

## Ta'dib: Journal of Islamic Education (Jurnal Pendidikan Islam)

1st Floor of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching Sciences, State Islamic University of Raden Fatah  
Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia. Prof. K. H. Zainal Abidin Fikri Street Number 1, Palembang,

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Criteria to be rated	Excellent	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	NA
<b>1. TITLE (maximum 12 words)</b>				
<b>Does</b> the title reflect the content properly? <b>Does</b> the title clearly or adequately describe the intent of the study? ( suggest alternate language for the title if the answer is NO)  Comments: <b>The title already reflects the content of the whole study. It also clearly describes the intention of the study.</b>	X			
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3. ABSTRACTS (150 words or less)	Excellent	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	NA
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5. THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	Excellent	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	NA
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6. METHODS	Excellent	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory	NA

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<p><b>Is</b> the research design clearly described and appropriate for the purpose of the study?  <b>Are</b> the participants, their characteristics and their selection methods described in detail and justified?  <b>Is</b> the context of the study elaborated to provide in-depth understanding about the setting?  <b>Are</b> the purpose, content and usage of data collection tools explained and justified?  <b>Are</b> data collection and analysis procedures are clearly explained with a reference to the role and competency of the researcher(s)?  For quantitative research, <b>Are</b> the validity and reliability processes in data collection and analyses described sufficiently?  For qualitative research, <b>is</b> the credibility or the “trustworthiness described sufficiently?  <b>Is</b> the way to protect the rights of human participants described sufficiently?</p> <p>Comments: <b>This section needs to be revised by considering the research design, research site and participants, data collection and analysis. If you use qualitative as the approach of your study then you have to specify the theme emerged from your study without any tendency to see the majority or the minority of errors produced by the studentsThe data analysis is in the form of quantitative data analysis. Thus, your research approach must be quantitative not qualitative one</b></p>			X	
<b>7. FINDINGS</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<p><b>Do</b> findings respond to the purpose of the study, and are presented systematically?  <b>Are</b> findings supported with sufficient and relevant quotations, examples, tables, and diagrams?  <b>Is</b> the description of the findings consistent with the study methodology (e.g., authors refer to the specific group, time period, or other key details in describing the study findings, so that readers understand the findings clearly)?</p> <p>Comments: <b>The findings are not clear. You have proposed three research questions in your</b></p>			X	

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introduction, but you said only one focus in this finding section. If you say comparison then there must be the similarities not only differences. But in the research question you said you only wanted to focus on the differences. Please Be consistent				
<b>8. DISCUSSION</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<p><b>Does</b> the discussion briefly review the principal findings of the current study?</p> <p><b>Are</b> findings are discussed with a reference to relevant and recent literature?</p> <p>If applicable, <b>do</b> the authors provide possible explanations why the results of the present study do not comport with findings from other relevant studies?</p> <p><b>Are</b> theoretical implications and practical significance of the study discussed?</p> <p>Comments: <b>This section is quite confusing. Your discussion is not clear. In the discussion you have to briefly review the principal findings of your study and explain whether the findings are discussed with a reference to relevant and recent literature or no</b></p>			X	
<b>9. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<p><b>Does</b> the conclusion succinctly but completely sum up the key takeaway points of the study? Does the conclusion match the objective?</p> <p><b>Are</b> implications for further implementations, suggestions for further research, and limitations of the current study provided?</p> <p>Comments: <b>Separate between these two sections; conclusion and implication. Please revise accordingly.</b></p>			X	
<b>10. CLARITY AND ACCURACY</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>

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<p><b>Is</b> the language appropriate and fluent?</p> <p><b>Is</b> Syntax correct and appropriate?</p> <p><b>Are</b> technical terms defined clearly?</p> <p><b>Is</b> the manuscript easy to follow? The central idea is clear and supported. The organization is orderly. The manuscript flows smoothly and logically, with the sentences, paragraphs, and sections fitting together and carrying the reader forward comfortably.</p> <p>Comments: <b>The manuscript contains minor revision towards grammar problems.</b></p>		X		
<b>11. DISCLOSURE STATEMENT</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<p><b>Does</b> author provide a conflict of interest statement?(e.g. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors).</p> <p>Comments: <b>There is no potential conflict of interest reported by the authors.</b></p>				X
<b>12. REFERENCES</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<p><b>Are</b> in-text citations and references following the APA referencing system?</p> <p>Comments: <b>The references in the manuscript have followed Tadib guidelines. Well done</b></p>	X			

**Recommendation for this manuscript (indicate your recommendation with an "X"):**

\_\_\_ **Accept** as written without any revisions

\_\_\_ **Accept** with minor revisions (a second round of review is not necessary).

\_X\_ **Accept** with major revisions (a second round of review will be necessary)

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## Grammatical Errors in Madrasah Aliyah Students' Narrative Essays:

## An Error Analysis of the Surface Strategy

Rahmah Eithriani

Email????

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

## Abstract

For English as a foreign language (EFL) students in Indonesia, writing has mostly been found as a complicated and difficult skill to master. As a consequence, errors in EFL writing is inevitable. Framed by Error Analysis approach, this study aimed at analysing grammar errors in writing narrative text, with a special focus on the comparison of errors made by the students of Mathematics & Natural Science (MNS) and Social Studies (SS) streams at a *Madrasah Aliyah* (Islamic senior high school). This study used 60 narrative essays as the data corpus, which were analysed/analyzed by using content analysis approach. The results of data analysis revealed eds interesting findings showing that generally, MNS students make more grammar errors than the SS students do. A closer look at the data showed eds that 1) MNS students produced more errors in five types; 'noun,' 'pronoun,' 'verb,' 'preposition,' and 'conjunction' while SS students only in one, namely 'article'; and 2) misselection, over inclusion, and omission became the dominant causes of the errors. These findings could be used as a proof to debunk the stereotype of MNS and SS students labelling with more preference given to MNS students who se/were perceived to be more dominant in academic performance.

**Keywords:** grammatical error analysis, Mathematics & Natural Science stream, narrative essay, Social Studies stream, Surface strategy

## Introduction

The importance of English as a global language has been long recognized by the government of Indonesia. The language was officially approved as the first foreign language in the country in 1955 and has become the only foreign language mandatorily taught in all levels of education since then. Based on the Curriculum 2013 (K-13), which has been implemented in all levels of high school since 2014, the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia (TEFL) should focus on developing language skills on four areas namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, it is stated that among the goal of TEFL

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in Indonesia is to equip students with the ability to develop oral and written communicative competence (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2014).

Despite the stated goal related to English communicative competence in both oral and written forms, the teaching of writing skills has been neglected in English classrooms including that at SMA (general senior high school) and MA (Islamic senior high school) levels. According to the K-13, writing instruction in SMA and MA aims to develop students' skills in writing simple texts to more complex ones in various genres including *narrative text*. However, in practice, writing instruction is still much dominated with activities to reinforce language structures at the sentence level. Writing is still viewed as a product activity emphasizing merely on grammatical and syntactic accuracy (Eithriani, 2017). As a consequence, most Indonesian EFL learners at the SMA/MA level perceive writing as a difficult skill to develop and master, particularly in terms of accuracy at the sentential level, that is, sentence grammar.

Studies have shown that Indonesian SMA/MA learners face various difficulties related to develop their English proficiency in written discourse (e.g. Husma, Zainil, & Rozimela, 2013; Inayah, & Gani, 2016; Nurhayati, 2015). In general, they were found to commit various errors, particularly grammatical ones in writing different genres as stated in the K-13 curriculum. Several studies have been conducted to analyse grammar errors on one particular genre of writing, namely narrative text. The focuses of discussion are diverse, which include the frequency and the types of grammar errors emerged in students' writing (Floranti & Adiantika, 2019; Hendriyanto & Sugeng, 2013; Murtiyana, 2019), the causes of grammar errors (Hendriyanto & Sugeng, 2013), the possible sources of those errors (Floranti & Adiantika, 2019), and grammatical error analysis across different grades and streams (Luthfiyati, Latief, & Subarnanto, 2015).

Despite the growing number of this path of research, most of them involved SMA students as the subjects of the research. Very few studies found in literature have focused on grammar errors made by MA students, let alone on the comparison of errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill the gap by comparing the grammatical errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay. In details, it focuses on answering three questions: 1)

1. What types of grammar errors are made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay? 2)

2. What are the causes of grammar errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay? And 3)

3.1. What are the differences of the types and causes of grammatical errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay?

The significance of this study stemmed from the idea that by identifying the grammar errors made by the students of the two streams, the researchers will gain a significant insight on what strategies they employ to develop communicative competence in English written discourse, particularly in writing narrative essay. Moreover, the findings of this study may work as a diagnostic tool to reveal the grammatical problems faced by the students in writing production so that they could be the focus of writing instruction for Indonesian SMA/MA

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students in general. Finally, since there is a stereotype of MNS students always outperforming the SS ones academically, this research could be used to either validate or debunk it.

## Literature Review

### Grammar knowledge and English writing ability

In today's global community, communicative competence in foreign languages, particularly in English is becoming increasingly important. English as a global language could be claimed to hold the most important role as a means of communication in various fields such as education, diplomacy, and international commerce. Among English language skills, writing has a special position due to its extensive usage in educational as well as professional settings. Without a good command in writing, one could not express her ideas when doing most of daily tasks such as writing essays, reports, applications, e-mails, etc. Thus, one's writing ability in a language could be used to indicate her proficiency in the language (Li & Lin, 2007).

Writing comprises a complex mental process involving multiple skills from cognitive analysis to linguistic synthesis. Thus, to become proficient in this particular language skill takes a considerable time and effort. For foreign language learners, the challenge and difficulty in developing writing proficiency is even doubled is due to various reasons ranging from the language barriers to the different rhetoric patterns deployed (Fithriani, 2018b). In addition, the ability in foreign language writing including in EFL context involves knowledge of other language skills, particularly grammar.

Since grammar is bounded to other language skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it is no doubt that good grammar knowledge is inevitably important in developing EFL communicative competence as it guides learners to use the language appropriately both in written form and in oral language skill (Fithriani, 2018a). In terms of the role of grammar in writing skill, Hedge (2005) argued that "effective writing requires a number of things: a high degree of development in the organization of ideas and information; a high degree of accuracy so there is no ambiguity of meaning; the use of complex grammatical devices for focus and emphasis; and careful choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and sentence structures to create a style which is appropriate to the subject matter and the eventual readers" (p. 5). In short it could be concluded that good writing requires good working knowledge of grammar.

### English writing instruction in Indonesian secondary schools

English is the only foreign language mandatorily taught in secondary schools and higher education institutions in Indonesia. Secondary schools in Indonesia consists of three years of junior high school and three years of senior high school and fall under the responsibility of either the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, or *Kemdikbud*) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kementerian Agama* or *Kemendagri*). Furthermore, the secondary schools under *kemdikbud* are known as SMP (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama*) for junior high school level and SMA (*Sekolah Menengah Atas*) for senior

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high school level, meanwhile those under *kemendagri* are called MTs (*Madrasah Tsanawiyah*) and MA (*Madrasah Aliyah*) respectively. However, the curriculum for English instruction throughout these levels becomes the sole responsibility of *kemdikbud* to design and issue.

According to K-13 as the currently implemented curriculum, the allotted time for English teaching at secondary school ranges from two up to six class hours (one class hour equals to 45 minutes) per week. For junior high schools, the allotted time is four class hours throughout grade 7 to grade 9. For senior high schools, the allotted time varies according to the stream based on students' academic interests. At SMA and MA levels, students are streamed into three academic interests, namely the Mathematics and Natural Sciences, the Social Studies, and the Language and Culture. For the first two streams, English is compulsory and allotted at least two class hours per week, while for the Language and Culture one, the time allotment for English is six hours per week. However, for *Madrasah Aliyah*, the curriculum structure can be developed in accordance with the needs set by the Ministry of Religion (*Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia*, 2018). This exception implies that there are possibilities for some differences of TEFL in the two types of senior high schools. Meanwhile, related to this academic interest-based division, there is a stereotype referring to the academic ability of MNS and SS students. People believe that MNS students are dominant in academic performance in almost, if not all, subjects (Efendi & Wahyudi, 2016; Hanafi, 2014). As a consequence, most students of secondary school prefer to take MNS compared to SS stream.

As stated in K-13, ELT at secondary schools should equip students with the ability to develop oral and written communicative competence in four areas of language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, the teaching of writing provides students with knowledge, experience and strategies of writing simple texts to more complex ones in 12 text genres, namely: recount, narrative, procedural, descriptive, report, news items, analytical exposition, persuasive exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion and review. For this purpose, genre-based approach is used to introduce students the social function, the generic structures, and the language features of the genres.

Among the 12 text genres taught to SMA and MA students, narrative may be considered special and unique as it is the most frequently used and learned throughout the grades of secondary school. Narrative is defined as a literary text that tells about a series of logically and chronologically related events (Lukens, 2007). According to Anderson and Anderson (2003), the social function of a narrative text is to entertain the readers with a story containing complications or problematic events that lead to a crisis and in turn find a resolution. The generic structure of a narrative text includes 1) Orientation to introduce the participants and inform the time and the place; 2) Complication to describe crises the participants need to deal with; and 3) Resolution to show the way of the participants to solve the crises. As it talks about the past events narrative text should be written in simple past. In addition, writing in narrative genre should include adequate details about the action and its context so that the readers can understand what is going on.

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### The significance of Error Analysis (EA) in EFL teaching & learning

Errors are an inseparable aspect of learning a second language, thus, it is important to obtain information how second language (L2) learners, including those of EFL make mistakes while performing oral or written tasks in the target language. One of the most popular method to conduct this particular type of research is Error Analysis (EA). Crystal (2003) defines EA as a "technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics" (p. 165). Similar to this, Corder (1974) believed that EA is a useful technique to describe L2 learners' knowledge of the target language in order to relate it to the teaching they have been receiving. Related to the stated definitions, EA is particularly beneficial for L2 teachers and/or researchers who want to obtain information about learners' linguistic deficiency so they can address the issues in future. In addition to identifying the errors, Richards and Schmidt (2002) stated other benefits of EA which include the identification of the learning strategies used by L2 learners and the causes of the errors they make.

EA was first introduced in 1960' by Corder (1967) as a result of his critics towards Contrastive Analysis (CA), which was claimed to fail in predicting errors made L2 learners. CA assumed that errors made by L2 learners are exclusively derived from the interference of their L1 or mother tongue, known as interlingual source. Meanwhile, in addition to interlingual source, EA made clear that errors in L2 learning also come from intralingual source, which result from faulty or partial learning of the target language. Guided by the two major purposes of EA, either to present error categories based on observable characteristics or to report the types of error observed, EA categorizes errors into four taxonomies, namely (1) linguistic category; (2) surface strategy; (3) comparative analysis; and (4) communicative effect.

Among the four taxonomies, surface strategy has much been used as an approach in analysing learners' errors in various EFL contexts (e. g. Mohammed & Abdalhussein, 2015; Vasquez, 2008; Yoon, 2012; Zheng & Park, 2013). Many experts have tried to identify the causes of errors EFL learners make based on the surface strategy taxonomy, including Carl James (1998). James (1998) categorized the errors into five categories as detailed below:

1. Omission, which is characterized by an absence in a well-formed utterance of an item.
2. Over Inclusion, which is characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance.
3. Misselection, which is characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morphemes or structure.
4. Misordering, which is characterized by the incorrect use of morpheme or a group of morphemes in a pronunciation.
5. Blends which is characterized by the combination of two alternative grammatical forms to produce an ungrammatical.

He furthermore classified them based on the sources, which include; 1) Interlingual errors referring to the errors caused by the interference of learners' mother tongue on target language (TL) learning; 2) Intralingual errors referring to the errors caused by the TL itself; 3) Communication strategy-based errors, which are subdivided into the holistic strategies or approximation referring to the errors caused by learners' assumption that it is all right to use

near-equivalent items to substitute the required items in TL and the analytic strategies or circumlocution referring to the errors made by expressing the concept indirectly or by allusion rather than by direct reference; and 4) Induced errors referring to the errors caused mostly by the TL teaching and learning process.

### Methods

#### Research design

Aiming to analyze grammatical errors in a written text, this present study adopted Corder's (1967) approach of Error Analysis (EA), which involves collecting samples from language learners, identifying the errors in the samples, describing these errors, classifying these errors according to their hypothesized causes and finally evaluating their seriousness (Mohammed & Abdalhussein, 2015). Furthermore, since this study was conducted to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its natural setting (Cresswell, 2008), in this case the phenomenon was the grammatical errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essays, the qualitative case study is considered the most suitable design to apply in this study.

#### Research site and participants

The study was carried out in Madrasah Aliyah Laboratorium (MAL), the State Islamic University of North Sumatra Medan. The participants of this study were 30 eleventh graders from the 2018/2019 academic year, consisting of 18 female and 12 male students. Half of the participants were enrolled in the MNS stream while the other half in SS stream. This particular school was chosen as the research site due to some considerations. Firstly, due to the aspect of accessibility since the researcher worked in the same institution which allowed her to conduct educational-related studies without involving too much administrative requirements to fulfill for research permission. Secondly, based on preliminary data collection, the English teacher shared similar interest to gather information about the main grammatical problems that her students encounter in their writing production and use the information in deciding what to focus for future teaching.

#### Data collection

This study used students' writing products as the main instrument of data collection. The corpus of the study involved 60 narrative texts written by the students, each consisted of 150 to 200 words. The students were given four essay topics which include *the Legend of Lake Toba*, *Cinderella*, *Malin Kundang*, and *Red Riding Hood*, representing the nuance of the themes the students learn during their study, those which are nationally and internationally popular. After selecting the topic, each student was asked to write two narrative essays in two topics of their choice from the selection with a provided time of 30 minutes to write an essay. It is necessary to emphasize that the two essays were not written in one class meeting, but two with a week time interval.

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### Data analysis

The data were analyzed using Content Analysis focusing on answering the three questions posed earlier in this study (Terrel, 2016). The procedure included three stages, namely identifying, categorizing, and quantifying. To ensure trustworthiness, inter-rater reliability was employed in analyzing students' essays during the identifying and categorizing stages. Two writing instructors at MAL UIN SU were involved in identifying grammar errors on students writing and furthermore categorizing them into six categories namely noun, pronoun, verb, article, preposition, and conjunction (look at table 1). Later, their ratings were reconciled by the researcher. At the quantifying stage, the errors were calculated in order to find out how frequently each type of errors were made by the students. To obtain the numerical data, the following percentage formula was used:

$$P = \frac{n1}{EN} \times 100\%$$

in which,

P : percentage of each error

n1 : total error of each type

EN : total of the whole errors made

By calculating the percentage of each error, the most frequent error made and the last frequent error made by students could be identified.

Table 1. Data Categorizing Sheet for Type of Error

No.	Student's Name	Type of Error						Total
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4								
5								
Total Error of Each Type								
Total of the Whole Error								

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In order to find out the causes of errors made, James' (1998) surface strategy taxonomy was adopted in analyzing the data. The errors identified by the raters were labeled into five categories and recorded in a table as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Data Categorizing Sheet for Causes of Error

No.	Type of Error	Cause of Error				
		Omission	Over Inclusion	Misselection	Misordering	Blends
1	Noun					
2	Pronoun					
3	Verb					
4	Article					
5	Preposition					
6	Conjunction					
Total						

### Findings

This study tried to compare grammar errors found in narrative essays written by 11<sup>th</sup> grade MA students taking Mathematics and Natural Science and Social Science streams at MAL UIN SU 2018/2019 academic year. The result of data analysis shows that in total, there are 450 errors found in 60 narrative essays written by the students. A closer look at the result reveals an interesting finding showing that MNS students make more errors with a total number of 250 occurrences than SS students do with 200 errors as shown in *Figure 1*. Other findings of this study will be presented in three parts in accordance with the questions posed earlier.

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Distribution of Grammatical Error

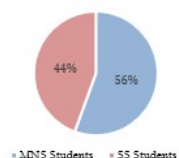


Figure 1. The Distribution of Grammatical Error Made by MNS and SS Students

#### The type of grammatical error

To answer the question related to the types of grammar errors made by MNS and SS students, the essays were first grouped into two; those written by MNS students and those by SS students. The errors identified in each of students' essays were recorded based on the six types explained in the data analysis section and calculated to find out the total number of errors for each type. The results are shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

As shown in Table 3, MNS students make grammar errors in all six types. The 'verb' type occupies the highest number of errors followed by the 'article' one. These two types of grammar errors contribute 37.6% and 19.2% of the total errors generated in the data analysis process. The types of 'preposition' and 'noun' come in the third and the fourth positions in the list of grammar error type made by MNS students comprising 14.4% and 10.4% of the 250 grammatical errors made. The errors in 'conjunction' and 'pronoun' share almost similar contribution to the total errors identified in MNS students' narrative essays. The two types of error comprise 9.6% and 8.8% of the total errors, thus rank the fifth and the sixth in the list.

Table 3. The Type of Grammatical Error Made by MNS Students

Type of Error	Number of Error
Noun	26
Pronoun	22
Verb	94
Article	48
Preposition	36
Conjunction	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>

Table 4 shows that SS students also make grammar errors in all six types. Verb errors are found to be the most dominant on SS students' narrative essays with the contribution of 39.5% of the total errors found. The types of 'article' and 'preposition' occupy the second and

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the third positions of the error frequency made by SS students contributing to 25.5% and 11.5% of the total identified errors. Ten percent of grammar errors in the narrative essays written by SS students is in using conjunction. Finally, 'pronoun' comprising 7.5% and 'noun' 6% of the total errors generated in the data analysis process are in the bottom two of the chart as the least grammar errors made by SS students. It means that either type of error contributes fewer than 10% of the total errors identified.

Table 4. The Type of Grammatical Error Made by SS Students

Type of Error	Number of Error
Noun	12
Pronoun	15
Verb	79
Article	51
Preposition	23
Conjunction	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>

#### The causes of grammatical errors

To answer the question related to the causes of grammar errors made by MNS and SS students, each type of identified errors made by MNS students and those made by SS students were calculated on two separate tables and classified based on James' (1998) surface strategy taxonomy. The findings reveal that only one type of grammar errors is caused by all five categories included in the taxonomy. As it can be seen in Tables 5 and 6, the grammar errors made by MNS and SS students are caused by various reasons covering the whole categories proposed by James (1998). While the rest of the types are 'only' caused by either four or three categories.

In terms of the frequency of the causes, as the findings in Table 5 reveal, most of grammar errors made by MNS students in their essays are caused by 'misselection' of the items comprising 38% of the total errors made, followed by 'over inclusion' with 29.6% and 'omission' with 22.4% of contributions. Meanwhile, grammar errors caused by 'misordering' and 'blends' are quite seldom to occur as they only contribute 5.2% and 4.8% of the total errors made by MNS students.

Table 5: The Cause of Grammatical Error Made by MNS Students

No.	Type of Error	Omission	Over Inclusion	Misselection	Misordering	Blends
1	Noun	5	-	18	3	-

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2	Pronoun	3	7	12	-	-
3	Verb	18	32	29	5	10
4	Article	19	15	11	3	-
5	Preposition	7	12	15	2	-
6	Conjunction	4	8	10	-	2
Total of Each Cause		56	74	95	13	12
Total of All Causes		250				

Based on the data presented in Table 6, errors caused by 'misselection' significantly outnumber other causes found on SS students' narrative essays with 42% contribution. 'Omission' ranks in the second as the most frequent causes of errors made comprising 30% of the total errors. By almost 50 percent fewer than the previous cause, which equals to 18.5% contribution, 'over conclusion' occupies the third position, followed by 'misordering' with the contribution of 6.5%. Finally, SS students made very minimum errors caused by 'blends' comprising only 3% of the total errors.

Table 6: The Causes of Grammatical Error Made by SS Students

No.	Type of Error	Cause of Error				
		Omission	Over Inclusion	Misselection	Misordering	Blends
1	Noun	2	2	6	2	-
2	Pronoun	5	-	10	-	-
3	Verb	26	18	16	11	3
4	Article	21	13	22	-	-
5	Preposition	3	2	18	-	-
6	Conjunction	3	2	12	-	3
Total of Each Cause		60	37	84	13	6
Total of All Causes		200				

### The comparison of grammatical errors made by MNS and SS students

To compare the types and the causes of grammatical errors found in narrative essays written by MNS and SS students, the findings used to answer the questions 1 and 2 in this study are displayed side by side and presented in a chart for each category as seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

The findings in Figure 2 indicate that both MNS and SS students make grammatical errors in their narrative essays in all types as detailed in the table sheet (Table 1). In terms of the frequency of each error type, the grammatical errors found in MNS and SS students' essays are dominated by the 'verb' ones, followed by 'article' and 'preposition.' However, there are some slight differences in the bottom three of the chart. The analysis of the data collected from MNS students reveal that they make more errors in using 'noun' compared to 'conjunction.' Meanwhile, SS students make errors in using 'conjunction' more often than in 'pronoun.' The type with the fewest errors found on MNS students' essays is 'pronoun' while that on SS students' essays is 'noun.' Furthermore, when comparing the total errors of each type, it is found that MNS students make more errors in five types, namely: 'verb,' 'preposition,' 'conjunction,' 'noun,' and 'pronoun.' While SS students make more errors only in 'article.'

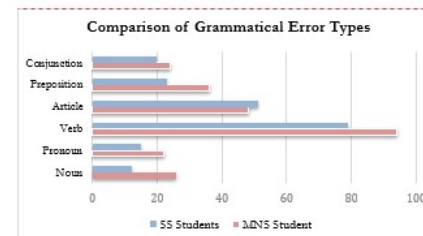


Figure 2. The Comparison of Type of Grammatical Error Made by MNS and SS Students

As shown in Figure 3, the grammatical errors made by MNS and SS students in their narrative essays are scattered in the five causes listed in the surface strategy taxonomy. A closer look at the findings reveals that most of the errors made by the two groups of students are caused by 'misselection' of the items used. In the second rank of the cause of error, it is found out that 'over inclusion' occurs more often than 'omission' for grammatical errors made by MNS students. On the contrary, SS students make more errors caused by 'omission' compared to those by 'over inclusion.'

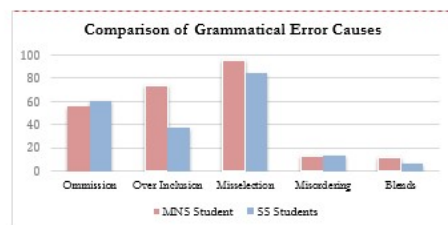


Figure 3. The Comparison of Grammatical Error Causes Made by MNS and SS Students

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that 11<sup>th</sup> grade MA students at MAL UIN SU had insufficient knowledge on how to employ several English parts of speech in their written discourse. It can also be inferred from the result that the verb and the article constituents are the most challenging area for the students. The researcher argued that these challenges occur due to two most dominant sources of errors, namely interlingual and communication strategy-based ones. As stated by James (1998) that interlingual errors are caused by the interference of learners' mother tongue on the target language, the students tended to either use the wrong form of certain items or omit them in their essays as seen in the following excerpts:

1. One day he went to catched fish in river near his house.
2. Cinderella more beautifuler than her two step sister.
3. Although she is not like them, she still maked breakfast in morning for them.
4. The woman so happy and try to hug the Malin Kundang
5. The wolf pretend to be the grandmother.

Indonesian verbs do not have interdependent participles determining the tense of the sentence, which are completely different from those in English. As a consequence, the students were repeatedly found to use the wrong forms of verb in their essays, such as 'try' to replace 'tried' in [4] and 'pretend' instead of 'pretended' in [5]. Another problem related to the interlingual factor is the omission of the plural marker in a noun and 'be' as a linking verb followed by a complement. Since Indonesian language does not recognize the linguistic element that marks the plurality of a given noun, some students omit that particular linguistic element as seen in the phrase "the two step sister" in [2]. Meanwhile the omission of 'be' in "Cinderella (was) more beautifuler" in [2] and "the woman (was) so happy" in [4] was because the students

translated the sentences word by word from Indonesian "Cinderella lebih cantik" and "wanita itu sangat bahagia" to English.

In addition to the interlingual source, errors in using the verb constituent is also caused from communication strategy-based source, particularly the holistic strategies or approximation. Verbs in English may have a random change and contradict the usual rules of the verb in the past form *-ed*, which are called irregular verbs. Since there are no certain rules to follow in changing the form, Indonesian EFL learners tend to over include by adding an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance as seen in 'catched' in [1] and 'maked' in [3]. According to James (1998), the source of this kind of errors is communication strategy-based one because the students assume that the use near-equivalent items to substitute the required items in target language is okay, in this case adding *-ed* to the verb 'catch' and 'make' to make the past form. Similar example can also be found in the word 'beautifuler' in [2] which is caused by the student's assumption that *-er* is added to the adjective to make its comparative form.

The findings of this study, at some extent correspondent yet inconsistent with those of other studies discussing similar topics. First, the finding showing the verb constituent as the most challenging area for senior high school students in writing narrative essays is also reported in Floranti and Adiantika's (2019) and Muryllyanas's (2019) studies. A closer look at the findings of the two studies also reveals some similarities with that in this current study, in which the most dominant verb errors are the verb tenses. However, for the second rank of the type of error frequently found in the essay, the result of this study is inconsistent with those of Floranti and Adiantika's (2019) and Muryllyanas's (2019) showing pronoun as the second predominant type of error found in their students' essays. Second, the result related to the source of grammar errors corresponds to the works of Floranti and Adiantika's (2019) and Mohammed's (2015). Both studies found interlingual source as the one of most dominant causes of grammar errors generated in the students' essays in their studies. However, since the two studies used Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) taxonomy of surface strategy as their theoretical framework, communication strategy-based source is not mentioned at all in the findings. Finally, the finding indicating that MNS students made more errors in their essays than SS students did is contrary to the result found by Sembiring and Gintings's (2013) research showing natural science students outperformed social science students in writing recount texts. Thus, this finding may also imply that the general understanding of society related to the labeling of SS students who are considered to have lower academic competence than MNS students is not necessarily true.

## Conclusion and Pedagogical Implication

This study investigated grammar errors made by some *Madrasah Aliyah* students in writing narrative essay. Results of data analysis generate three findings. Firstly, the students made grammar errors in six types, namely noun, pronoun, verb, article, preposition, and conjunction. Secondly, the causes of the errors varied which cover the five categories



mentioned in the surface strategy taxonomy, namely: omission, over inclusion, misselection, misordering, and blends. Furthermore, the results indicate that interference from students' mother tongue and their inadequate knowledge of L2 are the main source of errors. Finally, MA students of MNS stream have more defects of English knowledge in writing narrative essays.

This study investigated grammar errors made by some *Madrasah Aliyah* students in writing narrative essay. Results of data analysis generate three findings. Firstly, the students made grammar errors in six types, namely noun, pronoun, verb, article, preposition, and conjunction. Secondly, the causes of the errors varied which cover the five categories mentioned in the surface strategy taxonomy, namely: omission, over inclusion, misselection, misordering, and blends. Furthermore, the results indicate that interference from students' mother tongue and their inadequate knowledge of L2 are the main source of errors. Finally, MA students of MNS stream have more defects of English knowledge in writing narrative essays compared to their counterparts of SS stream.

Since studies in the nature of EFL learners' errors may be used to better understand the linguistic areas where they have difficulties in writing, the results are argued to be very essential for various parties. For teachers, particularly those of MAL UIN SU, the results of this study may provide them with the information needed in determining the most appropriate strategies to help EFL learners overcome the problematic areas of the target language. Furthermore, EFL teachers of senior high schools are also suggested to use different strategies and/or materials focusing and addressing different linguistic defects faced by MNS and SS students since one-fits-all strategy may not work with EFL students of similar demographic as those in this study. For textbook and syllabus designers, the results imply that the materials and syllabus for MA students need to be designed in the light of these errors. For researchers, it is suggested to conduct similar studies in a bigger scale than that in the present study to provide more insight on the topic under discussion.

#### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest needs to be reported.

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<p><b>Are</b> the aim, design and nature of the study well expressed in the abstract?</p> <p><b>Are</b> participants' characteristics, data collection analysis, and major findings summarized in the abstract?</p> <p>Comments: <b>he abstract summarizes the brief information of the manuscript. It covers all aspects such as; the aim, design and nature of the study, participants' caharacteristics, data collection, data analysis and major findings. However, You have wrong perceptions about types of errors and the causes of error. See Coder's theory about errors in Learning a language</b></p>			X	
<b>4. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<p><b>Is</b> the problem described clearly in light of what is already known about the study topic?</p> <p><b>Is</b> the purpose of the study clearly stated?</p> <p><b>Is</b> the gap in the literature well-established?</p> <p><b>Are</b> research questions generated accordingly?</p> <p><b>Do</b> the authors justify the need for this study, and does this research address the need?</p> <p>Comments; <b>The introduction covers all the needs of a good intoduction because it ensures the readers about the urgency of this study. The problem is in light of what is known about the study topic. However, Why do you thing that it is also necessary to conduct error analysis for Islamic senior high school students? What made you feel that there would be different results gained from MA students compared to SMA students related to errors the students produced in writing?</b></p>		X		
<b>5. THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>

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<p><b>Is</b> the review of the literature up-to-date and comprehensive?</p> <p><b>Does</b> it address the need for the manuscript?</p> <p><b>Are</b> the references accurate and in agreement with the statements made in the manuscript?</p> <p><b>Are</b> the references primary or secondary? The references should generally be the original studies rather than narrative or other reviews or journal supplements.</p> <p>Comments: <b>You have to add two points more in literature review: 1. Types of Error and 2. Causes of errors. Find out some theories about these two points.</b></p>		X		
<b>6. METHODS</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<p><b>Is</b> the research design clearly described and appropriate for the purpose of the study?</p> <p><b>Are</b> the participants, their characteristics and their selection methods described in detail and justified?</p> <p><b>Is</b> the context of the study elaborated to provide in-depth understanding about the setting?</p> <p><b>Are</b> the purpose, content and usage of data collection tools explained and justified?</p> <p><b>Are</b> data collection and analysis procedures are clearly explained with a reference to the role and competency of the researcher(s)?</p> <p>For quantitative research, <b>Are</b> the validity and reliability processes in data collection and analyses described sufficiently?</p> <p>For qualitative research, <b>is</b> the credibility or the “trustworthiness described sufficiently?</p> <p><b>Is</b> the way to protect the rights of human participants described sufficiently?</p> <p>Comments: <b>Your research approach should be quantitative. Since you want to compare the results of errors produced by MNS and SS students of MA. You also conducted quantitative content analysis, where your data are in the form of percentages, so your research approach must be quantitative not qualitative one. You have to mention what sampling technique did you use to draw your research participants and the reason of</b></p>			X	

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using certain sampling technique.				
<b>7. FINDINGS</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<p><b>Do</b> findings respond to the purpose of the study, and are presented systematically?</p> <p><b>Are</b> findings supported with sufficient and relevant quotations, examples, tables, and diagrams?</p> <p><b>Is</b> the description of the findings consistent with the study methodology (e.g., authors refer to the specific group, time period, or other key details in describing the study findings, so that readers understand the findings clearly)?</p> <p>Comments: <b>Please refer to your research questions. You have three objectives, then in the findings you also had to focus on these three objectives</b></p>			X	
<b>8. DISCUSSION</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<p><b>Does</b> the discussion briefly review the principal findings of the current study?</p> <p><b>Are</b> findings are discussed with a reference to relevant and recent literature?</p> <p>If applicable, <b>do</b> the authors provide possible explanations why the results of the present study do not comport with findings from other relevant studies?</p> <p><b>Are</b> theoretical implications and practical significance of the study discussed?</p> <p>Comments: <b>Your discussion is inappropriate. In the discussion section you have to compare your results of the research with other previous similar</b></p>			X	

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<b>studies and show whether your research results support, have different results or has new findings.</b>				
<b>9. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Does</b> the conclusion succinctly but completely sum up the key takeaway points of the study? Does the conclusion match the objective? <b>Are</b> implications for further implementations, suggestions for further research, and limitations of the current study provided?  Comments: <b>Please be sure that what you have stated refer to your research questions</b>			X	
<b>10. CLARITY AND ACCURACY</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Is</b> the language appropriate and fluent? <b>Is</b> Syntax correct and appropriate? <b>Are</b> technical terms defined clearly? <b>Is</b> the manuscript easy to follow? The central idea is clear and supported. The organization is orderly. The manuscript flows smoothly and logically, with the sentences, paragraphs, and sections fitting together and carrying the reader forward comfortably.  Comments: <b>The language used in this manuscript is easy to follow and fluent. However, minor revisions are necessary related to the syntax of English as well as punctuation</b>	X			
<b>11. DISCLOSURE STATEMENT</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Does</b> author provide a conflict of interest statement?(e.g. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors).				X



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Comments: <b>No potential conflict of interest is reported by the author in this manuscript.</b>				
<b>12. REFERENCES</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Are</b> in-text citations and references following the APA referencing system?  Comments: <b>The in-text citations and references of this manuscript are based on the APA referencing system</b>	X			

**Recommendation for this manuscript (indicate your recommendation with an "X"):**

\_\_\_ **Accept** as written without any revisions

\_\_\_ **Accept** with minor revisions (a second round of review is not necessary).

X **Accept** with major revisions (a second round of review will be necessary)

\_\_\_ **Reject** (the paper is not suitable for publication)

Grammatical Errors in *Madrasah Aliyah* Students' Narrative Essays:

## An Error Analysis of the Surface Strategy

Bahmah Fikhrizani

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

## Abstract

For English as a *foreign language (EFL)* students in Indonesia, writing has mostly been found as a complicated and difficult skill to master. As a consequence, errors in EFL writing is inevitable. Framed by Error Analysis approach, this study aims at *analysing* grammar errors in writing narrative text, with a special focus on the comparison of errors made by the students of Mathematics & Natural Science (MNS) and Social Studies (SS) streams at a *Madrasah Aliyah* (Islamic senior high school). This study used 60 narrative essays as the data corpus, which were *analysed* using content approach. The result of data analysis reveals interesting findings showing that generally, MNS students make more grammar errors than the SS students do. A closer look at the data shows that *61* MNS students produce more errors in five types: 'noun,' 'pronoun,' 'verb,' 'preposition,' and 'conjunction' while SS students only in one, namely 'article'; and 2) *misselection*, over inclusion, and omission become the dominant causes of the errors. These findings could be used as a proof to debunk the stereotype of MNS and SS students labelling with more preference given to MNS students who are perceived to be more dominant in academic performance.

**Keywords:** grammatical error analysis, *Mathematics & Natural Science stream* narrative essay, *Social Studies stream*, Surface strategy, *Types of error*, *Causes of errors*

## Introduction

The importance of English as a global language has been long recognized by the government of Indonesia. The language was officially approved as the first foreign language in the country in 1955 and has become the only foreign language mandatorily taught in all levels of education since then. Based on the Curriculum 2013 (K-13), which has been implemented in all levels of high school since 2014, the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia (TEFL) should focus on developing language skills on four areas namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, it is stated that among the goal of TEFL in Indonesia is to equip students with the ability to develop oral and written communicative competence (*Pertemuan*, Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2014).

## reviewer

You are inconsistent. In the introduction, there are three objectives of your research that you formulate in three research questions. But in the abstract you only *describe* two research findings.

You have wrong perceptions about types of errors and the causes of error. See Corder's theory about errors in Learning a language

## reviewer

Unnecessary information, delete it

## reviewer

Unnecessary *discuss*, delete it

Despite the stated goal related to English communicative competence in both oral and written forms, the teaching of writing skill has been neglected in English classrooms including that at SMA (general senior high school) and MA (Islamic senior high school) levels. According to the K-13, writing instruction in SMA and MA aims to develop students' skills in writing simple texts to more complex ones in various genres including *narrative text*. However, in practice, writing instruction is still much dominated with activities to reinforce language structures at the sentence level. Writing is still viewed as a product activity emphasizing merely on grammatical and syntactic accuracy (*Fikhrizani*, 2017). As a consequence, most Indonesian EFL learners at the SMA/MA level perceive writing as a difficult skill to develop and master, particularly in terms of accuracy at the sentential level, that is, sentence grammar.

Studies have shown that Indonesian SMA/MA learners face various difficulties related to develop their English proficiency in written discourse (e.g. Husna, Zainul, & Rosimela, 2013; Inayah, & Gani, 2016; Nurhayati, 2015). In general, they were found to commit various errors, particularly grammatical ones in writing different genres as stated in the K-13 curriculum. Several studies have been conducted to *analyse* grammar errors on one particular genre of writing, namely narrative text. The focuses of discussion are diverse, which include the frequency and the types of grammar errors emerged in students' writing (*Fioranti & Adiantika*, 2019; Hendriyanto & Sugeng, 2013; Yudhanegara, 2019), the causes of grammar errors (*Hendriyanto & Sugeng*, 2013), the possible sources of those errors (*Fioranti & Adiantika*, 2019), and grammatical error analysis across different grades and streams (*Luthfiyati, Latief, & Suharmanto*, 2015).

Despite the growing number of this path of research, most of them involved SMA students as the subjects of the research. Very few studies found in literature have focused on grammar errors *made by MA students*, let alone on the comparison of errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill the gap by comparing the grammatical errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay. In details, it focuses on answering three questions:

1. What types of grammar errors are made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay?
2. What are the causes of grammar errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay?
3. What are the differences of the types and causes of grammatical errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay?

The significance of this study stemmed from the idea that by identifying the grammar errors made by the students of the two streams, the researchers will gain a significant insight on what strategies they employ to develop communicative competence in English written discourse, particularly in writing narrative essay. Moreover, the findings of this study may work as a diagnostic tool to reveal the grammatical problems faced by the students in writing production so that they could be the focus of writing instruction for Indonesian SMA/MA students in general. Finally, since there is a stereotype of MNS students always outperforming the SS ones academically, this research could be used to either validate or debunk it.

## Literature Review

## reviewer

Why do you thing that it is also necessary to conduct error analysis for Islamic senior high school students? What made you feel that there would be different results gained from MA students compared to SMA students related to errors the students produced in writing?

## reviewer

I believe that you want to see the difference in terms of the dominant errors produced by the students of MA compared to SMA not about the differences in terms of type and causes.

## reviewer

You have to add two points more in literature review: 1. Types of Error and 2. Causes of errors. Find out some theories about these two points



### Grammar knowledge and English writing ability

In today's global community, communicative competence in foreign languages, particularly in English is becoming increasingly important. English as a global language could be claimed to hold the most important role as a means of communication in various fields such as education, diplomacy, and international commerce. Among English language skills, writing has a special position due to its extensive usage in educational as well as professional settings. Without a good command in writing, one could not express her ideas when doing most of daily tasks such as writing essays, reports, applications, e-mails, etc. Thus, one's writing ability in a language could be used to indicate her proficiency in the language (Li & Lin, 2007).

Writing comprises a complex mental process involving multiple skills from cognitive analysis to linguistic synthesis. Thus, to become proficient in this particular language skill takes a considerable time and effort. For foreign language learners, the challenge and difficulty in developing writing proficiency is even doubled due to various reasons ranging from the language barriers to the different rhetoric patterns deployed (Fithriani, 2018b). In addition, the ability in foreign language writing including in EFL context involves knowledge of other language skills, particularly grammar.

Since grammar is bounded to other language skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it is no doubt that good grammar knowledge is inevitably important in developing EFL communicative competence as it guides learners to use the language appropriately both in written form and in oral language skill (Fithriani, 2018a). In terms of the role of grammar in writing skill, Hedge (2005) argued that "effective writing requires a number of things: a high degree of development in the organization of ideas and information; a high degree of accuracy so there is no ambiguity of meaning; the use of complex grammatical devices for focus and emphasis; and careful choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and sentence structures to create a style which is appropriate to the subject matter and the eventual readers" (p. 5). In short it could be concluded that good writing requires good working knowledge of grammar.

### English writing instruction in Indonesian secondary schools

English is the only foreign language mandatorily taught in secondary schools and higher education institutions in Indonesia. Secondary schools in Indonesia consists of three years of junior high school and three years of senior high school and fall under the responsibility of either the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* or *Kemdikbud*) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kementerian Agama* or *Kemendag*). Furthermore, the secondary schools under *Kemdikbud* are known as SMP (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama*) for junior high school level and SMA (*Sekolah Menengah Atas*) for senior high school level, meanwhile those under *Kemendag* are called MTs (*Madrasah Tsanawiyah*) and MA (*Madrasah Aliyah*) respectively. However, the curriculum for English instruction throughout these levels becomes the sole responsibility of *Kemdikbud* to design and issue.

According to K-13 as the currently implemented curriculum, the allotted time for English teaching at secondary school ranges from two up to six class hours (one class hour equals to 45 minutes) per week. For junior high schools, the allotted time is four class hours throughout grade



7 to grade 9. For senior high schools, the allotted time varies according to the stream based on students' academic interests. At SMA and MA levels, students are streamed into three academic interests, namely the Mathematics and Natural Sciences, the Social Studies, and the Language and Culture. For the first two streams, English is compulsory and allotted at least two class hours per week, while for the Language and Culture one, the time allotment for English is six hours per week. However, for *Madrasah Aliyah*, the curriculum structure can be developed in accordance with the needs set by the Ministry of Religion (*Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia*, 2018). This exception implies that there are possibilities for some differences of TEFL in the two types of senior high schools. Meanwhile, related to this academic interest-based division, there is a stereotype referring to the academic ability of MNS and SS students. People believe that MNS students are dominant in academic performance in almost, if not all, subjects (Efendi & Wahyudi, 2016; Hanafi, 2014). As a consequence, most students of secondary school prefer to take MNS compared to SS stream.

As stated in K-13, ELT at secondary schools should equip students with the ability to develop oral and written communicative competence in four areas of language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, the teaching of writing provides students with knowledge, experience and strategies of writing simple texts to more complex ones in 12 text genres, namely: recount, narrative, procedural, descriptive, report, news items, analytical exposition, persuasive exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion and review. For this purpose, genre-based approach is used to introduce students the social function, the generic structures, and the language features of the genres.

Among the 12 text genres taught to SMA and MA students, narrative may be considered special and unique as it is the most frequently used and learned throughout the grades of secondary school. Narrative is defined as a literary text that tells about a series of logically and chronologically related events (Lukens, 2007). According to Anderson and Anderson (2003), the social function of a narrative text is to entertain the readers with a story containing complications or problematic events that lead to a crisis and in turn find a resolution. The generic structure of a narrative text includes 1) Orientation to introduce the participants and inform the time and the place; 2) Complication to describe crises the participants need to deal with; and 3) Resolution to show the way of the participants to solve the crises. As it talks about the past events narrative text should be written in simple past. In addition, writing in narrative genre should include adequate details about the action and its context so that the readers can understand what is going on.

### The significance of Error Analysis (EA) in EFL teaching & learning

Errors are an inseparable aspect of learning a second language, thus, it is important to obtain information how second language (L2) learners, including those of EFL make mistakes while performing oral or written tasks in the target language. One of the most popular method to conduct this particular type of research is Error Analysis (EA). Crystal (2003) defines EA as a "technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics" (p. 163). Similar to this, Gorder (1974) believed that EA is a useful technique to describe L2 learners' knowledge of the target language in order to relate it to the



teaching they have been receiving. Related to the stated definitions, EA is particularly beneficial for L2 teachers and/or researchers who want to obtain information about learners' linguistic deficiency so they can address the issues in future. In addition to identifying the errors, Richards and Schmidt (2002) stated other benefits of EA which include the identification of the learning strategies used by L2 learners and the causes of the errors they make.

EA was first introduced in 1960<sup>1</sup> by Gorder (1967) as a result of his critics towards Contrastive Analysis (CA), which was claimed to fail in predicting errors made L2 learners. CA assumed that errors made by L2 learners are exclusively derived from the interference of their L1 or mother tongue, known as interlingual source. Meanwhile, in addition to interlingual source, EA made clear that errors in L2 learning also come from intralingual source, which result from faulty or partial learning of the target language. Guided by the two major purposes of EA, either to present error categories based on observable characteristics or to report the types of error observed, EA categorizes errors into four taxonomies, namely (1) linguistic category; (2) surface strategy; (3) comparative analysis; and (4) communicative effect.

Among the four taxonomies, surface strategy has much been used as an approach in analyzing learners' errors in various EFL contexts (e.g. Mohammed & Abdulkussain, 2015; Vasquez, 2008; Yoon, 2012; Zheng & Park, 2013). Many experts have tried to identify the causes of errors EFL learners make based on the surface strategy taxonomy, including Carl James (1998). James (1998) categorized the errors into five categories as detailed below:

1. Omission, which is characterized by an absence in a well-formed utterance of an item.
2. Over Inclusion, which is characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance.
3. Misselection, which is characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morphemes or structure.
4. Misordering, which is characterized by the incorrect use of morpheme or a group of morphemes in a pronunciation.
5. Blends which is characterized by the combination of two alternative grammatical forms to produce an ungrammatical.

He furthermore classified them based on the sources, which include; 1) Interlingual errors referring to the errors caused by the interference of learners' mother tongue on target language (TL) learning; 2) Intralingual errors referring to the errors caused by the TL itself; 3) Communication strategy-based errors, which are subdivided into the holistic strategies or approximation referring to the errors caused by learners' assumption that it is all right to use near-equivalent items to substitute the required items in TL and the analytic strategies or circumlocution referring to the errors made by expressing the concept indirectly or by allusion rather than by direct reference; and 4) Induced errors referring to the errors caused mostly by the TL teaching and learning process.

## Methods

### Research design

Aiming to analyze grammatical errors in a written text, this present study adopts Gorder's (1967) approach of Error Analysis (EA), which involves collecting samples from language learners, identifying the errors in the samples, describe these errors, classifying these errors according to

**reviewer**  
Your research approach should be quantitative. Since you want to compare the results of errors produced by MNS and SS students of MA. You also conducted quantitative content analysis, where ~~qualitative~~ data are in the form of percentages, so your research approach must be quantitative not qualitative one.

their hypothesized causes and finally evaluating their seriousness (Mohammed & Abdulkussain, 2015). Furthermore, since this study was conducted to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its natural setting (Cresswell, 2008), in this case the phenomenon was the grammatical errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essays, the qualitative case study is considered the most suitable design to apply in this study.

### Research site and participants

The study was carried out in Madrasah Aliyah Laboratorium (MAL), the State Islamic University of North Sumatra Medan. The participants of this study were 30 eleventh graders from the 2018/2019 academic year, consisting of 18 female and 12 male students. Half of the participants were enrolled in the MNS stream while the other half in SS stream. This particular school was chosen as the research site due to some considerations. Firstly, due to the aspect of accessibility since the researcher worked in the same institution which allowed her to conduct educational-related studies without involving too much administrative requirements to fulfill for research permission. Secondly, based on preliminary data collection, the English teacher shared similar interest to gather information about the main grammatical problems that her students encounter in their writing production and use the information in deciding what to focus for future teaching.

### Data collection

This study used students' writing products as the main instrument of data collection. The corpus of the study involved 60 narrative texts written by the students, each consisted of 150 to 200 words. The students were given four essay topics which include *The Legend of Lake Toba*, *Cinderella*, *Malin Kundang*, and *Red Riding Hood* representing the nuance of the themes the students learn during their study, those which are nationally and internationally popular. After selecting the topic, each student was asked to write two narrative essays in two topics of their choice from the selection with a provided time of 80 minutes to write an essay. It is necessary to emphasize that the two essays were not written in one class meeting, but two with a week time interval.

### Data analysis

The data were analyzed using Content Analysis focusing on answering the three questions posed earlier in this study (Terrel, 2016). The procedure included three stages, namely identifying, categorizing, and quantifying. To ensure trustworthiness, inter-rater reliability was employed in analyzing students' essays during the identifying and categorizing stages. Two writing instructors at MAL UIN SU were involved in identifying grammar errors on students writing and furthermore categorizing them into six categories namely noun, pronoun, verb, article, preposition, and conjunction (look at table 1). Later, their ratings were reconciled by the researcher. At the quantifying stage, the errors were calculated in order to find out how frequently each type of errors were made by the students. To obtain the numerical data, the following percentage formula was used:

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

in which,

**reviewer**  
You have to mention what sampling technique did you use to draw your research participants and the reason of using certain sampling technique.

**reviewer**  
What are your considerations by only taking half of students from MNS and SS group of students?

**reviewer**  
You said you only had 30 participants. Why did you have 60 narrative ~~essays~~??? Why did the essay only consist of 150 to 200 words since essay at least consist of 300 words or 4 paragraphs???

**reviewer**  
Were the themes mandated in the syllabus of writing??  
**reviewer**  
for what level of students did you conduct the writing test??? (10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, or 12<sup>th</sup> grade of students???)  
Why did you only focus on Narrative type of text? Since I believe that there are at least three types of texts are mandated in the curriculum for each level of student???

**reviewer**  
30 minutes is suitable for writing a paragraph, not an essay. At least you need 60 minutes to write an essay

**reviewer**  
Please be clear about this. What do you mean???? why did you have to conduct two sessions of writing tests?

**reviewer**  
How about the type of text for the second essay??? the topic selection? Are they the same as the first meeting???

**reviewer**  
Inter-rater reliability is not kind of data trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is the prerequisite in qualitative research for qualitative data you gain from observation and interview for example. SEE your research books

P : percentage of each error  
n1 : total error of each type  
EN : total of the whole errors made

By calculating the percentage of each error, the most frequent error made and the last frequent error made by students could be identified.

Table 1. Data Categorizing Sheet for Type of Error

No.	Student's Name	Type of Error						Total
		N	Pro	V	Art	Prep	Con	
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
Total Error of Each Type								
Total of the Whole Error								

In order to find out the causes of errors made, James' (1998) surface strategy taxonomy was adopted in analyzing the data. The errors identified by the raters were labeled into five categories and recorded in a table as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Data Categorizing Sheet for Causes of Error

No.	Type of Error	Cause of Error				
		Omission	Over Inclusion	Misselection	Misordering	Blends
1	Noun					
2	Pronoun					

reviewer  
Unnecessary information

reviewer  
You have wrong perception about types of errors. Like what you said in your literature review, James (1998) categorized the errors into five categories as detailed below:  
1. Omission, which is characterized by an absence in a well-formed utterance of an item.  
2. Over Inclusion, which is characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance.  
3. Misselection, which is characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morphemes or structure.  
4. Misordering, which is characterized by the incorrect use of morphemes or a group of morphemes in a pronunciation.  
5. Blends which is characterized by the combination of two alternative grammatical forms to produce an ungrammatical.  
So the types of errors are NOT in the form of N, Pro, V, Art, Prep and Con

reviewer  
Omission, over inclusion, misselection, misordering, and blends are types of errors not causes of errors.

reviewer  
Unnecessary information

3	Verb						
4	Article						
5	Preposition						
6	Conjunction						
Total							

## Findings

This study tried to compare grammar errors found in narrative essays written by 11<sup>th</sup> grade MA students taking Mathematics and Natural Science and Social Science streams at MAL UIN SU 2018/2019 academic year. The result of data analysis shows that in total, there are 450 errors found in 60 narrative essays written by the students. A closer look at the result reveals an interesting finding showing that MNS students make more errors with a total number of 250 occurrences than SS students do with 200 errors as shown in Figure 1. Other findings of this study will be presented in three parts in accordance with the questions posed earlier.

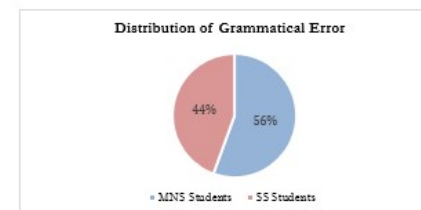


Figure 1. The Distribution of Grammatical Error Made by MNS and SS Students

## The type of grammatical error

To answer the question related to the types of grammar errors made by MNS and SS students, the essays were first grouped into two; those written by MNS students and those by SS students. The errors identified in each of students' essays were recorded based on the six types explained in the data analysis section and calculated to find out the total number of errors for each type. The results are shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

As shown in Table 3, MNS students make grammar errors in all six types. The 'verb' type occupies the highest number of errors followed by the 'article' one. These two types of grammar errors contribute 37.6% and 19.2% of the total errors generated in the data analysis process. The types of 'preposition' and 'noun' come in the third and the fourth positions in the list of grammar

reviewer  
Please refer to your research questions. You have three objectives, then in the findings you also had to focus on these three objectives

reviewer  
What is it for??? all of the findings must answer each research question you have proposed

error type made by MNS students comprising 14.4% and 10.4% of the 250 grammatical errors made. The errors in 'conjunction' and 'pronoun' share almost similar contribution to the total errors identified in MNS students' narrative essays. The two types of error comprise 9.6% and 8.8% of the total errors, thus rank the fifth and the sixth in the list.

Table 3. The Type of Grammatical Error Made by MNS Students

Type of Error	Number of Error
Noun	26
Pronoun	22
Verb	94
Article	48
Preposition	36
Conjunction	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>

Table 4 shows that SS students also make grammar errors in all six types. Verb errors are found to be the most dominant on SS students' narrative essays with the contribution of 39.5% of the total errors found. The types of 'article' and 'preposition' occupy the second and the third positions of the error frequency made by SS students contributing to 25.5% and 11.5% of the total identified errors. Ten percent of grammar errors in the narrative essays written by SS students is in using conjunction. Finally, 'pronoun' comprising 7.5% and 'noun' 6% of the total errors generated in the data analysis process are in the bottom two of the chart as the least grammar errors made by SS students. It means that either type of error contributes fewer than 10% of the total errors identified.

Table 4. The Type of Grammatical Error Made by SS Students

Type of Error	Number of Error
Noun	12
Pronoun	15
Verb	79
Article	51
Preposition	23
Conjunction	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>

#### The causes of grammatical errors

To answer the question related to the causes of grammar errors made by MNS and SS students, each type of identified errors made by MNS students and those made by SS students were calculated on two separate tables and classified based on James' (1998) surface strategy taxonomy. The findings reveal that only one type of grammar errors is caused by all five categories included in the taxonomy. As it can be seen in Tables 5 and 6, the grammar errors made by MNS

and SS students are caused by various reasons covering the whole categories proposed by James (1998). While the rest of the types are 'only' caused by either four or three categories.

In terms of the frequency of the causes, as the findings in Table 5 reveal, most of grammar errors made by MNS students in their essays are caused by 'misselection' of the items comprising 38% of the total errors made, followed by 'over inclusion' with 29.6% and 'omission' with 22.4% of contributions. Meanwhile, grammar errors caused by 'misordering' and 'blends' are quite seldom to occur as they only contribute 5.2% and 4.8% of the total errors made by MNS students.

Table 5: The Cause of Grammatical Error Made by MNS Students

No.	Type of Error	Cause of Error				
		Omission	Over Inclusion	Misselection	Misordering	Blends
1	Noun	5	-	18	3	-
2	Pronoun	3	7	12	-	-
3	Verb	18	32	29	5	10
4	Article	19	15	11	3	-
5	Preposition	7	12	15	2	-
6	Conjunction	4	8	10	-	2
<b>Total of Each Cause</b>		<b>56</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Total of All Causes</b>		<b>250</b>				

Based on the data presented in Table 6, errors caused by 'misselection' significantly outnumber other causes found on SS students' narrative essays with 42% contribution. 'Omission' ranks in the second as the most frequent causes of errors made comprising 30% of the total errors. By almost 50 percent fewer than the previous cause, which equals to 18.5% contribution, 'over conclusion' occupies the third position, followed by 'misordering' with the contribution of 6.5%. Finally, SS students made very minimum errors caused by 'blends' comprising only 3% of the total errors.

Table 6: The Causes of Grammatical Error Made by SS Students



No.	Type of Error	Cause of Error				
		Omission	Over Inclusion	Misselection	Misordering	Blends
1	Noun	2	2	6	2	-
2	Pronoun	5	-	10	-	-
3	Verb	26	18	16	11	3
4	Article	21	13	22	-	-
5	Preposition	3	2	18	-	-
6	Conjunction	3	2	12	-	3
Total of Each Cause		60	37	84	13	6
Total of All Causes		200				

#### The comparison of grammatical errors made by MNS and SS students

To compare the types and the causes of grammatical errors found in narrative essays written by MNS and SS students, the findings used to answer the questions 1 and 2 in this study are displayed side by side and presented in a chart for each category as seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

The findings in Figure 2 indicate that both MNS and SS students make grammatical errors in their narrative essays in all types as detailed in the table sheet (Table 1). In terms of the frequency of each error type, the grammatical errors found in MNS and SS students' essays are dominated by the 'verb' ones, followed by 'article' and 'preposition.' However, there are some slight differences in the bottom three of the chart. The analysis of the data collected from MNS students reveal that they make more errors in using 'noun' compared to 'conjunction.' Meanwhile, SS students make errors in using 'conjunction' more often than in 'pronoun.' The type with the fewest errors found on MNS students' essays is 'pronoun' while that on SS students' essays is 'noun.' Furthermore, when comparing the total errors of each type, it is found that MNS students make more errors in five types, namely: 'verb,' 'preposition,' 'conjunction,' 'noun,' and 'pronoun.' While SS students make more errors only in 'article.'

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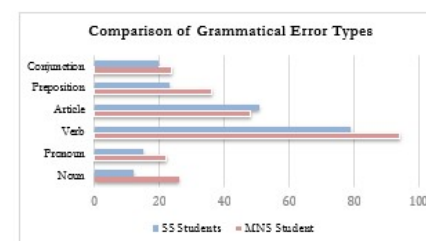


Figure 2. The Comparison of Type of Grammatical Error Made by MNS and SS Students

As shown in Figure 3, the grammatical errors made by MNS and SS students in their narrative essays are scattered in the five causes listed in the surface strategy taxonomy. A closer look at the findings reveals that most of the errors made by the two groups of students are caused by 'misselection' of the items used. In the second rank of the cause of error, it is found out that 'over inclusion' occurs more often than 'omission' for grammatical errors made by MNS students. On the contrary, SS students make more errors caused by 'omission' compared to those by 'over inclusion.'

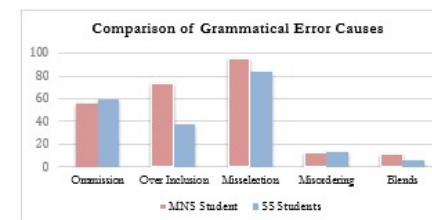


Figure 3. The Comparison of Grammatical Error Causes Made by MNS and SS Students

#### Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that 11<sup>th</sup> grade MA students at MAL UIN SU had insufficient knowledge on how to employ several English parts of speech in their written discourse. It can also be inferred from the result that the verb and the article constituents are the most challenging area for the students. The researcher argued that these challenges occur due to two most dominant sources of errors, namely interlingual and communication strategy-based ones. As

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stated by James (1998) that interlingual errors are caused by the interference of learners' mother tongue on the target language, the students tended to either use the wrong form of certain items or omit them in their essays as seen in the following excerpts:

1. One day he went to ~~catches~~ fish in river near his house.
2. Cinderella more ~~beautifuler~~ than her two step sister.
3. Although she is not like them, she still ~~make~~ breakfast in morning for them.
4. The woman so happy and try to hug the ~~Malin~~ Kundang
5. The wolf ~~pretend~~ to be the grandmother.

Indonesian verbs do not have interdependent participles determining the tense of the sentence, which are completely different from those in English. As a consequence, the students were repeatedly found to use the wrong forms of verb in their essays, such as 'try' to replace 'tried' in [4] and 'pretend' instead of 'pretended' in [5]. Another problem related to the interlingual factor is the omission of the plural marker in a noun and 'be' as a linking verb followed by a complement. Since Indonesian language does not recognize the linguistic element that marks the plurality of a given noun, some students omit that particular linguistic element as seen in the phrase "the two step sister" in [2]. Meanwhile the omission of 'be' in "Cinderella (was) more ~~beautifuler~~" in [2] and "the woman (was) so happy" in [4] was because the students translated the sentences word by word from Indonesian "Cinderella lebih cantik" and "wanita itu sangat bahagia" to English.

In addition to the interlingual source, errors in using the verb constituent is also caused from communication strategy-based source, particularly the holistic strategies or approximation. Verbs in English may have a random change and contradict the usual rules of the verb in the past form -ed, which are called irregular verbs. Since there are no certain rules to follow in changing the form, Indonesian EFL learners tend to over include by adding an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance as seen in 'catches' in [1] and 'make' in [3]. According to James (1998), the source of this kind of errors is communication strategy-based one because the students assume that the use near-equivalent items to substitute the required items in target language is okay, in this case adding -ed to the verb 'catch' and 'make' to make the past form. Similar example can also be found in the word 'beautifuler' in [2] which is caused by the student's assumption that -er is added to the adjective to make its comparative form.

The findings of this study, at some extent correspondent yet inconsistent with those of other studies discussing similar topics. First, the finding showing the verb constituent as the most challenging area for senior high school students in writing narrative essays is also reported in Floranti and Adianika's (2019) and Muryanusa's (2019) studies. A closer look at the findings of the two studies also reveals some similarities with that in this current study, in which the most dominant verb errors are the verb tenses. However, for the second rank of the type of error frequently found in the essay, the result of this study is inconsistent with those of Floranti and Adianika's (2019) and Muryanusa's (2019) showing pronoun as the second predominant type of error found in their students' essays. Second, the result related to the source of grammar errors corresponds to the works of Floranti and Adianika's (2019) and Mohammed's (2015). Both studies found interlingual source as the one of most dominant causes of grammar errors generated

in the students' essays in their studies. However, since the two studies used Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) taxonomy of surface strategy as their theoretical framework, communication strategy-based source is not mentioned at all in the findings. Finally, the finding indicating that MNS students made more errors in their essays than SS students did is contrary to the result found by Sembiring and Ginting's (2013) research showing natural science students outperformed social science students in writing recount texts. Thus, this finding may also imply that the general understanding of society related to the labeling of SS students who are considered to have lower academic competence than MNS students is not necessarily true.

### Conclusion and Pedagogical Implication

This study investigated grammar errors made by some *Madrasah Aliyah* students in writing narrative essay. Results of data analysis generate three findings. Firstly, the students made grammar errors in six types, namely noun, pronoun, verb, article, preposition, and conjunction. Secondly, the causes of the errors varied which cover the five categories mentioned in the surface strategy taxonomy, namely: omission, over inclusion, ~~misselection~~, ~~misordering~~, and blends. Furthermore, the results indicate that interference from students' mother tongue and their inadequate knowledge of L2 are the main source of errors. Finally, MA students of MNS stream have more defects of English knowledge in writing narrative essays.

This study investigated grammar errors made by some *Madrasah Aliyah* students in writing narrative essay. Results of data analysis generate three findings. Firstly, the students made grammar errors in six types, namely noun, pronoun, verb, article, preposition, and conjunction. Secondly, the causes of the errors varied which cover the five categories mentioned in the surface strategy taxonomy, namely: omission, over inclusion, ~~misselection~~, ~~misordering~~, and blends. Furthermore, the results indicate that interference from students' mother tongue and their inadequate knowledge of L2 are the main source of errors. Finally, MA students of MNS stream have more defects of English knowledge in writing narrative essays compared to their counterparts of SS stream.

Since studies in the nature of EFL learners' errors may be used to better understand the linguistic areas where they have difficulties in writing, the results are argued to be very essential for various parties. For teachers, particularly those of MAL UIN SU, the results of this study may provide them with the information needed in determining the most appropriate strategies to help EFL learners overcome the problematic areas of the target language. Furthermore, EFL teachers of senior high schools are also suggested to use different strategies and/or materials focusing and addressing different linguistic defects faced by MNS and SS students since one-fits-all strategy may not work with EFL students of similar demographic as those in this study. For textbook and syllabus designers, the results imply that the materials and syllabus for MA students need to be designed in the light of these errors. For researchers, it is suggested to conduct similar studies in a bigger scale than that in the present study to provide more insight on the topic under discussion.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest needs to be reported.

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Grammatical Errors in *Madrasah Aliyah* Students' Narrative Essays:

## An Error Analysis of the Surface Strategy

Bahmah Fithriani

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

## Abstract

For English as a *foreign language (EFL) students* in Indonesia, writing has mostly been found as a complicated and difficult skill to master. As a consequence, errors in EFL writing is inevitable. Framed by Error Analysis approach, this study aims at *analysing* grammar errors in writing narrative text, with a special focus on the comparison of errors made by the students of Mathematics & Natural Science (MNS) and Social Studies (SS) streams at a *Madrasah Aliyah* (Islamic senior high school). This study used 60 narrative essays as the data corpus, which were *analysed* using content approach. The result of data analysis reveals interesting findings showing that generally, MNS students make more grammar errors than the SS students do. A closer look at the data shows that 1) MNS students produce more errors in five types; 'noun,' 'pronoun,' 'verb,' 'preposition,' and 'conjunction' while SS students only in one, namely 'article'; and 2) *misselection*, over inclusion, and omission become the dominant causes of the errors. These findings could be used as a proof to debunk the stereotype of MNS and SS students labelling with more preference given to MNS students who are perceived to be more dominant in academic performance.

**Keywords:** grammatical error analysis, Mathematics & Natural Science stream, narrative essay, Social Studies stream, Surface strategy

## Introduction

The importance of English as a global language has been long recognized by the government of Indonesia. The language was officially approved as the first foreign language in the country in 1955 and has become the only foreign language mandatorily taught in all levels of education since then. Based on the Curriculum 2013 (K-13), which has been implemented in all levels of high school since 2014, the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia (TEFL) should focus on developing language skills on four areas namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, it is stated that among the goal of TEFL in Indonesia is to equip students with the ability to develop oral and written communicative competence (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2014).

Despite the stated goal related to English communicative competence in both oral and written forms, the teaching of writing skill has been neglected in English classrooms including that at SMA (general senior high school) and MA (Islamic senior high school) levels. According to the K-13, writing instruction in SMA and MA aims to develop students' skills in writing simple texts to more complex ones in various genres including *narrative text*. However, in practice, writing instruction is still much dominated with activities to reinforce language structures at the sentence level. Writing is still viewed as a product activity emphasizing merely on grammatical and syntactic accuracy (Fithriani, 2017). As a consequence, most Indonesian EFL learners at the SMA/MA level perceive writing as a difficult skill to develop and master, particularly in terms of accuracy at the sentential level, that is, sentence grammar.

Studies have shown that Indonesian SMA/MA learners face various difficulties related to develop their English proficiency in written discourse (e.g. Husna, Zaini, & Rozimela, 2013; Inayah, & Gani, 2016; Nurhayati, 2015). In general, they were found to commit various errors, particularly grammatical ones in writing different genres as stated in the K-13 curriculum. Several studies have been conducted to analyse grammar errors on one particular genre of writing, namely narrative text. The focuses of discussion are diverse, which include the frequency and the types of grammar errors emerged in students' writing (Floranti & Adiantika, 2019; Hendriwanto & Sugeng, 2013; Mardiyana, 2019), the causes of grammar errors (Hendriwanto & Sugeng, 2013), the possible sources of those errors (Floranti & Adiantika, 2019), and grammatical error analysis across different grades and streams (Luthfiyati, Latief, & Suharmanto, 2015).

Despite the growing number of this path of research, most of them involved SMA students as the subjects of the research. Very few studies found in literature have focused on grammar errors made by MA students, let alone on the comparison of errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill the gap by comparing the grammatical errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay. In details, it focuses on answering three questions:

1. What types of grammar errors are made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay?
2. What are the causes of grammar errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay?
3. What are the differences of the types and causes of grammatical errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essay?

The significance of this study stemmed from the idea that by identifying the grammar errors made by the students of the two streams, the researchers will gain a significant insight on what strategies they employ to develop communicative competence in English written discourse, particularly in writing narrative essay. Moreover, the findings of this study may work as a diagnostic tool to reveal the grammatical problems faced by the students in writing production so that they could be the focus of writing instruction for Indonesian SMA/MA students in general. Finally, since there is a stereotype of MNS students always outperforming the SS ones academically, this research could be used to either validate or debunk it.

## Literature Review

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### Grammar knowledge and English writing ability

In today's global community, communicative competence in foreign languages, particularly in English is becoming increasingly important. English as a global language could be claimed to hold the most important role as a means of communication in various fields such as education, diplomacy, and international commerce. Among English language skills, writing has a special position due to its extensive usage in educational as well as professional settings. Without a good command in writing, one could not express her ideas when doing most of daily tasks such as writing essays, reports, applications, e-mails, etc. Thus, one's writing ability in a language could be used to indicate her proficiency in the language (Li & Lin, 2007).

Writing comprises a complex mental process involving multiple skills from cognitive analysis to linguistic synthesis. Thus, to become proficient in this particular language skill takes a considerable time and effort. For foreign language learners, the challenge and difficulty in developing writing proficiency is even doubled is due to various reasons ranging from the language barriers to the different rhetoric patterns deployed (Fithriani, 2018b). In addition, the ability in foreign language writing including in EFL context involves knowledge of other language skills, particularly grammar.

Since grammar is bounded to other language skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it is no doubt that good grammar knowledge is inevitably important in developing EFL communicative competence as it guides learners to use the language appropriately both in written form and in oral language skill (Fithriani, 2018a). In terms of the role of grammar in writing skill, Hedge (2005) argued that "effective writing requires a number of things: a high degree of development in the organization of ideas and information; a high degree of accuracy so there is no ambiguity of meaning; the use of complex grammatical devices for focus and emphasis; and careful choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and sentence structures to create a style which is appropriate to the subject matter and the eventual readers" (p. 5). In short it could be concluded that good writing requires good working knowledge of grammar.

### English writing instruction in Indonesian secondary schools

English is the only foreign language mandatorily taught in secondary schools and higher education institutions in Indonesia. Secondary schools in Indonesia consists of three years of junior high school and three years of senior high school and fall under the responsibility of either the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* or *Kemdikbud*) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kementerian Agama* or *Kemendagri*). Furthermore, the secondary schools under *Kemdikbud* are known as SMP (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama*) for junior high school level and SMA (*Sekolah Menengah Atas*) for senior high school level, meanwhile those under *Kemendagri* are called MTs (*Madrasah Tsanawiyah*) and MA (*Madrasah Aliyah*) respectively. However, the curriculum for English instruction throughout these levels becomes the sole responsibility of *Kemdikbud* to design and issue.

According to K-13 as the currently implemented curriculum, the allotted time for English teaching at secondary school ranges from two up to six class hours (one class hour equals to 45 minutes) per week. For junior high schools, the allotted time is four class hours throughout grade

7 to grade 9. For senior high schools, the allotted time varies according to the stream based on students' academic interests. At SMA and MA levels, students are streamed into three academic interests, namely the Mathematics and Natural Sciences, the Social Studies, and the Language and Culture. For the first two streams, English is compulsory and allotted at least two class hours per week, while for the Language and Culture one, the time allotment for English is six hours per week. However, for *Madrasah Aliyah*, the curriculum structure can be developed in accordance with the needs set by the Ministry of Religion (*Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia*, 2018). This exception implies that there are possibilities for some differences of TEFL in the two types of senior high schools. Meanwhile, related to this academic interest-based division, there is a stereotype referring to the academic ability of MNS and SS students. People believe that MNS students are dominant in academic performance in almost, if not all, subjects (Efendi & Wahyudi, 2016; Hanafi, 2014). As a consequence, most students of secondary school prefer to take MNS compared to SS stream.

As stated in K-13, ELT at secondary schools should equip students with the ability to develop oral and written communicative competence in four areas of language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, the teaching of writing provides students with knowledge, experience and strategies of writing simple texts to more complex ones in 12 text genres, namely: recount, narrative, procedural, descriptive, report, news items, analytical exposition, persuasive exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion and review. For this purpose, genre-based approach is used to introduce students the social function, the generic structures, and the language features of the genres.

Among the 12 text genres taught to SMA and MA students, narrative may be considered special and unique as it is the most frequently used and learned throughout the grades of secondary school. Narrative is defined as a literary text that tells about a series of logically and chronologically related events (Lukens, 2007). According to Anderson and Anderson (2003), the social function of a narrative text is to entertain the readers with a story containing complications or problematic events that lead to a crisis and in turn find a resolution. The generic structure of a narrative text includes 1) Orientation to introduce the participants and inform the time and the place; 2) Complication to describe crises the participants need to deal with; and 3) Resolution to show the way of the participants to solve the crises. As it talks about the past events narrative text should be written in simple past. In addition, writing in narrative genre should include adequate details about the action and its context so that the readers can understand what is going on.

### The significance of Error Analysis (EA) in EFL teaching & learning

Errors are an inseparable aspect of learning a second language, thus, it is important to obtain information how second language (L2) learners, including those of EFL make mistakes while performing oral or written tasks in the target language. One of the most popular method to conduct this particular type of research is Error Analysis (EA). Crystal (2003) defines EA as a "technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics" (p. 163). Similar to this, Corder (1974) believed that EA is a useful technique to describe L2 learners' knowledge of the target language in order to relate it to the

teaching they have been receiving. Related to the stated definitions, EA is particularly beneficial for L2 teachers and/or researchers who want to obtain information about learners' linguistic deficiency so they can address the issues in future. In addition to identifying the errors, Richards and Schmidt (2002) stated other benefits of EA which include the identification of the learning strategies used by L2 learners and the causes of the errors they make.

EA was first introduced in 1960' by Corder (1967) as a result of his critics towards Contrastive Analysis (CA), which was claimed to fail in predicting errors made L2 learners. CA assumed that errors made by L2 learners are exclusively derived from the interference of their L1 or mother tongue, known as interlingual source. Meanwhile, in addition to interlingual source, EA made clear that errors in L2 learning also come from intralingual source, which result from faulty or partial learning of the target language. Guided by the two major purposes of EA, either to present error categories based on observable characteristics or to report the types of error observed, EA categorizes errors into four taxonomies, namely (1) linguistic category; (2) surface strategy; (3) comparative analysis; and (4) communicative effect.

Among the four taxonomies, surface strategy has much been used as an approach in analyzing learners' errors in various EFL contexts (e.g. Mohammed & Abdalhussain, 2015; Vasquez, 2008; Yoon, 2012; Zheng & Park, 2013). Many experts have tried to identify the causes of errors EFL learners make based on the surface strategy taxonomy, including Carl James (1998). James (1998) categorized the errors into five categories as detailed below:

1. Omission, which is characterized by an absence in a well-formed utterance of an item.
2. Over Inclusion, which is characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance.
3. Misselection, which is characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morphemes or structure.
4. Misordering, which is characterized by the incorrect use of morpheme or a group of morphemes in a pronunciation.
5. Blends which is characterized by the combination of two alternative grammatical forms to produce an ungrammatical.

He furthermore classified them based on the sources, which include; 1) Interlingual errors referring to the errors caused by the interference of learners' mother tongue on target language (TL) learning; 2) Intralingual errors referring to the errors caused by the TL itself; 3) Communication strategy-based errors, which are subdivided into the holistic strategies or approximation referring to the errors caused by learners' assumption that it is all right to use near-equivalent items to substitute the required items in TL and the analytic strategies or circumlocution referring to the errors made by expressing the concept indirectly or by allusion rather than by direct reference; and 4) Induced errors referring to the errors caused mostly by the TL teaching and learning process.

## Methods

### Research design

Aiming to analyze grammatical errors in a written text, this present study adopts Corder's (1967) approach of Error Analysis (EA), which involves collecting samples from language learners, identifying the errors in the samples, describe these errors, classifying these errors according to

their hypothesized causes and finally evaluating their seriousness (Mohammed & Abdalhussain, 2015). Furthermore, since this study was conducted to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its natural setting (Cresswell, 2008), in this case the phenomenon was the grammatical errors made by MA students of MNS and SS streams in writing narrative essays, the qualitative case study is considered the most suitable design to apply in this study.

### Research site and participants

The study was carried out in Madrasah Aliyah Laboratorium (MAL), the State Islamic University of North Sumatra Medan. The participants of this study were 30 eleventh graders from the 2018/2019 academic year, consisting of 18 female and 12 male students. Half of the participants were enrolled in the MNS stream while the other half in SS stream. This particular school was chosen as the research site due to some considerations. Firstly, due to the aspect of accessibility since the researcher worked in the same institution which allowed her to conduct educational-related studies without involving too much administrative requirements to fulfill for research permission. Secondly, based on preliminary data collection, the English teacher shared similar interest to gather information about the main grammatical problems that her students encounter in their writing production and use the information in deciding what to focus for future teaching.

### Data collection

This study used students' writing products as the main instrument of data collection. The corpus of the study involved 60 narrative texts written by the students, each consisted of 150 to 200 words. The students were given four essay topics which include *the Legend of Lake Toba*, *Cinderella*, *Major Kundang*, and *Red Riding Hood*, representing the nuance of the themes the students learn during their study, those which are nationally and internationally popular. After selecting the topic, each student was asked to write two narrative essays in two topics of their choice from the selection with a provided time of 30 minutes to write an essay. It is necessary to emphasize that the two essays were not written in one class meeting, but two with a week time interval.

### Data analysis

The data were analyzed using Content Analysis focusing on answering the three questions posed earlier in this study (Terrel, 2016). The procedure included three stages, namely identifying, categorizing, and quantifying. To ensure trustworthiness, inter-rater reliability was employed in analyzing students' essays during the identifying and categorizing stages. Two writing instructors at MAL UIN SU were involved in identifying grammar errors on students writing and furthermore categorizing them into six categories namely noun, pronoun, verb, article, preposition, and conjunction (look at table 1). Later, their ratings were reconciled by the researcher. At the quantifying stage, the errors were calculated in order to find out how frequently each type of errors were made by the students. To obtain the numerical data, the following percentage formula was used:

$$P = \frac{n_i}{EN} \times 100\%$$

in which,



P : percentage of each error  
n1 : total error of each type  
EN : total of the whole errors made

By calculating the percentage of each error, the most frequent error made and the last frequent error made by students could be identified.

Table 1. Data Categorizing Sheet for Type of Error

No.	Student's Name	Type of Error						Total
		N	Pro	V	Art	Prep	Con	
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
Total Error of Each Type								
Total of the Whole Error								

In order to find out the causes of errors made, James' (1998) surface strategy taxonomy was adopted in analyzing the data. The errors identified by the raters were labeled into five categories and recorded in a table as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Data Categorizing Sheet for Causes of Error

No.	Type of Error	Cause of Error				
		Omission	Over Inclusion	Misselection	Misordering	Blends
1	Noun					
2	Pronoun					



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3	Verb					
4	Article					
5	Preposition					
6	Conjunction					
Total						

## Findings

This study tried to compare grammar errors found in narrative essays written by 11<sup>th</sup> grade MA students taking Mathematics and Natural Science and Social Science streams at MAL UIN SU 2018/2019 academic year. The result of data analysis shows that in total, there are 450 errors found in 60 narrative essays written by the students. A closer look at the result reveals an interesting finding showing that MNS students make more errors with a total number of 250 occurrences than SS students do with 200 errors as shown in Figure 1. Other findings of this study will be presented in three parts in accordance with the questions posed earlier.

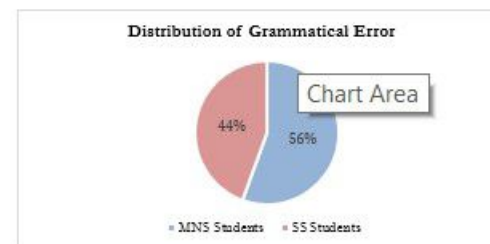


Figure 1. The Distribution of Grammatical Error Made by MNS and SS Students

## The type of grammatical error

To answer the question related to the types of grammar errors made by MNS and SS students, the essays were first grouped into two; those written by MNS students and those by SS students. The errors identified in each of students' essays were recorded based on the six types explained in the data analysis section and calculated to find out the total number of errors for each type. The results are shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

As shown in Table 3, MNS students make grammar errors in all six types. The 'verb' type occupies the highest number of errors followed by the 'article' one. These two types of grammar errors contribute 37.6% and 19.2% of the total errors generated in the data analysis process. The types of 'preposition,' and 'noun' come in the third and the fourth positions in the list of grammar

error type made by MNS students comprising 14.4% and 10.4% of the 250 grammatical errors made. The errors in 'conjunction' and 'pronoun' share almost similar contribution to the total errors identified in MNS students' narrative essays. The two types of error comprise 9.6% and 8.8% of the total errors, thus rank the fifth and the sixth in the list.

Table 3. The Type of Grammatical Error Made by MNS Students

Type of Error	Number of Error
Noun	26
Pronoun	22
Verb	94
Article	48
Preposition	36
Conjunction	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>

Table 4 shows that SS students also make grammar errors in all six types. Verb errors are found to be the most dominant on SS students' narrative essays with the contribution of 39.5% of the total errors found. The types of 'article' and 'preposition' occupy the second and the third positions of the error frequency made by SS students contributing to 25.5% and 11.5% of the total identified errors. Ten percent of grammar errors in the narrative essays written by SS students is in using conjunction. Finally, 'pronoun' comprising 7.5% and 'noun' 6% of the total errors generated in the data analysis process are in the bottom two of the chart as the least grammar errors made by SS students. It means that either type of error contributes fewer than 10% of the total errors identified.

Table 4. The Type of Grammatical Error Made by SS Students

Type of Error	Number of Error
Noun	12
Pronoun	15
Verb	79
Article	51
Preposition	23
Conjunction	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>

#### The causes of grammatical errors

To answer the question related to the causes of grammar errors made by MNS and SS students, each type of identified errors made by MNS students and those made by SS students were calculated on two separate tables and classified based on James' (1998) surface strategy taxonomy. The findings reveal that only one type of grammar errors is caused by all five categories included in the taxonomy. As it can be seen in Tables 5 and 6, the grammar errors made by MNS

and SS students are caused by various reasons covering the whole categories proposed by James (1998). While the rest of the types are 'only' caused by either four or three categories.

In terms of the frequency of the causes, as the findings in Table 5 reveal, most of grammar errors made by MNS students in their essays are caused by 'misselection' of the items comprising 38% of the total errors made, followed by 'over inclusion' with 29.6% and 'omission' with 22.4% of contributions. Meanwhile, grammar errors caused by 'misordering' and 'blends' are quite seldom to occur as they only contribute 5.2% and 4.8% of the total errors made by MNS students.

Table 5. The Cause of Grammatical Error Made by MNS Students

No.	Type of Error	Cause of Error				
		Omission	Over Inclusion	Misselection	Misordering	Blends
1	Noun	5	-	18	3	-
2	Pronoun	3	7	12	-	-
3	Verb	18	32	29	5	10
4	Article	19	15	11	3	-
5	Preposition	7	12	15	2	-
6	Conjunction	4	8	10	-	2
<b>Total of Each Cause</b>		<b>56</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Total of All Causes</b>		<b>250</b>				

Based on the data presented in Table 6, errors caused by 'misselection' significantly outnumber other causes found on SS students' narrative essays with 42% contribution. 'Omission' ranks in the second as the most frequent causes of errors made comprising 30% of the total errors. By almost 50 percent fewer than the previous cause, which equals to 18.5% contribution, 'over conclusion' occupies the third position, followed by 'misordering' with the contribution of 6.5%. Finally, SS students made very minimum errors caused by 'blends' comprising only 3% of the total errors.

Table 6. The Causes of Grammatical Error Made by SS Students

No.	Cause of Error
-----	----------------



	Type of Error	Omission	Over Inclusion	Misselection	Misordering	Blends
1	Noun	2	2	6	2	-
2	Pronoun	5	-	10	-	-
3	Verb	26	18	16	11	3
4	Article	21	13	22	-	-
5	Preposition	3	2	18	-	-
6	Conjunction	3	2	12	-	3
Total of Each Cause		60	37	84	13	6
Total of All Causes		200				

#### The comparison of grammatical errors made by MNS and SS students

To compare the types and the causes of grammatical errors found in narrative essays written by MNS and SS students, the findings used to answer the questions 1 and 2 in this study are displayed side by side and presented in a chart for each category as seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

The findings in Figure 2 indicate that both MNS and SS students make grammatical errors in their narrative essays in all types as detailed in the table sheet (Table 1). In terms of the frequency of each error type, the grammatical errors found in MNS and SS students' essays are dominated by the 'verb' ones, followed by 'article' and 'preposition.' However, there are some slight differences in the bottom three of the chart. The analysis of the data collected from MNS students reveal that they make more errors in using 'noun' compared to 'conjunction.' Meanwhile, SS students make errors in using 'conjunction' more often than in 'pronoun.' The type with the fewest errors found on MNS students' essays is 'pronoun' while that on SS students' essays is 'noun.' Furthermore, when comparing the total errors of each type, it is found that MNS students make more errors in five types, namely: 'verb,' 'preposition,' 'conjunction,' 'noun,' and 'pronoun.' While SS students make more errors only in 'article.'

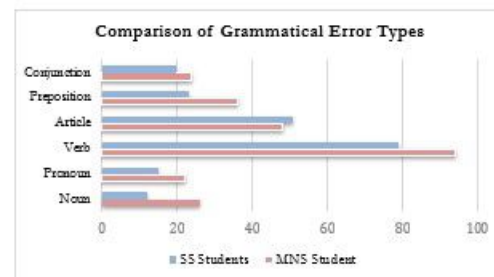


Figure 2. The Comparison of Type of Grammatical Error Made by MNS and SS Students

As shown in Figure 3, the grammatical errors made by MNS and SS students in their narrative essays are scattered in the five causes listed in the surface strategy taxonomy. A closer look at the findings reveals that most of the errors made by the two groups of students are caused by 'misselection' of the items used. In the second rank of the cause of error, it is found out that 'over inclusion' occurs more often than 'omission' for grammatical errors made by MNS students. On the contrary, SS students make more errors caused by 'omission' compared to those by 'over inclusion.'

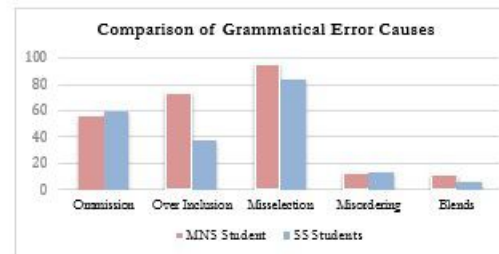


Figure 3. The Comparison of Grammatical Error Causes Made by MNS and SS Students

#### Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that 11<sup>th</sup> grade MA students at MAL UIN SU had insufficient knowledge on how to employ several English parts of speech in their written discourse. It can also be inferred from the result that the verb and the article constituents are the most challenging area for the students. The researcher argued that these challenges occur due to two most dominant sources of errors, namely interlingual and communication strategy-based ones. As

stated by James (1998) that interlingual errors are caused by the interference of learners' mother tongue on the target language, the students tended to either use the wrong form of certain items or omit them in their essays as seen in the following excerpts:

1. One day he went to ~~catched~~ fish in river near his house.
2. Cinderella more ~~beautifulex~~ than her two step sister.
3. Although she is not like them, she still ~~make~~ breakfast in morning for them.
4. The woman so happy and try to hug the ~~Malin~~ Kundang
5. The wolf ~~pretend~~ to be the grandmother.

Indonesian verbs do not have interdependent participles determining the tense of the sentence, which are completely different from those in English. As a consequence, the students were repeatedly found to use the wrong forms of verb in their essays, such as 'try' to replace 'tried' in [4] and 'pretend' instead of 'pretended' in [5]. Another problem related to the interlingual factor is the omission of the plural marker in a noun and 'be' as a linking verb followed by a complement. Since Indonesian language does not recognize the linguistic element that marks the plurality of a given noun, some students omit that particular linguistic element as seen in the phrase "the two step sister" in [2]. Meanwhile the omission of 'be' in "Cinderella (was) more ~~beautifulex~~" in [2] and "the woman (was) so happy" in [4] was because the students translated the sentences word by word from Indonesian "Cinderella ~~lebu cantik~~" and "~~wanita itu sangat bagus~~" to English.

In addition to the interlingual source, errors in using the verb constituent is also caused from communication strategy-based source, particularly the holistic strategies or approximation. Verbs in English may have a random change and contradict the usual rules of the verb in the past form -ed, which are called irregular verbs. Since there are no certain rules to follow in changing the form, Indonesian EFL learners tend to over include by adding an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance as seen in 'catched' in [1] and 'make' in [3]. According to James (1998), the source of this kind of errors is communication strategy-based one because the students assume that the use near-equivalent items to substitute the required items in target language is okay, in this case adding -ed to the verb 'catch' and 'make' to make the past form. Similar example can also be found in the word 'beautifulex' in [2] which is caused by the student's assumption that -ex is added to the adjective to make its comparative form.

The findings of this study, at some extent correspondent yet inconsistent with those of other studies discussing similar topics. First, the finding showing the verb constituent as the most challenging area for senior high school students in writing narrative essays is also reported in Florani and Adiantika's (2019) and Murydhanas's (2019) studies. A closer look at the findings of the two studies also reveals some similarities with that in this current study, in which the most dominant verb errors are the verb tenses. However, for the second rank of the type of error frequently found in the essay, the result of this study is inconsistent with those of Florani and Adiantika's (2019) and Murydhanas's (2019) showing pronoun as the second predominant type of error found in their students' essays. Second, the result related to the source of grammar errors corresponds to the works of Florani and Adiantika's (2019) and Mohammed's (2015). Both studies found interlingual source as the one of most dominant causes of grammar errors generated

in the students' essays in their studies. However, since the two studies used Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) taxonomy of surface strategy as their theoretical framework, communication strategy-based source is not mentioned at all in the findings. Finally, the finding indicating that MNS students made more errors in their essays than SS students did is contrary to the result found by Sembiring and Ginting's (2013) research showing natural science students outperformed social science students in writing recount texts. Thus, this finding may also imply that the general understanding of society related to the labeling of SS students who are considered to have lower academic competence than MNS students is not necessarily true.

### Conclusion and Pedagogical Implication

This study investigated grammar errors made by some *Madrasah Aliyah* students in writing narrative essay. Results of data analysis generate three findings. Firstly, the students made grammar errors in six types, namely noun, pronoun, verb, article, preposition, and conjunction. Secondly, the causes of the errors varied which cover the five categories mentioned in the surface strategy taxonomy, namely: omission, over inclusion, ~~misselection~~, ~~misordering~~, and blends. Furthermore, the results indicate that interference from students' mother tongue and their inadequate knowledge of L2 are the main source of errors. Finally, MA students of MNS stream have more defects of English knowledge in writing narrative essays.

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Since studies in the nature of EFL learners' errors may be used to better understand the linguistic areas where they have difficulties in writing, the results are argued to be very essential for various parties. For teachers, particularly those of MAL UIN SU, the results of this study may provide them with the information needed in determining the most appropriate strategies to help EFL learners overcome the problematic areas of the target language. Furthermore, EFL teachers of senior high schools are also suggested to use different strategies and/or materials focusing and addressing different linguistic defects faced by MNS and SS students since one-fits-all strategy may not work with EFL students of similar demographic as those in this study. For textbook and syllabus designers, the results imply that the materials and syllabus for MA students need to be designed in the light of these errors. For researchers, it is suggested to conduct similar studies in a bigger scale than that in the present study to provide more insight on the topic under discussion.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest needs to be reported.





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