantitative research. According to Fraenkel and Wallen,⁴ a descriptive method is used to explain, analyze, and classify something. This research used a cluster random sampling technique. The researchers chose 20 backgrounds of undergraduate theses as the sample of this research.

Error analysis technique was used in analyzing the data. The technique of data analysis in this research involved three steps as follows:

- a. Analyzing the grammatical errors.

- b. Classifying the grammatical errors in their appropriate kind.
- c. Calculating the total number and percentage of each kind of error by using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

P: Number of Percentages

F: Frequency of kind of grammatical error

N: Number of whole errors

There have been many researches related to this study. Some of them are as follows:

Asfihana⁵ who conducted a research on the students taking Grammar IV as their course. The researcher states that the students need more practice about the second section of TOEFL test (Structures and Written Expression). Furthermore, the students mentioned that they want the teacher of Grammar IV course uses more attractive teaching aids for attracting their motivation in mastering grammar. Jabeen⁶ tried to investigate why *Pakistani ESL* and *Iranian EFL* fail in producing true grammatical sentences in English though they have English as a compulsory subject at all levels in their learning institutions and schools. The results of the analysis

³ Aqsa Jabeen. *The Role of Error Analysis in Teaching and Learning of Second and Foreign Language* (Education and Linguistic Research, 2015, Vol. 1, No. 2), p. 60

⁴ Jack R. Fraenkell and Norman E. Wallen. *How to design and Evaluate research in Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 23.

⁵ Raida Asfihana. *The Needs of the Students Who Are Taking Grammar (Structures) IV Course at English Department of Tarbiyah Faculty Academic Year of 2012/2013* (Banjarmasin: IAIN Antasari, 2013), p. 12.

⁶ Aqsa Jabeen. *The Role of Error Analysis in Teaching and Learning of Second and Foreign Language*. (Education and Linguistic Research, 2015, Vol. 1, No. 2), p. 60-61.

states that the students lack of grammatical accuracy in their English writing and they are not sure about the grammatical rules that may apply in their English writing. The study concludes that the students highly influenced by the rules of their first language (L1).

2. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

2.1 Finding

The data described in this finding was taken from the students' introduction of their undergraduate theses. The students' introduction was identified and classified into various error categories. The researcher also presented the

frequency and percentage of errors in order to answer the second research question and to ease the readers to know the most common error made by the students in writing the introduction of undergraduate thesis. The detail description of the data can be seen as follows:

The Kinds of Grammatical Error Made by the Students in Writing Undergraduate Thesis.

In writing Introduction, this student made 15 grammatical errors. Those errors consisted of 5 kinds of grammatical error category. Have a look at the following table.

Table 1.
 The Grammatical Error Made by the Student 10.1300.034

Error Words	Correction	Kinds of Error
It is in line with Jimm Miller's statement which <i>said</i> that....	It is in line with Jimm Miller's statement which <i>says</i> that....	Verb Tense
It is in line with Jimm Miller's statement which said that <i>beside introduced</i> the discussion of phrases,	It is in line with Jimm Miller's statement which said that <i>besides introducing</i> the discussion of phrases,	Word Class
It is important to <i>analysis</i> the words.	It is important to <i>analyze</i> the words.	Word Class
parts of speech as a <i>basic</i> of language.	parts of speech as a <i>basis</i> of language.	Word Class
the way it works in a <i>sentence</i> .	the way it works in a <i>sentence</i> .	Singular/Plural
The base thing that we <i>learn</i> when we <i>study</i> a language <i>is</i> vocabulary.	The base thing that we <i>had learnt</i> when we <i>studied</i> a language <i>was</i> vocabulary.	Verb Tense

Error Words	Correction	Kinds of Error
a material about <i>grouping</i> of vocabulary	a material about <i>the group</i> of vocabulary	Article & Word Class
to make the right sentence is very important for us to learn about <i>part</i> of speech.	to make the right sentence is very important for us to learn about <i>the part</i> of speech.	Article
Part of speech is <i>consisting</i> of eight parts.	Part of speech is <i>consisted</i> of eight parts.	Word Class
It is basic for the <i>the</i> English learners.	It is basic for the <i>the</i> English learners.	Sent. Structure
But many students <i>get</i> difficulty to understand about narrative text	But many students <i>got</i> difficulty to understand about narrative text	Verb Tense
most of them <i>are</i> lack of vocabulary,	most of them <i>were</i> lack of vocabulary,	Verb Tense
they <i>are</i> lazy to read the text and also they <i>are</i> very lazy to open the dictionary when they <i>do</i> not know.	they <i>were</i> lazy to read the text and also they <i>were</i> very lazy to open the dictionary when they <i>did</i> not know.	Verb Tense
students' ability in identifying <i>part</i> of speech	students' ability in identifying <i>the part</i> of speech	Article

Regarding the table above, it shows that the most common error made by the student is 'verb tense' and 'Word class' with five errors of each and 'article' with three errors. The least is 'singular/plural and 'sentence structure' with only one error of each.

Frequency and Percentage of Grammatical Errors

Based on the data of all of the tables, the writer calculated the students' grammatical errors, analyzed the percentage of the errors, and classified them into kinds of grammatical error.

Table 2. The Frequency and Percentage of Grammatical Errors.

KINDS	Students' Grammatical Errors																				TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Article	3	6	3	3	2	3	-	1	3	-	1	1	2	-	3	2	1	-	2	1	37 11.89%
Verb Tense	5	3	3	3	7	7	13	2	1	3	4	-	3	2	6	6	2	8	4	4	86 27.65%
SVA*	-	-	2	-	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	-	-	-	3	-	-	18 5.78%
Sing/Pl**	1	-	-	-	2	1	2	1	1	-	1	2	1	-	1	2	1	4	2	2	24 7.71%
Word Class	5	4	2	5	4	8	-	-	2	2	-	3	2	4	2	4	2	2	3	1	55 17.68%
Sent. Sc***	1	3	2	3	2	2	-	1	2	1	3	5	2	3	1	2	2	-	4	3	42 13.50%
Spelling	-	1	-	1	4	2	-	-	1	1	-	1	6	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	21 6.75%
Punctua- tion	-	3	1	1	2	3	3	3	1	1	-	-	4	1	-	1	-	-	1	3	28 9%
TOTAL	15 (4.82)	20 (6.43)	13 (4.18)	16 (5.18)	24 (7.71)	28 (9)	19 (6.10)	9 (2.89)	12 (3.85)	9 (2.89)	11 (3.53)	13 (4.18)	21 (6.75)	12 (3.85)	14 (4.50)	18 (5.78)	8 (2.57)	18 (5.78)	17 (5.46)	14 (4.50)	311 (100%)

Based on the table above, by analyzing 20 introductions of undergraduate thesis, there are 311 errors made by the students in their writing. The highest percentage of grammatical errors made by the students is the error in using verb tense with 86 errors (27.65 %). After that, there are word class with 55 errors (17.68 %), sentence structure with 42 errors (13.50 %), article with 37 grammatical errors (11.89 %), punctuation with 28 errors (9 %), singular/plural with 24 errors (7.71 %), spelling with 21 errors (6.75 %), and subject-verb agreement with 18 errors (5.78 %). That is the order of grammatical errors made by the students in writing introduction from the highest to the lowest percentage of error. However, every student essentially has his/her own difficulties. Focusing on the highest three of the kinds of grammatical error namely 'verb tense,' 'word class,' and 'sentence structure,' there is only one student that did not make mistake in using verb tense and there are only two students which did not make error in constructing sentence structure and there are only three students that did not create error in determining word class. It can be a good reference

for a lecturer to give a big attention to teach the student not only about how to form tenses but also how to use tenses especially in writing undergraduate thesis, how to construct a good sentence structurally, and how to choose an appropriate word class to be used in writing. From eight kinds of grammatical errors made by the students in writing introduction above, the writers found certain subdivisions or certain categories of errors of each kind related to the common grammatical errors. Here are the details:

1) Article

An article is a small word which can cause a very large problem if it is used incorrectly. Basically, an article is an adjective which modifies a noun. From three kinds of article, students sometimes use it improperly. Based on this research, the writer found some subdivisions of errors in the use of the article. They are: the first is omitting article or a failure in using an article (a/an/the) when it is needed. The second is adding an article or inserting an article when it is unneeded. Here are the examples.

Table 3. Article

Subdivision	Error Word	Correction
Omitting article	can be called <i>master</i> of the foreign language if they able to speak using the foreign language (<i>use the article when the noun is specified by the other word, phrase or clause</i>)	can be called <i>the master</i> of the foreign language if they able to speak using the foreign language
Adding article	It is basic for the <i>the</i> English learners. (<i>no need to use two articles in modifying a noun</i>)	It is basic for the English learners.

2) Verb Tense

Tense simply shows the time of an action or state of being as shown by a verb. The verb is changed to show what time it is referring to. Time signals help people to know a proper verb tense to use in a sentence. The students have a problem in constructing the sentence in an

appropriate tense such as perfect and simple tense. They use the wrong verb whether base form/infinitive or past form to express past or present event. In this research, the writers found some subdivisions of errors in the use of verb tense. They are Simple Past Tense, Simple Present Tense, and Present Perfect Tense. Here are the examples.

Table 4. Verb Tense

Subdivision	Error Word	Correction
Simple Past Tense	It is in line with Jimm Miller's statement which <u>said</u> that.... <i>(use Simple Present Tense to explain a statement)</i>	It is in line with Jimm Miller's statement which <u>says</u> that....
Simple Present Tense	But many students <u>get</u> difficulty to understand about narrative text <i>(use Simple Past Tense to explain the result of a research)</i>	But many students <u>got</u> difficulty to understand about narrative text
Present Perfect Tense	It <u>has</u> proven that there <u>is</u> a significant difference of the students' achievement in mastering English vocabulary <i>(use Past Tense to explain an event happens in the past).</i>	It proved that there <u>was</u> a significant difference of the students' achievement in mastering English vocabulary

3) Subject-Verb Agreement

In English, there should be an agreement between a subject and a verb in a sentence. If the subject is singular, the verb should be singular too. If the subject is plural, the verb should be plural too. If the subject is the third singular person or thing, the verb should be singular. The students face confusion to match

subject and verb in a sentence. They sometimes ignore an appropriate agreement based on the subject. In this research, the writers found some subdivisions of errors in the use of subject verb agreement. They are (1) third singular person/thing, (2) singular plural subject and verb. Here are the examples.

Table 5. Subject-Verb Agreement

Subdivision	Error Word	Correction
third singular person/thing	the Qquestion Card Survey <i>are</i> expected to facilitate the students in learning English (<i>third singular thing is followed by singular verb</i>)	the Qquestion Card Survey <i>is</i> expected to facilitate the students in learning English
singular plural subject and verb	in this case, the local governments <i>is</i> deeply engaged in the role..... (<i>plural subject is followed by plural verb</i>)	in this case, the local governments <i>are</i> deeply engaged in the role.....

4) Singular/Plural

English noun is inflected for grammatical number. If it is a countable type of noun, it generally has a different form for singular and plural. English plural noun is formed from singular form. The type may be in the regular form of the noun or irregular form of the noun. The students face complex problems in this case because it is unusual for Indonesian to add certain letters to state a plural noun. They just

need to do repetition to a noun such as (*orang-orang*). In this research, the writers found some subdivisions of errors in the use of singular and plural noun. They are (1) Omitting 's/es' (failure to add 's' or 'es' to make a plural noun). (2) Adding 's/es' (the use of 's' or 'es' when it is unneeded). (3) Irregular plural noun (errors in using nouns which do not form the plural noun by adding 's' or 'es'. Here are the examples:

Table 6. Singular/Plural

Subdivision	Error Word	Correction
Omitting 's/es'	English teacher realizes that English is one of <i>the difficult subject</i> (<i>to form a plural noun, 'subject' should be added 's'</i>)	English teacher realizes that English is one of <i>the difficult subjects</i>
Adding 's/es'	Based on the problem above, the researcher applied "Find Someone Who" <i>activities</i> (<i>no need to add 's' in 'activity' because it is singular noun</i>)	Based on the problem above, the researcher applied "Find Someone Who" <i>activity</i>

Subdivision	Error Word	Correction
Irregular Plural Noun	It is one of <i>the medium</i> of communication (<i>the plural form (irregular form) of medium is 'media'</i>)	It is one of <i>the media</i> of communication

5) Word Class

Word class is a set of words that display the same formal properties, especially their inflections and distribution. It is similar to the more traditional term 'Part of Speech'. Knowing the word class helps the reader to catch the meaning of writing, such as which word modifies others. The students sometimes want to express adjective word but they present a

noun in the sentence. According to Swan (2001) that the students have considerable problems in distinguishing the pair of English words. In this research, the writers found some subdivisions of errors in the use of word class. They failed in using the noun, adjectives, adverb, gerund, past participle, present participle, and verb (bare infinitive). Here are the examples.

Table 7. Word Class

Subdivision	Error Word	Correction
Noun	to diagnose the <i>difficult</i> of the study in English (<i>'difficult' is adjective and the noun form of 'difficult' is 'difficulty'</i>)	to diagnose the <i>difficulty</i> of the study in English
Adjectives	writing is the most <i>importantly</i> skill. (<i>this sentence needs adjective word to modify the noun (skill). The adjective form of 'importantly' is 'important.'</i>)	writing is the most <i>important</i> skill.
Adverb	so the goal of the learning process can be run <i>effective and efficient</i> . (<i>'effective and efficient' is adjective form while this sentence needs adverb to modify verb (run). The adverb form of 'effective and efficient' is 'effectively and efficiently.'</i>)	so the goal of the learning process can be run <i>effectively and efficiently</i> .

Subdivision	Error Word	Correction
Gerund	the first problem in <u>develope</u> their speaking skill (<i>'in' is preposition and should be followed by object of preposition. Verb (develop) cannot be object of preposition. So, this sentence need gerund to be object of preposition.</i>)	the first problem in <u>developing</u> their speaking skill
Past participle	the teaching method or strategy should <u>be improving</u> . (<i>'the teaching method' is placed in subject position but it can do an activity. Surely, this sentence is a passive sentence. To form a passive sentence, past participle is needed.</i>)	the teaching method or strategy should <u>be improved</u> .
Present participle	technique can be used to develop the vocabulary is <u>played</u> games (<i>this sentence is an active sentence because the object (games) placed after the verb (play). So, it needs present participle not past participle form.</i>)	technique can be used to develop the vocabulary is <u>playing</u> games
Verb (bare infinitive)	We cannot <u>denily</u> that, English has an important role in this modern era. (<i>'cannot' is a modal auxiliary and it should be followed by bare infinitive.</i>)	We cannot <u>deny</u> that, English has an important role in this modern era.

6) Sentence Structure

A sentence is a group of words which starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop (.), question mark (?), or exclamation mark (!). A sentence should contain or imply minimally a

subject and a predicate. An object and an adverb are optional. In this research, the writers found some subdivisions of errors in the use of sentence structure. They are (1) omitting verb, and (2) adding a verb.

Table 8. Sentence Structure

Subdivision	Error Word	Correction
Omitting Verb	the researcher noticed that the students their <i>lack</i> of vocabulary (<i>'the students' is a subject and subject should be followed by a verb.</i>)	the researcher noticed that the students there <i>were lack</i> of vocabulary
Adding Verb	because <i>they</i> are able <i>to be make</i> students enjoy and fun (<i>'be' and 'make' are verb and the rule forbid a verb followed by the other verb.</i>)	because <i>they</i> are able <i>to make</i> students enjoy and fun

7) Spelling

Some English learners, especially for those who use English as a second or foreign language, have problems with written English because they should pronounce words differently from their writing. Some students in IAIN Parepare also

write English word with misspelling because they are influenced by the words that they usually pronounce. In this research, the writers found some subdivisions of errors in spelling words. They are failures of using (1) omitting letter, (2) adding letter, and (3) wrong letter. Here are the examples.

Table 9. Spelling

Subdivision	Error Word	Correction
Omitting Letter	It attracts <i>attention of</i> many people to learn the language (<i>'attention' becomes 'attention'</i>)	It attracts <i>attention of</i> many people to learn the language
Adding Letter	English is not an instant skill which possessed in once <i>proccess</i> (<i>'process' becomes 'process'</i>)	English is not an instant skill which possessed in once <i>process</i>
Wrong Letter	Besides <i>fasilitating</i> the learners in learning the English, (<i>'fasilitating' becomes 'facilitating'</i>)	Besides <i>facilitating</i> the learners in learning the English,

8) Punctuation

Punctuation means making a few marks. It means putting the right kind of few marks in the right place to show the exact length and meaning of sentences. Proper punctuation is essential in written English to enable the reader to understand what a writer is trying to

say. Spacing the punctuation correctly is also important to make the writing readable. In this research, the writers found some subdivisions of errors in the use of punctuation. They are the use of comma and capital letter. Here are the examples.

Table 10. Punctuation

Subdivision	Error Word	Correction
Comma	Based on the description <i>above</i> <u>the</u> researcher was motivated to carry out this research... <i>(‘based on the description above’ is adverb placed in initial sentence and should be followed by a comma.)</i>	Based on the description <i>above,</i> <u>the</u> researcher was motivated to carry out this research...
Capital Letter	<i>developing students’ vocabulary mastery through Matching up games to the eighth-grade students of MTs Negeri Parepare</i> <i>(the initial letter of each words in the title should be capitalized except preposition).</i>	<i>Developing Students’ Vocabulary Mastery through Matching Up Games to the Eighth Grade Students of MTs Negeri Parepare.</i>

3. DISCUSSION

This section deals with the interpretation of the findings of grammatical error made by the students in writing the introduction of undergraduate thesis. The highlight of the findings above is discussed in this part. Inspired by the purposes of the research, this part is divided into two main discussions. The first part discusses the findings of this research deals with the kinds of grammatical error made by the

students in writing undergraduate thesis. The next part discusses the most common grammatical error made by the students in writing undergraduate thesis.

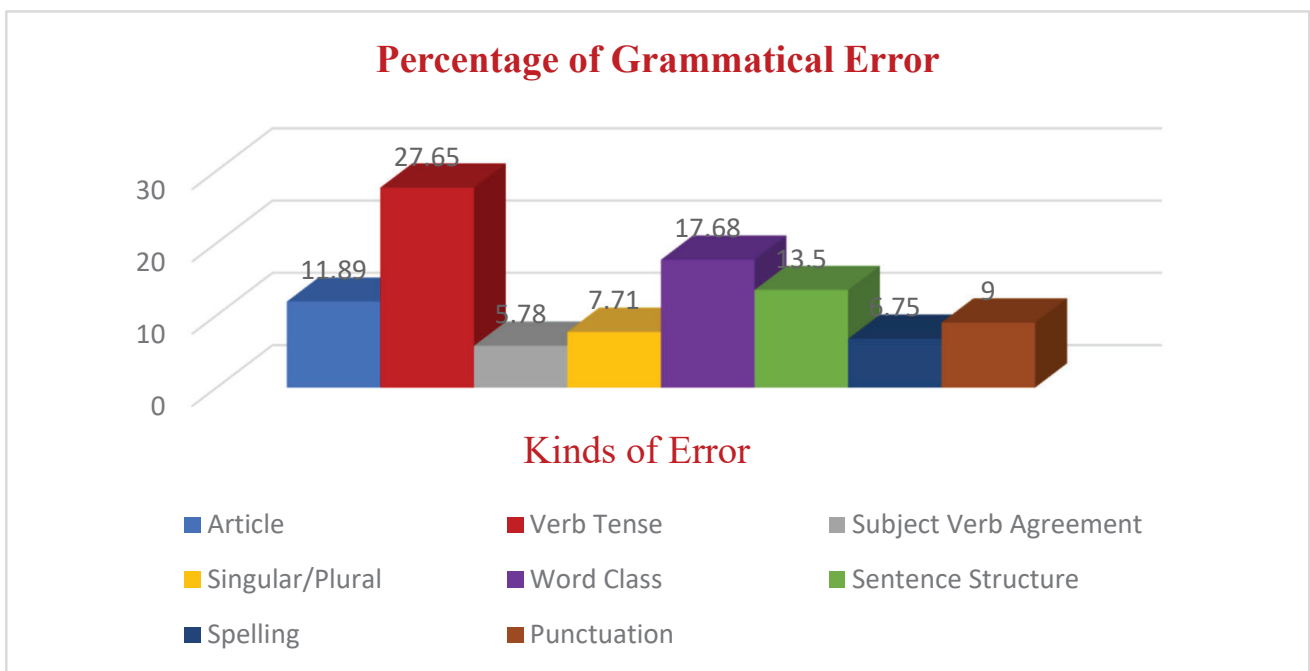
In this research, the writers tried to find out the kind of grammatical error made by the students in writing undergraduate thesis especially in writing the introduction of undergraduate thesis. After analyzing 20 introductions of undergraduate thesis, the writers

found eight kinds of grammatical error made by the students in writing the introduction and the names of the grammatical error is inspired from La Trobe University Handout for Students as mentioned in the previous chapter. The names of the kinds of grammatical error are Article, Verb Tense, Subject-Verb Agreement, Singular/Plural, Word Class, Sentence Structure, Spelling, and Punctuation.

The Most Common Grammatical Error Made by The Students in Writing Undergraduate Thesis.

After analyzing all of the sample taken by the researchers, it was found that the most common grammatical error made by the students in writing undergraduate thesis was error in Verb Tense with 86 errors (27.65 %). After that, there were Word Class with 55 errors (17.68 %), Sentence Structure with 42 errors (13.50 %), Article with 37 grammatical errors (11.89 %), Punctuation with 28 errors (9 %), Singular/Plural with 24 errors (7.71 %), Spelling with 21 errors (6.75 %), and Subject-Verb Agreement with 18 errors (5.78 %). It can be seen in the chart below.

Figure 1. The Percentage of Grammatical Error



The figure above shows that the students still face difficulties in writing undergraduate thesis. Focusing on the highest three of the kinds of grammatical error namely Verb Tense, Word Class, And Sentence Structure, the students are difficult to

use an appropriate tense in their writing and they are still difficult to differentiate the word class or part of speech based on the function of words in the sentence. Even, the students are difficult to construct a good sentence. It can be a good reference for a

lecturer to give a big attention to teach the student not only about how to form tenses but also how to use tenses especially in writing undergraduate thesis, how to construct a good sentence structurally, and how to choose an appropriate word class to be used in writing.

4. CONCLUSION

In this research, the writers found eight kinds of grammatical error made by the students in writing introduction namely Article, Verb Tense, Subject-Verb Agreement, Singular/Plural, Word Class, Sentence Structure, Spelling, and Punctuation. The sequence of grammatical error made by the students in writing undergraduate from the most error to the least error is Verb Tense, Word Class, Sentence Structure, Article, Punctuation, Singular/Plural, Spelling, and Subject-Verb Agreement.

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