

## **An empirical study on grammatical error uttered by non-native English students**

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**Abstract** - This research was conducted to analyze students' grammatical error uttered by 20 El. Tourism Trainee students. To data collection done through observation, aided by audio recording and it was completed by the note-taking technique during the research. The data were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively using classroom research. The data collected by recording the students' conversation was done teaching and learning activity in the classroom. The results of the analysis were found that students ignore the rule of an interrogative in asking a question. Most of the students tended to obtain dubious in expressing the statement and question during the conversation. The conclusion the students' ignorances because of their knowledge of the grammatical structure they are learning and practising during their activity of doing their tasks.

**Keywords:** error, grammatical error, non-native English students

## 1. Introduction

Several skills should be studied by the students in learning and using English during class activities. Those skills including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Speaking and writing are productive skills domain, while reading and listening are receptive skills. Productive skill, which is speaking, is considered a significant skill as it is one of the main keys to communication. In terms of speaking, this productive skill is the first way to interact with others in the social community.

The study on grammar errors uttered by the students conducted by previous researches in the past. Vinhas et al (2018) analyzed learners' grammar errors the highest error occurred in the category of substitution of simple non-past and the factors that contribute to the error production were interlingual error, intralingual error, the context of learning, and communication strategy. This means grammar errors are often discovered through conversation activities. Another barrier is the lack of students' understanding of grammar errors. Most students didn't understand a grammatical error, because they were unable to change grammatical error to be good sentences (Suhono, 2017). Misinformation, misordering, omission, and addition of word orders contribute to the students' ungrammatical utterances or errors in spoken English. Three common errors made by the students in this study were subject-verb agreement, noun changes, and the use of to be (Yildiz, 2016). This indicates that basic English grammar ought to be taught by the teachers in the classroom which assists learners to decrease the grammar error. The study conducted in Nigeria found that the misused of morphemes -ed and -s. (Aliyu, 2017). The students' miss concept on the English structure in Nigeria indicated the lack of understanding of past tense and verb-agreement English structure. The tendency of misused found by Kamlasi (2019).

The researchers found that students tend to use verb-ing instead of using verb infinitive in spoken English. They dispose to add and omit any linguistic category unconsciously when they speak. The difficulties in which the correct structure is made are still discovered from the learners' utterances. The study provided by Kirmizi and Karci in higher education in Turkey also found a high percentage of over-generalization errors. The errors involved the confusion of prepositions, confusion of articles, lack of agreement between subject and the main verb, irregular verb, wrong word choice, omission of the verb to be, using progressive, the sequence of the sentence, and the least were wrong use of word group (Kirmizi & Karci, 2017). Similarly, in the study conducted in Pakistan the researchers found that the majority of the students has committed top six errors which are (1) missing comma after introductory element error, (2) wrong tense or verb error, (3) capitalization error, (4) wrong word/ phrase, (5) fused Sentence, (6) missing comma in a compound sentence (Asif et al, 2019). In writing skills, grammar mistakes are also can be found by the researches. In other words, English structure mistake is not only discovered on speaking skill but also the learners' written text.

The influence of the first language towards the decrease of grammatical understanding was discovered by Eng et al (2020). The interference of L1 which becomes fossilized, besides the limited knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. The other study identified the interference of L1 in speaking English obtained by Suzanne. The use of the wrong preposition, and also the use of preposition that must not appear in a well-formed utterance are the major errors found in the students' utterances. The errors are caused by some factors but are dominantly influenced by the interference of the first language. This study strengthens the

argument that errors cannot be ignored and should be decreased as the students learn the English language more and more. The very limited data of this study cannot give enough description of various types and categories of preposition errors (Suzanne, 2017). This statement was supported by Wayar and Saleh's (2016) analysis who found that the students' errors were due to interference of mother tongue. This is because certain verbs in the Hausa language do not inflect for number and gender. This means the mother tongue has a significant role to decrease the students' grammar comprehension.

The conversation is the most fundamental form of oral communication as well as the significant method of rising speaking English skills. Practically, a conversation could be done by students by preparing the text or directly doing the interactive speaking with others in front of the classroom. In addition, interactive speaking could be one way to help the learners to improve their comprehension in learning and using English. There are some aspects suppose to be concerned while doing oral interaction with other people for instance grammar, pronunciation, and intonation. Formally, the sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought or a group of words that contains a Subject and a Predicate. The learners are obliged to understand in applying the grammar in written and spoken as the significance of structure in expressing the idea through text or oral is to make the correct usage.

The subjects of the research are students of Elizabeth tourism trainees who are studying and practising English related to the tourism department. English is the main language used in the tourism field which must be taught from the basics. Furthermore, learners are prioritized to use the English language to increase the language skill level. One of the components to support language skill is learning grammar or structure. However, there was a deficient of tourism trainee students grammar analysis in the previous research, this study attempts to analyze the grammar error spoken through the English conversation and the cause of the structure error in Elizabeth tourism trainee.

## **2. Method**

There were 20 students in the El. tourism trainee program conducted in this study. The data were taken by voice recording while the subjects were doing some conversations in a classroom with their friends and questioners were also given in order to find out the problem faced by the students when expressing the conversation. This questioner helped to determine the causes of miss grammar uttered by the students in front of the classroom practices and the questions for them are: (1) the kinds of grammatical error done by the students, (2) the cause of grammatical error expressed by the learners and these questions would be clearly explained in the result and discussion. A descriptive qualitative method was used to analyze which then elaborate on the data. The WH question structure from Schramm (2003) applied to evaluate the learners' grammar errors while doing conversation.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

A question in English could be used in getting information during the conversation and there are two kinds of question words In English grammar such as the wh-questions. The wh-questions usually start with a word beginning with wh-, but "how"

is also included. The wh-words are what, when, where, who, whom, which, whose, why, and how.

Data of Conversation conducted by El. Tourism Trainee

1<sup>st</sup> Conversation

A: Good afternoon, Dwi  
B: Good afternoon  
A: How are you?  
B: I am fine, and you?  
A: I am fine too thank you, what is your favorite food, dwi?  
B: My favorite food is fried noodle  
A: when last time you buy fried noodle?  
B: Yesterday.  
A: where is you buy it?  
B: Japanese restaurant, how about you, what is your favorite food?  
A: my favorite food is fried rice.  
B: when is you time?  
A: yesterday.  
B: where is you buy it?  
A: I am buy fried rice in traditional restaurant. Why you like fried noodle?  
B: because fried noodle is delicious.  
How about you?  
A: I like fried rice because this is traditional food of Indonesia

2<sup>nd</sup> Conversation

A: good afternoon Wis, how are you today?  
B: I am fine thanks. How about you?  
A: I am very well, thank you for ask me and where will you go now? Why you look so happy?  
B: I am so happy because my friends have weeding party  
A: really, are you happy because your friend is married?  
B: no, Because I have so a lot free food.  
A: whoa, you go there to take a free food. And when you will go there, you will go now or latter?  
B: I am go now because I am so hungry  
A: how you feel that you always eat the free food?  
B: I feel so happy.  
A: What's your favorite food?  
B: my favorite food is many  
A: what is that?  
B: like a fried rice, fried chicken, fried noodle and ayam betutu.  
A: you like local food with whom you to go there, by yourselfe or you go there with your friend?  
B: I go there with me  
A: oh just by yourself . okay I hope you enjoy in your friends' weeding party, so see you next time wis, thank you

3<sup>rd</sup> Conversation

A: may I know your full name?  
B: my full name is I Wayan Gede Antara  
A: may I know where are you come from?  
B: I am from Gianyar  
A: where you school know?  
B: I school at Elizabeth international management  
A: may I know why you choose Elizabeth International school?  
B: because interesting for me  
A: how about your hobby?  
B: my hobby is playing traditional music because when I listen Balinese traditional music I am very calm and I am without problem.  
A: may I know what is your favorite food?  
B: my favorite food is fried rice

4<sup>th</sup> Conversation

A: where are you going now?  
B: I am going to prepare my friend party  
A: when will start the party?  
B: start from 7 o'clock, how about you?  
A: now I want go to market  
B: what is you buy in the market?  
A: I want buy a apple

5<sup>th</sup> Conversation

A: Good morning Vina, how are you?  
B: good morning too, I am Fine, how about you? I am fine  
A: where are you going today ?  
B: I am going to the campus, how

6<sup>th</sup> Conversation

A: Hello, good morning Guna.  
B: good morning Jul.  
A: what your looking in here?  
B: I am holiday  
A: oh you holiday, and where you going in here?

about you, where are you going today?

A: I am going to supermarket, what time you going to home?

B: I am going to home at 9 PM. What do you in the supermarket?

A: I buy some cake for my sister.

B: why you buy a cake?

A: because I buy cake for my sister for birthday party

B: when your sister birthday party?

A: birthday party is on 6<sup>th</sup> September

B: can I join?

A: yes of course.

B: see you tomorrow

A: see you.

B: yesterday

A: where you go next time, Wiguna?

B: maybe I am going to GWK in last year

A: how many person you holiday in here?

B: I am 1 person, I am alone.

A: why you alone in your holiday?

B: because I am not have a girlfriend.

A: what? Oh no, okay next time you going with me.

B: thank you

#### 7<sup>th</sup> Conversation

A: good evening Rahadi

B: good evening Van, how are you?

A: not bad man

B: long time no see, last we meet on the Christmas years ago

A: yes, I miss that moment

B: where did you live now?

A: I live in an apartment in Los Angeles, by the way, what are you doing?

B: I just waiting for my friend, we will playing football.

A: when you like playing football?

B: It is on 6 Pm on the field

A: why do you playing football?

B: because this sport can make my body healthy.

A: by the way, would you like to join with us?

B: of course, come on man

#### 8<sup>th</sup> Conversation

A: What is your favorite food in the beach?

B: my favorite food is fried chicken and rice fried. Where will you go now?

A: I am go last week in beach

B: how about you beach there?

A: because I am like it and so beautiful.

B: where you favorite field?

A: I am favorite view beach, mall and then rice field in Bali.

B: nice to meet you

A: nice to meet you

#### 9<sup>th</sup> Conversation

A: hi good morning

B: good morning

A: what is your name?

B: my name is Agustian and you?

A: my name is Hyunika, where are you from?

B: I am from America

A: where are you going holiday to Bali?

B: yesterday

A: why you like holiday in Bali?

B: I like Bali because Bali view beautiful view

A: for how long you holiday in Bali?

B: last three weeks

A: so, very nice. See you next tomorrow.

B: see you.

#### 10<sup>th</sup> Conversation

A: hello, what is your name?

B: my name is Indra

A: where do you live now?

B: I live in Sukawati

A: why do like you live there?

B: because there are friendly and good peoples

A: that is so cool, what your hobby?

B: my hobby is playing volleyball

A: when do you have playing volleyball?

B: I am play volleyball every last week

A: so cool, nice to meet you

B: nice to meet you too

Schramper (2003) stated that an information question is a question that asks for information by using one of question words (where, when, why, who, how), in additionally, an information question form should use question word, auxiliary verb, subject, main verb and rest of sentence respectively. Similarly, according to Thomson (1986), what is general interrogative used for asking things. On the other hand what and how in a question is used to get information about measurement. We can use what+age /depth/height/length/width, but in a conversation, it would be more usual to say how old are you? The form of wh-questions are wh-words followed by auxiliary verb and subject.

The data below shows and describes pupils' conversations which were expressed and uttered incorrectly by the learners in front of the classroom. There are ten conversations done by 20 students which were recorded by the lecturer in the classroom. In addition, all groups were applying the wh-questions in the interaction although some of the forms of questions were lack of correct structure. Often refer to these words as wh-words because they include the letters wh- such as where, who, what, which, why, and how. Furthermore, limitation time was given during the conversation performed by the students, as restrict the duration of the activities. The kinds of grammatical errors done by the students could be seen from the table and the elaboration below.

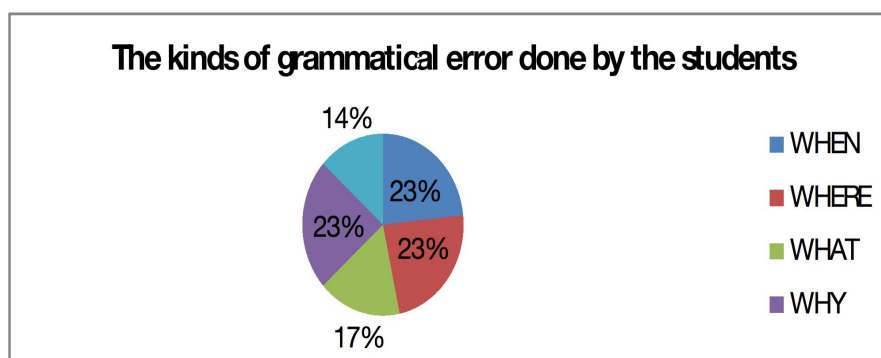


Figure 1 The kind of grammatical error done by the Elizabeth Tourism Trainee

#### Data (When)

- (1) When last time you buy fried noodle?
- (2) When you will go there, you will go now or latter?
- (3) When you like playing football?
- (4) When do you have playing volleyball?
- (5) When is you time?
- (6) When your sister birthday party?
- (7) When will start the party?

Those data present the use of the question word "when". The use of "when" in the sentence must be followed by an auxiliary verb and then subject. However, the students utterances always forget to insert the auxiliary verb on their utterances. It was found in data 1, "when last time you buy fried noodle?" The question word "when" supposed to be followed by auxiliary verb "was" indicates past event since there is a nominal sentence. The utterance supposes to be "when was you buy fried noodle?" Data 2, "when you will go there", indicates the question word in the future tense. In future tense, the wh-question must be followed by "will" as an auxiliary verb.

However, the question word followed by subject and “will” stated after the subject. It was a crucial mistake since the subject stated before the auxiliary verb in the question sentence. It supposed to be “when will you go there?” In data 3 and 4 belong to question words in the present tense. They need “do” as an auxiliary verb after the question word “when”. The utterance supposed to be “when do you like to play football?” And “when do you play volleyball?” The last data which was “when is your time?” should be “when did you buy?” as the answer or the response is “yesterday”. The sixth example is “When your sister birthday party?” according to the answer, the question should be mentioning the future tense “will” before “your sister birthday party” this would make a clear question. The seventh question was “When will start the party?” This question should be rearranged the party must be placed after “when” and the use of passive voice is needed this could be expressed “when the party will be started?”

#### Data (Where)

- (1) Where is you buy it?
- (2) Where you school know?
- (3) Where are you going holiday to Bali?
- (4) Where you go next time, Wiguna?
- (5) Where did you live now?
- (6) Where you favorite field?
- (7) Where you going in here?

In using a “where” question, the form “where” should be followed by an auxiliary verb before the subject. The data were that found by the researchers shows that there was some misunderstanding of grammars in asking a question to another partner. The data 1, the question for instance, “where is you buy it?”, auxiliary verb “is” should not be uttered by the utterance during expressing this type of question, auxiliary “do” is the correct grammar instead using to be as a verb “buy” said by the speaker. The second data of where question form shows that, the lack of using auxiliary verb done by the utterance. The verb “do” should be applied after saying where in the interrogative sentence, the form should be “where do you school know?”.

Data 3 illustrates that the miss comprehension of question structure uttered by the learner, the answer to the question was “yesterday”, from the response of the speaker which is yesterday, the interrogative form should be said “when did you arrive in Bali?”. The fourth data shows that the deficiency of understanding question form could be seen from the incorrect interrogative. The question form “where you go next time, Wiguna?” was definitely incorrect in terms of English structure. Adding “do” would be the perfect auxiliary verb to make grammatically correct on this type of question. The last mistake done by the learner was “where did you live now?”. This type of question used past tense and the speaker add adverb time in the statement. The inconsistent of the grammar used could be seen from this example and the question should be where do you live now? To get the correct question based on English grammar. The sixth question was “where you favorite field?”, this question asked the favourite places in Bali while the speaker asked by using the wrong grammar, the question should “where is your favourite place in Bali?”. The last question was where you going here, based on the answer the question must be asking when the listener arrived in Bali. This means that the interrogative form should be “when did you arrive here?”

#### Data (What)

- (1) What do you in the supermarket?

- (2) What your looking in here?
- (3) What is so cool, what your hobby?
- (4) What time you going home?
- (5) What is you buy in the market?

In terms of using what form question, there are three incorrect structure data that could be found during the whole conversations in the classroom. The first data shows that students miss the completion of using future tense and verb “do” as the speaker wanted to ask the following activities in the supermarket. The second question form illustrates that the miss understanding of using subject pronoun and to be “are”, the learner tended to use the possessive adjective “your” instead “you” and the speaker should utter “are” after what question form. The last what form data shows that the lack of using to be “is” after what interrogative form. The speaker ignored this structure whereas this is a significant part of making question form based on correct grammar. The fourth question shows that the lack of using “do” before pronoun “you” and followed by verb infinitive “go”, the question should be “what time do you go home?” expressed during the conversation. The fifth question is using the auxiliary verb “is” which should not be applied in this interrogative form. The auxiliary verb “do” must be replaced “is” to make the sentence grammatically is correct.

#### Data (Why)

- (1) Why do you playing football?
- (2) Why do like you live there?
- (3) Why you like holiday in Bali?
- (4) Why you like fried noodle?
- (5) Why you look so happy?
- (6) Why you buy a cake?
- (7) Why you alone in your holiday?

Why interrogative form would ask the reason to the situation during the conversation and according to the data, similarly, the question form of what and why had the same number of incorrect grammar. These could be analyzed from the first data, the speaker said “why do you playing football?” the utterance correct in using the helping verb “do” while totally wrong in using the main verb which should be “play”. Data 2 was considered wrong in choosing “you” to this question form furthermore there is no correlation of pronoun “you” used in this form, this should be ignored and the word “to” must be used before the main verb on this question form. The third question had a misunderstanding of question purposes, based on the answer, the responder explains why he or she likes living in Bali. The correct interrogative question should be “why do you like to spend your time in Bali?” The forth interrogative form was “why you like fried noodle?” which incorrect grammar question form as the speaker should use and utter such as ”why do you like fried noodle?” The sixth why question form, the utterance stated “why you look so happy?” this example could be said better to use correct grammar “why are you so happy?” the verb helping “do” must not be used. The last form was not correct as the speaker ignored to be “are” before the pronoun “you” and the question must be “why are you alone in your holiday?”

#### Data (How)

- (1) How many person you holiday in here?
- (2) How about you beach there?
- (3) For how long you holiday in Bali?



(4) How you feel that you always eat the free food?

Question form shows that there are 3 data were found by the researchers which was the same number of what and why data question form: first “how many person you holiday in here?” and second “how about you beach there?” and the last “for how long you holiday in Bali?”. the first example was lack of helping verb “do” which should be applied by the speaker in the classroom and the other side, “people” should be used instead “person” as this is a countable example of a question. The second question shows that the incorrect of using question structure, when the response of the speaker explains the reason for the question, the interrogative form should use “why” and the question should be “why do you like to go to the beach?”. The last “how” question form illustrates that the duration of the responder activities during spending holiday in Bali. The speaker uttered “for how long you holiday in Bali?” is totally incorrect in grammar “for” should not be used and the speaker neglected to apply auxiliary verb “do”, using the main verb “spend”, expressing possessive adjective “your” and the interrogative form of this question should be “how long do you spend your holiday in Bali?”. Another error grammatically example is “how you feel that you always eat the free food?” this example should be put helping verb before feel and the appropriate example should be “how do you feel if you always eat free food?”

Overall, there were two factors that could affect the learner in comprehending grammar while making an interrogative or question form; lack of grammar understanding and students subconsciously. These could be seen from the students’ error grammatically example. The third group used the least wh-question while the first group conversation applied the most asking questions about activities. There are nine groups of conversations that have slightly under nine expressions of wh-questions during the time given by the lecturer.

As a result, shown on the table, the red text colour means miss grammar on wh-questions expressed while the black text colour purposes the responses of the students uttered by the pupils. As mentioned in the method of research, questioners were also given in order to find out the problems faced by the students when pronouncing the selected words in English. The cause of grammatical error expressed by the learners and the result could be seen on the pie chart.

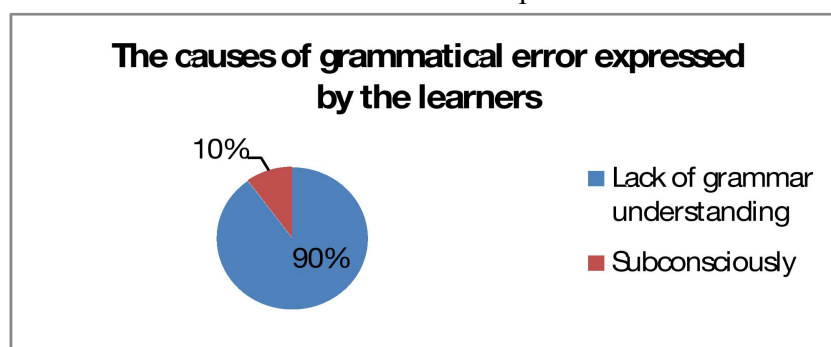


Figure 2 The cause of grammatical error expressed by the Elizabeth Tourism Trainee

In terms of the group conversations, there are four questions which were more than half of the wh-expressions with grammatical error uttered by the first groups’ learners (when last time you buy fried noodle? where is you buy it? when is you time? where is you buy it? why you like fried noodle?) Furthermore, the first group tended

to make mistake questions while uttering when, where, and why questions form. Similarly, the seventh group of learners makes more than half of the error of grammatical questions made (where did you live now? when you like playing football? why do you playing football?) from the examples, it could be seen that the questions form used by the students were where, when and why. The ninth group of students (where are you going holiday to Bali?, why you like holiday in Bali?) and the tenth group of speakers (for how long you holiday in Bali? why do like you live there? that is so cool, what your hobby?, when do you have playing volleyball?) had slightly more than half grammar error spoken by the students. Furthermore, the second and fifth group had eight questions while half of the questions were wrong grammar used (why you look so happy?, you go there to take a free food. And when you will go there, you will go now or latter?, how you feel that you always eat the free food? and what time you going to home?, what do you in the supermarket?, why you buy a cake?, when your sister birthday party? respectively) and the second group tends to use when, why, and how while the fifth group regularly expressed what and why during the activities. Moreover, there were only four wh-questions expressed by the fourth and eighth group conversations for example: when will start the party?, what is you buy in the market? and where you favorite field?, how about you beach there? respectively. These errors should be avoided if the student had better comprehension in grammar, especially in making interrogative forms in which auxiliary verb for instance “do and does” must be learned by the pupils during the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. In addition, students should study verb infinitive to improve learner's skills in grammar.

However, the third group spoke only two expressions during the conversations. Surprisingly, there were not correct grammars expressed by the sixth group students during the role play, for examples: what your looking in here?, and where you going in here?, where you go next time, Wiguna?, how many person you holiday in here?, why you alone in your holiday? These examples prove that the learners were subconsciously expressing the English sentence commonly and interrogative form especially. Although the students were asked to prepare the script before doing the performance in front of the classroom, the learners were still confused and oblivious in uttering the error grammar during the performance. Lack of grammar comprehension and having subconsciously expressed the error grammar during the conversations were two combinations in making the students get a low scores in speaking skills.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Most students of the food and beverage department in Elizabeth tourism trainee made error grammatical as the learners had a lack of knowledge in using sentence structure. Learners should be given part of speech material because pupils must be a good use of language especially English. In addition, the students should improve the usage of grammar, especially on speaking because the receiver could understand the meaning of utterances' purposes. Furthermore, the lecturer must give more practice and exercise of sentence structure so that, students would not hesitate to use correct grammar in written or oral activities, and to improve the students' comprehension in grammar, the lecturer should give drilling of English structure, especially in making wh-questions.

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