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IDENTIFYING GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES BY INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS: AN ERROR ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this research is to identify and explore the common errors made by eleventh-grade students at SMKS Bintan Insani in their usage of gerunds and infinitives, as well as to investigate the factors contributing to these errors. This study adopts an analytical approach within the framework of a descriptive quantitative research design to elucidate the nature of the errors made by students. Data collection was achieved through the administration of a written test. Furthermore, to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing these errors, open-ended interviews were conducted with the students. Upon completion of the analysis, it was evident that the thirty eleventh-grade students collectively produced a total of 386 errors. Among these errors, 56 (14.51%) were identified as additions, 200 (51.81%) as misformations, and 130 (33.68%) as omissions. These findings underscore the students' limited grasp of gerunds and infinitives, with misformations emerging as the most prevalent error type. This prevalence indicates uncertainty in the correct selection between gerunds and infinitives. The errors in gerunds and infinitives construction can be attributed to various factors, including interference from the students' mother tongue, wherein structures from their native language are applied to English. Overgeneralization of grammatical rules also contributes to these errors. In addition, shortcomings in the teaching process, characterized by inadequate explanations and limited practice opportunities, hinder student progress. To address these issues, it is imperative to provide explicit instruction, raise awareness of verb patterns, and offer extensive practice opportunities coupled with constructive feedback to enhance the students' proficiency in the accurate usage of gerunds and infinitives.

Keywords: Gerunds, Infinitives, Error Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence (Brown, 2001). The mastery of grammar constitutes a fundamental element in the acquisition of language skills. Grammar holds intrinsic importance in effective communication, as it forms the formal study of a language's structural underpinnings, delineating the rules governing how words coalesce to form

coherent and meaningful constructions (Williams, 2005). A proficient understanding of grammar is indispensable, as it enables students to craft sentences and convey ideas in communicative activities. Conversely, a deficiency in grammar knowledge can impede the construction of meaningful expressions, thereby undermining students' confidence in both spoken and written English.

From a researcher's perspective, grammar represents an integral component in the process of language acquisition. Second language learning could be a process that is not unlike first language learning in its trial-and-error nature (Brown, 1994). It must be diligently acquired to facilitate the utilization of language in a grammatically accurate and meaningful manner. Despite the fact that grammar instruction typically commences at the elementary level and continues through senior high school, learners often encounter challenges in mastering this linguistic aspect. A thorough comprehension of grammar empowers learners to comprehend how it interacts with vocabulary within the framework of a communicative system.

Among the myriad of essential grammar topics, gerunds and infinitives stand out. These verb forms can function as nouns in a sentence, adding complexity to sentence structure (Azar & Hagen, 2009). The intricacies surrounding the use of gerunds and infinitives can be particularly confounding for high school students, as this grammar concept is initially introduced at the senior high school level and may not receive sufficient review. Consequently, students, particularly those for whom English is not their first language, grapple with the challenge of determining when to employ gerunds or infinitives, leading to frequent confusion in various contexts (*Comparing Gerunds, Participles, and Infinitives - Purdue OWL® - Purdue University*, n.d.).

Nonetheless, for certain students, correctly identifying and employing gerunds and infinitives can prove to be a formidable challenge, particularly when they are not well-versed in the regulations governing the use of these verb forms. This predicament can culminate in inaccuracies in both their written and spoken language, ultimately impacting their overall linguistic competence. It is imperative to acknowledge that the occurrence of errors is an intrinsic facet of the learning process, with mistakes constituting an indispensable and inescapable component of the learning curve (Wulandari et al., 2021).

Error analysis, a research approach, delves into linguistic failures, encompassing their prevalence, types, causes, and repercussions (James, 1998). This methodology scrutinizes students' language errors, offering valuable insights into the challenges they encounter and the strategies they employ to overcome them. Error analysis, however, deals with "the learners' performance in terms of the cognitive processes they make use of in recognising or coding the input they receive from the target language" (Erdoğan, 2005). A specific error analysis, focused on students' proficiency in recognizing gerunds and infinitives, affords a comprehensive understanding of the types of errors made, their root causes, and potential remedies.

This study's purpose is to undertake an error analysis of SMKS Bintan Insani Tanjungpinang students' capacity to identify gerunds and infinitives. Its objective is to ascertain the nature and extent of these errors and propose measures for enhancement. This

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investigation is centered on a student sample from SMKS Bintan Insani Tanjungpinang, a vocational high school located in Tanjungpinang, situated on Bintan Island within the Riau Islands province of Indonesia.

Several factors underscore the significance of this topic for SMKS Bintan Insani Tanjungpinang students. Firstly, gerunds and infinitives are integral components of the English language, frequently employed in academic and professional contexts. Proficiency in their accurate identification and usage is imperative for students seeking success in their studies and pursuing careers that hinge on robust language skills. Secondly, the ability to identify gerunds and infinitives is intricately linked with broader language proficiency facets, including grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. Enhancing students' proficiency in recognizing these verb forms can exert a positive influence on their overall language skills.

In summary, this study contributes to the field of second language acquisition by shedding light on the challenges encountered by students at SMKS Bintan Insani Tanjungpinang when grappling with gerunds and infinitives identification. By pinpointing and analyzing student errors and suggesting avenues for improvement, this study aspires to furnish practical guidance for educators and researchers addressing analogous learner populations.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research adopts a descriptive quantitative research design as its core methodology, with the principal objective of elucidating the errors that students make when employing gerunds and infinitives. The initial phase of data collection entailed the administration of a comprehensive test aimed at evaluating students' errors in the application of gerunds and infinitives. To comprehensively analyse and categorise these errors, the study drew upon the framework devised by Heidi Dulay, which includes the aspects of addition, misformation, and omission (Dulay et al., 1982). Additionally, H. Douglas Brown's model was employed to investigate the underlying contributing factors, encompassing mother tongue interference, overgeneralisation, and the teaching process (Brown, 1994).

Subsequently, the amassed data underwent analysis to identify the specific types of errors made by the students, with a particular focus on ascertaining the most prevalent errors. The percentage of errors made by the students was calculated using the formula $P = f / N \times 100\%$ (Sudijono, 2005).

To further enrich the research and address the second research question, an open-ended interview was conducted to explore the impediments faced by students in correctly using gerunds and infinitives. These inquiries were directly posed to five respondents. The research methodology involved several essential steps: Firstly, the collection of students' test papers, which were then meticulously examined to analyse the errors committed by the students. Secondly, the classification and categorization of the identified error types. Thirdly, the documentation of the erroneous sentences produced by the students in a designated error column. Fourthly, the provision of corrections for each sentence in the correction column.

Fifthly, the researcher employed the quantitative descriptive method to elucidate the analysis and utilised a formula to address the research question.

This research was conducted in June 2023, commencing on the 15th and concluding on the 17th of June. The research was carried out at SMKS Bintan Insani in Tanjungpinang, specifically located at Jl. WR. Supratman, Air Raja, Tanjungpinang Timur, Tanjung Pinang City, Riau Islands. The research subjects consisted of eleventh-grade students at SMKS Bintan Insani, with a total of 30 students in the classroom. The research's focal point was the analysis of errors made by students in their use of gerunds and infinitives. It is worth noting that both the population and sample for this research comprised the same set of 30 students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher has categorized the errors made by Eleventh Grade students of SMKS Bintan Insani in using gerunds and infinitives into three types: omission, addition, and misformation. These error types will be thoroughly described, explained, and evaluated by the researcher in the following table:

Table 1. Percentage of Errors

No	Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage of Errors
1	Addition	56	14.51%
2	Misformation	200	51.81%
3	Omission	130	33.68%
	Total	**386**	**100%**

The provided data reveals that out of a total of 386 errors made by the students, misformation errors were the most frequent, occurring 200 times (51.81% of the errors). Omission errors were the next most common, with a frequency of 130 (33.68% of the errors). Addition errors had a total frequency of 56 (14.51% of the errors).

Table 2. Data of Student Errors in using Gerund

Error Recognition	Error Classification	Error Reconstruction
The man sitting next to Lita said, "Do you mind if i'm *smokeing*?"	Addition	The man sitting next to Lita said, "Do you mind if i'm *smoking*?"
The children enjoy playing on the beach and *to swim* in the ocean.	Misformation	The children enjoy playing on the beach and *swimming* in the ocean.
I am looking forward to *geting* a salary	Omission	I am looking forward to *getting* a salary

raise	next	raise	next
month.		month.	

As indicated in the table, it is evident that students occasionally commit errors falling into the category of addition errors. This is primarily attributable to the general rule governing gerunds, which dictates the formula as verb + ing. However, it is important to note that certain exceptions exist, where specific verbs require the exclusion of a letter. For example, when combining "smoke" with "ing," it results in "smoking" (not "smokeing. If students have not been previously informed about these exceptions, they are more prone to making such errors.

Furthermore, students frequently grapple with the challenge of distinguishing between gerunds and infinitives, resulting in what can be categorised as misformation errors. Meanwhile, within the category of omission errors, similar to addition errors, there is a tendency for certain letters to be omitted. For instance, when combining "swim" with "ing," the correct form is "swimming" (not "swiming"). It is essential to recognise that some words necessitate memorisation as they deviate from standard formulas and do not adhere to conventional patterns.

Table 3. Data of Student Errors in using Infinitive (Bare Infinitive and To- Infinitive)

Error Recognition	Error Classification	Error Reconstructions
The fact that he was put into prison for something he had not done made his wife *crying.*	Addition	The fact that he was put into prison for something he had not done made his wife *cry.*
I'm calling you *asking* for your help.	Misformation	I'm calling you *to ask* for your help.
It is not easy *master* a foreign language.	Omission	It is not easy *to master* a foreign language.

The provided table presents a breakdown of student errors concerning the use of infinitives, distinguishing between the bare infinitive and the to-infinitive. In the case of addition errors, which involve the inappropriate use of the bare infinitive, the example sentence "The fact that he was put into prison for something he had not done made his wife crying" illustrates such an error. This error is corrected by replacing "crying" with "cry," adhering to the correct usage of the bare infinitive. On the other hand, misformation errors, where the to-infinitive is erroneously used, are exemplified by the sentence "I'm calling you asking for your help." The correction involves substituting "asking" with "to ask," ensuring proper usage of the to-infinitive. Lastly, omission errors pertaining to the to-infinitive are identified in the sentence "It is not easy master a foreign language," where the infinitive particle "to" is missing before "master." The error is rectified by adding "to" to the sentence, resulting in "It is not easy to master a foreign language." These distinctions in error types highlight the significance of correctly employing infinitives in English grammar and writing.

Findings of the Cause of Errors

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Table 4. Open-ended Interview Questions

No.	Question
1	Can you provide examples of sentences in which you use gerunds and infinitives?
2	Have you ever encountered difficulties or challenges when using gerunds and infinitives? If so, could you explain them?
3	How were gerunds and infinitives taught to you in language class or through textbooks? Do you feel that the teaching process was effective in helping you understand their usage?
4	What strategies do you employ to enhance your comprehension and usage of gerunds and infinitive?

Following an open-ended interview conducted on June 17th, 2021, with five eleventh-grade students from SMKS Bintan Insani, this study sought to investigate the factors underlying errors in the employment of gerunds and infinitives. The interview protocol encompassed four carefully designed questions tailored to elicit insights and information from the participating students. Drawing from the responses garnered, the research offers conclusions concerning the origins of errors associated with gerunds and infinitives construction.

The analysis of errors committed by students unveils a multitude of factors contributing to their misconceptions and lapses. A salient root of these errors can be traced to "Mother Tongue Interference," wherein students tend to transpose rules from their native language, Indonesian, onto English, thereby resulting in inaccuracies. For instance, Student 1's perplexity in distinguishing between gerunds and infinitives emanates from the congruity of their meanings in Indonesian, thereby culminating in grammatical inaccuracies within the English language.

This phenomenon of mother tongue interference is further exemplified by Student 4. Notably, Indonesian lacks comparable verb-noun conversions akin to English gerunds. Consequently, this void may provoke perplexity and blunders when students endeavor to superimpose similar structures from their native language onto English. For instance, Student 4's utterance, "Jadi kita yang belajar bahasa Inggris emang bener-bener harus extra buat belajar pola nya" (So, those of us learning English really have to put in extra effort to learn the pattern), bears evidence of interference via Indonesian possessive pronouns, as "pola nya" is employed instead of "the pattern."

Another prevalent source of errors lies in the realm of "Overgeneralization," whereby students extend a given rule to contexts where it may not be applicable. Student 2's response vividly illustrates this, as they erroneously generalize that "he stopped to smoke" and "he stopped smoking" carry identical meanings, engendering erroneous usage of gerunds and infinitives. Student 3's contribution underscores overgeneralization, specifically, their allusion to the process of appending '-ing' to verbs and its occasional resulting in the duplication of the final letter, though not consistently. Instances such as "forgetting" and "stopping" are cited. This manifestation signifies students' proclivity to apply a rule overly broadly, anticipating uniformity in verb behavior, yet not all verbs conform to such patterns in English, thereby fostering errors in usage.

The "Teaching Process" itself is an influential factor in the occurrence of errors. Student 3's expression of discontentment with the conventional teaching methodology suggests potential issues related to student engagement and interest. Such concerns may

subsequently hinder the students' comprehension and retention of the subject matter, thereby contributing to errors in the accurate deployment of gerunds and infinitives. Notably, Student 2 emphasizes the importance of lucid explanations and illustrative examples provided by the teacher, noting, "Guru memberikan materi, dan juga contoh beserta soal" (The teacher provides materials, examples, and exercises). While this method may prove effective for some students, it may not suffice for all. Given the diverse learning preferences of students, it becomes apparent that alternative instructional approaches, inclusive of interactive modalities and personalized attention, may be necessary for an encompassing comprehension of intricate concepts, such as the distinctions between gerunds and infinitives.

Furthermore, Student 5's reliance on personal preferences, which entail selecting between gerunds and infinitives based on subjective familiarity or appeal, may indicate a deficit in the provision of unequivocal guidelines during the teaching process. Such ambiguity could culminate in inconsistent utilization and errors.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapter, the researcher conducted a comprehensive data analysis, encompassing the administration of both a test and an open-ended interview to the student cohort with the aim of identifying errors and factors contributing to their difficulties in employing gerunds and infinitives. The ensuing findings, systematically presented in a tabular format delineating the frequency and percentage distribution of diverse error typologies, unveiled a total of 386 errors. Notably, these errors were further stratified into distinct categories, with 56 errors (14.51%) classified as additions, 200 errors (51.81%) as misformations, and 130 errors (33.68%) as omissions. These outcomes illuminate a relatively modest comprehension level among students pertaining to gerunds and infinitives, wherein misformations emerged as the predominant error type, indicative of hesitancy in selecting the appropriate form between gerunds and infinitives.

The origins of the observed errors in gerunds and infinitives construction can be ascribed to various influencing factors. One prominent factor is the intrusion of the mother tongue, wherein students tend to transpose the linguistic structures inherent in their native language onto English. The inherent dissimilarities in rules and structures governing verbal forms across languages consequently lead to errors in the utilization of gerunds and infinitives. Another contributory factor lies in the phenomenon of overgeneralization, whereby students extend rules and patterns universally without due regard to specific verb patterns or exceptions. This proclivity can culminate in the erroneous application of gerunds and infinitives.

Furthermore, the efficacy of the teaching process bears significant implications for the students' grasp and application of gerunds and infinitives. Inadequate explanations, limited opportunities for practice, or insufficient emphasis on gerunds and infinitives may impede students' progress. Consequently, addressing these challenges necessitates the provision of explicit instructional guidance on gerunds and infinitives, the enhancement of awareness

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regarding specific verb patterns, and the provision of ample opportunities for practice and constructive feedback to reinforce accurate usage. Through such measures, students can augment their comprehension and proficiency in the accurate application of gerunds and infinitives.

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