The Analysis of German Language Students' Error:

A Case Study of the Results of the *Schreiben* German Proficiency Test *(UKBJ)* at UNESA

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Abstract: The mastery of language skills is necessary for German language learners, especially those who study at the State University of Surabaya. This language competency can be mastered through classes and examination tests, such as international and/or local standard tests or certain course final exams as a requirement to become a Bachelor of Education. One of those examination tests is taking the German Language Proficiency Test or *Uji Kompetensi Bahasa Jerman (UKBJ)*. This test also becomes an indicator to determine the quality of college students' proficiency in the German language. There are some subtests in the UKBJ, such as *Leseverstehen, Hören, Sprachbausteine, Schreiben, and Sprechen.* The researchers' observation shows that there is a difficulty and language error that the students make in *Schreiben* or writing test. This article aims to describe (1) language error and the language error analysis, (2) what kind of grammatical error that has been found in the *Schreiben* subtest result. The findings indicate that there are 9 categories of grammatical error from 20 test-takers. Mostly, their errors were categorized into *Unterkompetenzfehler* level.

Keywords: Analysis, Language Error, Writing, German Language

1   Introduction

This article aims to analyze the form of language errors from the writing results (*Schreiben*) of German language students who took the German Language Competency Test (UKBJ). The discussion focus of this article is (1) language errors and language error analysis, (2) what kind of grammatical errors were found in the *Schreiben* UKBJ test results of UKBJ participants in 2023.

The study of this language error analysis is important and interesting to conduct because German is taught as a foreign language for German learners at UNESA. Therefore, a study of the analysis of language errors needs to be done. The goal is that the results of error analysis can provide information and references for German language teachers and then be used as a basis for paying more attention to errors made by learners. Moreover, the results of the analysis will be used as a basis for planning

better learning in terms of what kind of syllabus as a basis to provide solutions and efforts to minimize errors made by learners.

It should be acknowledged that German language learning in Indonesia is studied as a foreign language or commonly called *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (DaF) at both formal and non-formal institutions. At the formal level in universities, for example, teaching German has a lot of courses with fairly dense linguistic content in its four language skills. One of the language skills taught is writing skills. This skill has an important role in German language teaching. The importance of this writing competency can be seen from the considerable distribution of writing courses, spread over basic, intermediate and advanced writing courses.

The importance of writing and reading competence as part of language skills is also stated by Kast [1]. In addition to that, Fitrawati and Safitri [2] believed that writing allows one to assess their language skills, memory, and thought processes. Purwanto [3] conveyed that in this case, writing or composing also requires mastery of an active language, including foreign language learning, also German.

The importance of mastering writing competence for German language learners as a foreign language is also a demand for German language learners, including in the German Language Education Study Program at UNESA. In the final semester of study at UNESA, German language students are required to go through a series of course exams and language competency tests. One of them is the language proficiency test called UKBJ. In this phase, language and writing skills are being examined for the B-1 level. This exam is conducted for students in the 4th-5th semester. In this exam, students must pass and exceed the competencies.

However, observation during the student examination process has found that writing test is one of the language skills that is difficult to master for most of the German language students at UNESA. This is based on the research of observing students during the *Schreiben* course for approximately 15 years. The cause of unsatisfactory learning outcomes for foreign language learners comes from various causes. Kaseng [4] argues that this could be due to teacher, media, subject matter, space and other factors.

In the teaching and learning process activities, various efforts have been made to use strategies or techniques as well as varied media to improve students' abilities in the *Schreiben* course. However, it seems that the results have not been satisfactory. Difficulties in this writing course are more visible in the lack of ability of students to find ideas in writing stories and/or letters, in understanding the problems they face, and in how many grammatical errors are found in their writing. These grammatical errors often appear in learning to write. Sadiah and Royani [5] argue that "writing is considered as the most complicated skill to be mastered required not only great vocabulary but also grammar". In writing German, some assumptions affect the low writing ability of German language students. Learning a foreign language, according to Dina [6], is a process of mastering a foreign language in addition to the mother tongue or certain regional languages.

According to the researcher's observations, a few of the factors which influence the low writing ability of German language students are low student writing habits, lack of vocabulary in German and lack of ideas in writing. There are also differences

in student input and the need to master good rules or grammar, which is different from Indonesian grammar. In terms of writing, we need to condition our thoughts to make us get used to writing which needs several practices, therefore a writing system is formed in our brains. To overcome the problems mentioned above, it is necessary to research the analysis of writing errors made by German language students in the German Language Competency Test (UKBJ).

The German Language Competency Test (UKBJ) is a German language test that includes reading, writing, listening and speaking. In this exam, students must exceed B1 level language skills. This exam is delivered in two forms of exams, namely written exams and speaking (oral) exams. In the writing part of the exam, the test subjects are including *Leseverstehen*, *Hoeren*, *Sprachbausteine* and *Schreiben*. Students must surpass this stage of the writing exam, *Schreiben,* with a predetermined standard.

Based on the development guidelines book of UNESA German language learning students, states that undergraduate German students must master writing competencies from A1-A2 and B1. This ability is regulated in the curriculum and one must be able to complete the language package in stages. The A1 level exam can be done in semester 1, the A2 exam is done in semester 2. In general, the final German exam which requires the ability to master the language equivalent to level B-1 must be done in the 5th semester. For foreign language learners, mastery of this competency is measured by the equivalent of a B-1 level exam or a similar local exam. German students take B1 exams with international standards or can also take B-1 exams equivalent to that level. The exam that we can do is the UKBJ exam.

The German Language Competency Test (UKBJ) is a local exam for German language students. It requires B1-level language skills with reading, writing, speaking, listening and vocabulary items. In German, the UKBJ consists of a written exam and a spoken exam. The spoken exam is divided into *Leseverstehen*, *Hoeren*, *Sprachbausteine*, *Schreiben* and *Sprechen*.

This writing learning process will evaluate the students' learning outcomes with standardized assessments for the evaluation of German writing skills. The technical guidelines for this standard writing assessment have certain standards and assessment criteria. The assessment are based on the following criteria: (1) *Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte*, (2) *Kommunikative Gestaltung*, and (3) *Formale Richtigkeit*. These points are standard assessment based on the exams conducted at UKBJ.

2   Methods

This research is qualitative descriptive research. Djoyosuroto [7] explains that the data used is also qualitative, in the form of written material instead of the form of numbers. The data source is German language students who take the UKBJ test at UNESA during the exam period in 2023. The data used are the results of student writing (*Schreiben*) participants, a total of 20 participants (P1-P20). The result of this study is to describe the language errors and grammatical errors that occur in the results of student writing. The data analysis technique used in analyzing grammatical

errors is by (1) identifying the grammatical errors in the writing results of UKBJ participants (P1-P20 data) and (2) providing an explanation or analysis on the causes of grammatical errors.

3   Results and Discussion

3.1   The Language Error and How To Analyse It

Joanna [8] argues that the use of language means "sending codes from the speakers". When using the language, there is a possibility of a communication error through the communication itself. Ratnaningsih and Azizah [9] argue that language error can happen for several reasons. Learning a language is a kind of 'trial-and-error' activity process, where the student —or the speaker — creates a hypothesis and then proves it. Rifa and Ratri [10] also stated that the student is impossible to avoid an error when using a foreign language which actually can enrich their knowledge of how to use a foreign language instead. Parera and Prasetyo [11] argue that the right or wrong on how to use the language should refer to a certain rule that has been agreed upon. Kleppin [12] also stated that during the language use process, language errors always happen. A language error is defined as a kind of error in a language that has been used by a certain group. During the language learning process, understanding and analyzing the language error from the student is important, so it can help to understand the material and minimize the mistake, even though not all language errors needed to be corrected in the learning process. Tira [13] argues that "*error analysis is a way to investigate errors in the second or second language acquisition.*"

For foreign language students, analyzing the language error is carried out as an effort to help the learners to achieve their goals in language learning. One of them is by knowing the cause and understanding how to overcome the language mistake they have made during the process of mastering the B2 level. Regarding KBBI, analysis can be defined as an investigation of an event, essay, and so on to understand what the reality is. While language error is every kind of error when using the language and is inappropriate with some rules which need to be corrected, so they can use the language correctly. In communication, language error always happens especially in learning a foreign language like the German language. But this language error does not always have to be corrected when it occurs, especially in spoken language or *Sprechen*.

Aziz [14] stated that the error analysis is a form of mistake in using language or discrepancy of the correct language structure itself. This language error should have to be corrected, so they can use the language properly. Furthermore, according to Erdogan, [15] language errors can be slowed down by recognizing the mistakes and correcting them in accordance with the input received.

Error analysis also studies every aspect to understand every mistake that student do during learning a foreign language. There are some steps to analyze the language error, such as (1) obtaining the data, (2) identifying the error based on the language structure, such as grammatical error, (3) creating the error list, and (4) explaining or analyzing the errors. Language error in writing can be analyzed with orthography mistake that covers spelling error, punctuation, and so on. Corder in Kleppin [12] explains that

there are two language error categories, such as (1) "*Unter Kompetenzfehler* auch als (Engl. error bezeichnet - versteht man einen Fehler, der vom Lernender nicht selbst erkannt werden kann. Entweder hat er zB. Eine Struktur noch gar nicht gelernt und macht daher Fehler, oder er hat etwas falsch verstanden*" This means that the language error occurs because of these factors: the learner does not understand or is unconscious of the language error and the incomprehension to the correct language structure. Then continued to (2) *Unter Performanzfehler werden meist verstosse gerechnet, die vom Lernenden erkannt und eventuell selbst korigiert werden koennen wenn sie ihm bewusst gemacht werden. Performanzfehler koennen wieder um aufgeteilt werden in Fehler, die durch noch unvollkommene Automatisierungen von bekannten Strukturen entstanden sind (engl. mistake), und in Versprecher (engl. lapses).* This means that there is a lack of performance that the students know and later they can improve consciously from their mistakes. This mistake also happened because of automation or wrong behavior (mistakes or lapses).

3.2   Grammatical Error Found in The "Schreiben" Subtest Result

After identifying the grammatical errors in students' writings found in UKBJ's *Schreiben* subtest, the errors are categorized and analyzed into 11 types of error, such as (1) regular verb conjugation (*regelmäßige Verben*), (2) irregular verb conjugation (*unregelmäßige Verben*), (3) article declination, (4) pronoun declination, (5) preposition, (6) the use of *Konjunktionen/Konnektoren*, (7) verb position, (8) *Adjektivendungen*, (9) the use of *Präteritum,* (10) the use of *Perfekt (Partizip 2),* (11) Konjunktiv II. The 2023 students' writing results found that there are 10 out of 11 error types of error. Below are the 10 types of grammatical errors.

The Error of Irregular Verb or "*unregelmäßige Verben.*" This error was done by learners in a conjugation case. This error is caused by inappropriate verb conjugation form. For instance, *essen Ich* (and the correct one is *esse Ich*). This error identification is categorized into unter Kompetenzfehler. This mistake occurred because the student's incompetence to the right sentence structure. For example, from P2's mistake. "*Essen ich*" *mit meiner Familie* (P2) should be *Esse Ich*, because of the conjugation "*Ich*" (Stamm + e, not Stam + en). This grammatical error in the use of *Konjunktionen* on (P2/P3/P10/P13/P16/P18). This error is also caused by the learner's incomprehension of the use of *wenn/weil*. Here is the complete table that explains the grammatical error.

Table 1. Grammatical Error List

No	Error	Data
1.	*Essen ich mit meiner Familie*	P2
2.	*Wenn ich eine Million gewinnen*	P2
3.	*Du hat eine andere Idee*	P2
4.	*Weil ich so lange deine Email nicht haben*	P3
5.	*Ich willst dein Geschenk in Berlin haben*	P3

6.	*Wenn ich gibt ein Million Euro*	P9
7.	*Wenn du eine Million gewinnen, kauft die Motorrad*	P10
8.	*Und Museen in Europa ich besuchen werden*	P10
9.	*Wenn ich eine Million gewinnen, …*	P13
10.	*Wenn ich eine Million haben*	P15
11.	*Ich hat eigentlich Geburtstag*	P16
12.	*Ich macht den eine Million Euro*	P16
13.	*Wenn du deine Million gewinnen*	P18

Article Declination Error. The students made this error in article declination, the influence of *dativ akkusativ*. German language learners should understand the noun's article and the rule on how to use it. This error can be categorized into unter *Kompetenzfehler*. This mistake is caused by the students' incompetence and unable to form the article declination, like P1/P7/P8/P11/P15/P16.

Table 2. Article Declination Error List

No	Error	Data
1.	*Hoffentlich dir sende einem Brief zu mir*	P1
2.	*Danke für den guten Idee*	P7
3.	*In meine Geburtstag, möchte ich ein grosser Geburtstag feiern*	P8
4.	*Deshalb möchte ich mit meine Schwester treffen*	P8
5.	*Ich würde mich meine Land besuchen*	P8
6.	*Sie leben in andere Stadt*	P11
7.	*Ich hatte kein Zeit*	P15
8.	*Ich möchte du bringen ein Apfelsaft*	P16
9.	*Vielen Dank für ihre Brief*	P19

Pronoun Declination Error or "*Possesivpronomen*". The error made by the learner, in this case, was the formation of possessive pronouns that were not in accordance with the rules that apply in the German language on P2/P6/P8/P11/P13.

Table 3. Pronoun Declination Error List

No	Error	Data
1.	*Für deinen Idee ist sehr gut*	P2
2.	*Danke für deine Brief*	P6
3.	*In meine Geburtstag, möchte ich ein grosser Geburtstag feiern*	P8
4.	*Ich hoffe, as salles gut für deine Leben*	P11
5.	*Vielen Dank für deine Brief*	P13

Preposition Error. Prepositional errors in German are possible in terms of (1) errors in omission, addition, placement, selection, and use of prepositions, and errors in the

use of prepositions used with verbs and adjectives. Meanwhile, the factors which caused the students to make errors in using prepositions in writing can occur due to interference from the German language. In the case of P18, the mistake made was using the preposition *über* with the *Akkusativ* case.

Table 4. Preposition Error List

No	Error	Data
1.	*Danke schön über* *deinem Brief*	P18

"*Konjunktionen/Konnektoren*" Error. The learner made an error by using the conjunction *dass* when the correct conjunction should have been *wenn*. This error belongs to the *unter Kompetenzfehler* category, which means that the learner's ability to understand and determine the correct conjunctions is still not quite right.

Table 5. "*Konjunktionen/Konnektoren*" Error List

No	Error	Data
1.	*Ich würde sofort ein Auto und Handy kaufen,* *dass* *mein Handy kaput ist*	P8

"*Verposition*" Error. The error made was a mistake in choosing the placement of verbs, especially verbs in sentences that have conjunctions such as *wenn* and *weil*. In sentences that use liaisons, the verb is placed at the end of the sentence. However, this is not the case with what was done by P4/P5/P9/P10/P11/P12. The verb was placed after the subject, which is in the second position. This error belongs to the unter *Kompetenzfehler* category, which means that the learner's ability to understand and determine the correct conjunctions is still not quite right.

Table 6. "*Verposition*" Error List

No	Error	Data
1.	*Wenn* *lese* *ich ihr Brief*	P4
2.	*Weil ich nicht* *haben* *viel Geld*	P4
3.	*Weil ich* *möchte* *besucht meine Vater*	P5
4.	*Wenn ich* *gibt* *ein Million Euro*	P9
5.	*Wenn ich* *habe* *eine Million Euro*	P10
6.	*Wenn* *habe* *ich eine Million Euro, ich will meine Grosseltern besuchen*	P11
7.	*Weil* *dir erzählen für mir*	P12
8.	*Ich hoffe, du* *kannst* *bezahlen dein Geburtstag.*	P12
9.	*Ich hoffe, wir können treffen am Wochenende im Restaurant*	P12
10.	*Ich möchte* *du bringen* *ein Apfelsaft*	P16
11.	*Ich* *verstehen, dass du bist reich*	P20
12.	*Ich glaube, dass* *hast* *du ein grosses Geburtstagfest*	P20

"*Adjektivendungen*" Error. Adjective declination, also known as Adjektiv deklination, is a change that occurs at the end of an adjective. This process occurs in adjectives before nouns or adjectives and functions as a complement to nouns. The four cases of adjective declension are nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive. In

the case of P4 students' errors, the errors were caused by not mastering adjective declension changes and mastering noun articles affected by changes.

Table 7. "*Adjektivendungen*" Error List

No	Error	Data
1.	*Möchte ich ein grosses Haus mit grosses Garten*	P4

"*Perfekt* (*Partizip* 2)" Error. This error was made by an inaccuracy use of the grammatical structure. In this case, the analysis was carried out because of an error made in using *Partizip* 2. The reason is that the learner incorrectly applied German language rules, specifically the imperfect application of language rules and the failure to learn the conditions for applying the rules.

Table 8. "*Perfekt (Partizip 2)*" Error

No	Error	Data
1.	*Ich hatte, dass wir nach Bayern zum Dusseldorf gefahren mit Motorrad*	P1
2.	*Ich sehr interesse gelesen*	P7
3.	*Es ist toll, dass deine Freunde dir eine Lottoscheine geschenkt*	P10
4.	*Gestern habe ich nur meine Grossefamilie in meine Geburtstagparty feirn einladen*	P11
5.	*Ich bin am 13 august geborten*	P14
6.	*Ich hatte Familie geessen im Restaurant*	P14
7.	*Wir haben singen und tanzen*	P15
8.	*Ich habe Berlin mit Motorrad fahren*	P16
9.	*Ich habe Geburtstag feiern*	P17
10.	*Weil du Geburtstagfest gemacht*	P19

"*Konjunctiv* 2" Error. This error was also made by student because of an inaccuracy of grammatical rules. In this case, the analysis carried out was an error made in Konjunktiv 2 for students (P1). The cause of the error was the students' ignorance of the *wurden* conjugation and the choice of verbs.

Table 9. "*Konjunctiv* 2" Error

No	Error	Data
1	*Ich wurde Autos kaufen*	P1
2	*Ich wurde dein Haus gefahren*	P1

4   Conclusion

Using language is certainly inseparable from errors that occur in communication, especially for foreign language learners. The study of language error analysis needs to be done. The goal is that the results of the founded error analysis can provide information and references for German language teachers and then be used as a basis for paying more attention to the mistakes made by learners. Moreover, the results of the analysis will be used as a basis for planning better learning, in terms of material or as a basis for providing solutions and efforts to minimize errors made by learners.

The results of the analysis of the writing results of students participating in UKBJ found (11 categories) of errors categorized in the *unter Kompetenzfehler* error category. In writing skills, errors in *Unter Kompetenzfehler* will be visible from the results of writing and cannot be immediately corrected by the learner as in *unter Performanzfehler*. In this case, learners may immediately realize and give corrections in learning not only speaking skills, but also writing skills.

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