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# Crisis Grammatical Use: Revealing Causes on EFL Students' Grammatical Erros

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Abstract. This study aimed to find out the causes on EFL Students' grammatical errors in speaking skills for students of English Language Department of Hamzanwadi University. This research employed descriptive qualitative research design. The participants of this study were 27 students from the second semester. The data were collected by three research instruments which were observation, interview, and documentation. The observation results showed that students often used their mother tongue for class interactions, rarely applying English during the learning. Moreover, the results of the interview showed that students faced challenges in applying grammar to speaking skills due to a lack of vocabulary, comprehension, writing-focused approach, and lack of practice. In conclusion, it is important to learn and practice grammar in speaking skill because fluency in grammar and language rules is crucial for students to become qualified teachers and avoid mistakes. Learning and practicing grammar in speaking skill is also essential for long-term capability.

Keywords: Speaking Ability, EFL Students, Grammatical Errors.

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui penyebab kesalahan tata bahasa asing siswa dalam keterampilan berbicara pada mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Hamzanwadi. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Peserta penelitian ini adalah 27 mahasiswa dari semester kedua. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan tiga instrumen penelitian yaitu observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil observasi menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa sering menggunakan bahasa ibu untuk interaksi kelas dan jarang menerapkan bahasa Inggris selama pembelajaran. Selain itu, hasil wawancara menunjukkan bahwa siswa menghadapi tantangan dalam menerapkan tata bahasa untuk keterampilan berbicara karena kurangnya kosa kata, pemahaman, pendekatan yang berfokus pada penulisan, dan kurangnya latihan. Kesimpulannya, penting untuk mempelajari dan berlatih tata bahasa dalam berbicara keterampilan karena kelancaran dalam tata bahasa dan aturan bahasa sangat penting bagi siswa untuk menjadi guru yang berkualitas dan menghindari kesalahan. Belajar daan berlatih tata bahasa dalam keterampilan berbicara juga penting untuk menunjang kemampuan jangka panjang

Kata kunci: Kemampuan Berbicara, Mahasiswa EFL, Kesalahan Tata Bahasa

### INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, English has emerged as the lingua franca of international communication hence it is important for individuals to have competent in English language skills. English as global language implies fluid, dynamic, and often fragmented use, nested in a multilingual landscape, very different from what is usually conceived of as a common world language (King et al., 2022). As a result, the importance of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) has significantly increased, especially in non-English speaking countries. (Ricohermoso et al., 2019) said that English language fulfills people's different communication need and there is a concern that people might lose if English is viewed as more important than people's mother tongue. Mastering speaking skills is crucial for understanding other English skills and improving overall proficiency.

Speaking skill is a person's ability to communicate and speak fluently, clearly and effectively. It includes the ability to verbally express thoughts, opinions, ideas and emotions in words. There is a desire which is common among the students to learn and communicate in English very fluently not just because of the prestige and it is needed to survive when students go to higher levels of graduation and career. Speaking skills are the key to success in a career or work and social interactions, especially in the field of education. EFL students will be considered successful in their field when influenced by speaking skills. Communication skills play a vital role and one must mastery over other skills in respective fields(Jan, 2019). This becomes a trigger for each student so that they are competing to deepen their speaking skills. However, this is a problem because many forget the importance of mastering one aspect of the language which is grammar.

Grammar is the rules and structure of the language used to form grammatically correct sentences. Grammar includes the rules for how words are arranged, how sentences are formed, and how other elements of language, such as phrases and clauses, interact with one another. English language instruction in the EFL context necessitates the rethinking of grammar instruction. While certain academicians argue that grammar should be emphasized since without it will produce fluent but inaccurate English (Rustamova, 2023). The use of proper grammar in speaking is very important so that the message to be conveyed can be clearly understood by the listener or reader. These rules are continuous and must be positioned according to the place and use. These rules make many students find grammar complicated to learn.

Grammar on speaking is very helpful for understanding the intent of the interlocutor because grammar rules apply to its utilization when speaking. It will be confusing if grammar students carelessly. For example, I am like monkeys and I like monkeys. The difference is very subtle but the meaning is very different. It could be strange for people who understand grammar. Many questions arise regarding the causes and problems of grammatical errors when speaking. In the realm of education, proper and correct use of grammatical is needed. In fact, many EFLs know the importance of using grammar in speaking but do not practice it. In addition, many instructors often don't pay attention to this problem. In teaching, they don't use the correct grammatical elements, even the Indonesian language is used to explain.

Based on those problems, it needs special attention because it's common for EFL students to be professionals in their fields. For this reason, researchers are encouraged to raise this issue of the grammatical crisis use to reveal the causes of students' problems in using proper grammar in speaking. By being sensitive to the causes, solutions will arise that might be able to help and overcome the problems that have occurred. At least students and teachers are aware of the changing learning patterns and habits to form new habits that can help students understand grammar and can apply them to speaking.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Definition of speaking skills**

According to (Namaziandost et al., 2020) speaking skill refers to the ability to express oneself orally in a language with fluency, accuracy, and coherence. It involves the effective use of spoken language to convey thoughts, ideas, opinions and information to others in a clear and understandable manner. Speaking skills encompasses various aspects, including pronunciation, vocabulary usage, grammar, intonation, and body language. Proficiency in speaking involves not only the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences but also the capacity to communicate effectively in different contexts, such as casual conversations, formal presentations, or public speaking engagements.

A skilled speakers can articulate ideas, engage in meaningful conversations, participate in discussions, negotiate, persuade, and convey emotions appropriately. They can adapt their language and style to different audiences and situations, using appropriate registers, tones, and gestures to effectively convey their message. Developing speaking skills involves practice, exposure to the language, and feedback to improve pronunciation, fluency, and

coherence(Chen & Hwang, 2020). It also requires a good understanding of grammar and vocabulary to construct meaningful and grammatically correct sentences.

### **Definition of grammar**

Grammar refers to the set of rules and principles that govern the structure, formation and usage of a language. It encompasses the syntax (word order and sentence structure), morphology (word forms and inflections), phonology (sound patterns), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics(Mandasari & Wahyudin, 2019). Grammar provides the framework for organizing words, phrases, and sentences to convey meaning and communicate effectively. It defines the relationships between different elements of a language, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, and conjunctions, and determines how they should be combined to form grammatically correct and meaningful expressions.

As (Laili & A'yun, 2019) stated that The study of grammar involves understanding the rules and patterns of a language, including its grammatical categories, verb tenses, agreement between words, sentence construction, punctuation, and more. It helps students comprehend and produce language accurately, allowing for clear communication and comprehension. Grammar is not limited to formal or prescriptive rules but also encompasses the descriptive aspects of language usage. It reflects the conventions and patterns observed in actual language use by native speakers. While grammar provides guidelines for correct usage, it can also vary in different dialects, registers, and contexts.

### Challenges in utilizing proper grammar in speaking.

Applying grammar in speaking can indeed be challenging, especially for non-native speakers or those who are still learning the language. (Yaccob & Yunus, 2019) Grammar rules can be complex, with various exceptions and irregularities. It takes time and practice to become familiar with the rules and their proper application. When speaking, there is often a trade-off between fluency and accuracy. Fluency refers to speaking smoothly and without pauses, while accuracy relates to using correct grammar. Sometimes, in an effort to maintain fluency, speakers may prioritize communication over adhering strictly to grammar rules. In spoken communication, there is often limited time to construct grammatically correct sentences. As a result, speakers may rely more on intuition and familiarity than consciously applying grammar rules. This can lead to errors or deviations from formal grammar.

One common difficulty is correctly using verb tenses and subject-verb agreement. Different languages have different rules, and mastering these concepts in a new language can be challenging. Languages often contain idiomatic expressions, which are phrases or sentences that have a figurative meaning different from the literal interpretation of the words. Understanding and using idiomatic expressions correctly can be particularly tricky when it comes to grammar. If a person has limited exposure to the language or doesn't practice speaking regularly, it can be challenging to internalize and apply grammar rules. Consistent practice and immersion in the language are crucial for improving grammar skills in speaking.

# The causes of grammatical errors

According to (Setiyorini, 2020)Inadequate understanding of grammar takes challenging to apply it correctly while speaking. If speakers hasn't thoroughly learned or practiced grammar concepts, they may struggle to use them accurately in their speech.Limited exposure to the target language also can hinder the development of grammar skills. Without regular exposure to native speakers or immersion in the language, learners may not have enough input to naturally internalize grammar rules. When speaking in a foreign language, individuals may experience anxiety or self-consciousness, which can affect their ability to apply grammar. Nervousness or fear of making mistakes can lead to hesitations or avoidance of complex sentence structures, resulting in simplified or incorrect grammar usage.

Students often face challenges due to the influence of their first language on their second language acquisition. The grammatical structures, word order, or verb tenses in the native language might differ from those in the target language, leading to errors in the grammar application(Elangga et al., 2019).Regular practice is essential for developing proficiency in grammar. Without sufficient opportunities to practice speaking and receive feedback, learners may struggle to apply grammar rules accurately. Inadequate practice can result in fossilized errors, where incorrect grammar patterns become ingrained and difficult to correct. In some cases, learners may prioritize vocabulary acquisition or communication skills over grammar. While vocabulary is crucial for communication, neglecting grammar can hinder accurate and effective expression. Balancing the learning of vocabulary and grammar is important for overall language proficiency. Spoken language often deviates from formal written grammar.

According to (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020) There are four sources of errors in language, namely first, Interlingual Error, which means errors associated with the original language (L1); and second, Intralingual Error, which is an error caused by a misunderstanding of the language being studied (L2). It causes students to harbor what they learn and use something ordinary to avoid mistakes and feel safe. Apart from all that, grammar does have its own difficulties in speaking skills, especially for people who are not used to it. Usually they go through a phase of thinking about what to say first, so thinking about grammar is a challenge that can hinder fluency in speaking. That's why many students choose origin to speak, especially for people who are not used to it. Usually they go through a phase of thinking about what to say first. If you just talk,

Actually, there are several previous researchers discussing about grammatical errors in speaking skills at EFL students which is influenced by(Antakusuma, 2020)with the title an analysis of students' grammatical errors in performing English storytelling. The research results showed that the errors are classified into 4 categories in the taxonomy of surface structure such as errors in omission, addition, misinformation and misordering. (SARI, 2018)with her research "students grammatical error analysis in speaking". The result of the study underscores the highest percentage of grammatical error was number which is categorized as syntactical error with the percentage is 25%. A part of them(Maulidar et al., 2019)with the title teacher's strategies in teaching speaking for cadets. The results showed that the teacher used fuve strategies to teach such as role play, drilling, games, describing pictures, and group discussions.

Based on previous research, the researcher aims to complete the lack of data related to the causes of the grammar use crisis that occurred in EFL students. This is because previous researchers only focused on student performance in storytelling, number and speaking performance only. They did not touch on the reasons for the low use of student EFL grammar in depth. In addition, it seems that it is rare to be aware of the grammar use crisis that occurs when speaking because it assumes that speaking does not require good and correct language arrangements. So that the writer is motivated to raise this issue related to the existing crisis.

### **METHOD**

The participants of this study were 27 students at second semester majoring in English at Hamzanwadi University. This study used random sampling to reduce data prejudice because the selection of samples in random sampling was done randomly so that each member of the population has the same opportunity to be selected. Random sampling is also the simplest and easiest method of data collection. A case study design was applied as the research design in this study because the researcher wanted to explore the problem in depth so that the researcher could find out the reality and in this case study became the right guide.

The researcher tried to investigate students' problems in speaking using the correct grammar or language demands. The researcher used a qualitative descriptive method. It was in accordance with the research objectives in order to achieve effective results. Qualitative method is the method used to understand, investigate and explain a complex and accurate phenomenon. Based on (Kurniawan, 2023), "qualitative descriptive research is felt to be very appropriate for the subject being studied with the aim of getting a clear picture of the description".

There are 3 steps of data collection that researchers did, including: 1) Observations. Before conducting the interview, the researcher made observations first. Knowing that many EFLs speak without using a grammar, the researchers investigated further about the reasons and problems that EFL experienced. 2) In-depth interview. In order to find out the causes and problems, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the participants. Face to face was done during the interview. The researcher gave 5 questions related to the causes of the problems that occurred in order to find out the deep reasons for students' fear when using good and correct grammar when speaking. 3) Documentation. To get the accuracy of the data, the researcher documented by recording all forms of interaction during observations and interviews. To obtain more valid data, additional information is also taken from several sources that support the completeness of the information from this study.

# RESULT

To get qualified results, the researcher made observations to test students' abilities by giving them the opportunity to tell repeated incidents and events in the past. It aims to monitor whether students really understand the procedures for using simple tenses. In addition, researchers also paid attention to the interactions of students who were more inclined to use each other's mother tongue. Many of them avoided and felt afraid to be spoken

in English because of the stereotype and they thought that they would be ostracized if they did something wrong. To strengthen the results of these observations, the researcher gave 5 questions related to the problems encountered when speaking using grammar.

From the results of observations and interviews, it was found that each student had different problems related to the use of grammar when speaking. Some of the students said that the use of grammar was not that urgent, especially when many people did not understand how good their English was as a student. The point is to be able to sound fluent in front of people and be understood. Behind it all, they still realize that grammar is important, but they think that tourists don't use grammar properly, as if seducing students to use English as best they can.

Apart from that, many of the students were constrained by difficulties in understanding grammar so that they were prevented from using it when speaking. Many assume that the use of grammar is more inclined to write and easy to detect errors, but grammar is not very applicable. Applying grammar in writing is easier to apply so it feels easier. Grammar in speaking is also important, but it will follow when speaking is fluent and can be applied later. As for students who understand grammar, they are still constrained in its use because it needs to be processed and sorted properly in the brain so that they run out of time to think and make speaking sound ugly and stammer. This triggers students to feel inferior and not confident about their language skills.

In addition, the difficulty in determining the use of tenses was also highlighted as the most difficult for students. This difficulty triggers students' limitations in composing sentences and the choice of verbs which is quite complicated is also complained by them. Grammatical material that is complicated and felt a lot also creates a feeling of laziness to deepen it. Apart from tenses and verb changes, the use of auxiliary verbs has a crucial challenge so that many students still make mistakes such as the use of I am studying and I am studying. Another cause is the number of formulas that need to be memorized which will later give changes to the sentence such as changes in subject, object, verb, irregular verb,

The cause of the difficulty of using grammar in speaking is also caused by the different previous school background of each student. There are those who have schools that are in urban areas and there are also schools that are still in rural areas. Usually the regions that are more advanced tend to be better so seeing some of them still have difficulty speaking is normal. They said that grammar was difficult because they were just learning and were learning so they couldn't apply that fast to speaking. Sometimes the material being studied is

also easy to forget, so that becomes an obstacle when you want to practice it, especially for students who have problems with difficulty remembering caused by the many activities that must be carried out outside the campus.

The students' self-confidence was also tested because they admitted that they had experienced stage fright when practicing speaking in front of a crowd, especially when they felt they did not have sufficient knowledge because they were still in the learning process. Lack of self-confidence creates fear of speaking in class and outside of class. The main factor also comes from the pronunciation which is not fluent compared to their fluent friends so that some students prefer to be silent. Lack of practice is also a trigger for low self-confidence which has an effect on many things including speaking practice. When self-confidence is lacking, understanding is also hampered, coupled with excessive fear, students find it increasingly difficult to speak.

There are also students who easily understand grammar but practice it which is not easy. Because grammar is a standard rule of language, if you use it incorrectly, the meaning conveyed will automatically be different. When an error occurs, the impression will be bad on the other person and can cause problems. Plus, a student said that grammar is not difficult when it is understood with logic and simple use but the difficulty lies when it is when you have to memorize formulas. Then the students said that grammar was not too important to use because it was too standard and the best grammar was when you could use it and understand each other.

### **DISCUSSION**

# Students' lack of vocabulary understanding

As EFL students, students must have a good mastery of English vocabulary. Students should have a lot of vocabulary lists in speaking because without a lot of vocabulary lists a speaker will not be able to use interactive communication. In short, it can be said that the power of mastering words or having vocabulary knowledge is one of the keys to success in speaking(Diana, 2021). With this ability, they can produce language because the root of language formation is vocabulary, but the importance of learning vocabulary is still often forgotten during learning. Laziness and the notion that learning vocabulary is a difficult thing to do makes one reluctant to learn it. Even though this is not a barrier but something that must be realized if students aim to study English. Also, the purpose of English education is to teach

students and pass on this knowledge that encouragement becomes a stepping stone to convey ideas precisely and accurately.

To use grammar properly in speaking, students need to have adequate vocabulary(Nurfitri & Rahmawati, 2021). If they have a limited vocabulary, they may have difficulty constructing sentences that comply with grammar rules. They will feel limited in the choice of words used to describe or explain certain concepts. Then also students will have difficulty building complex and varied sentences. This makes students tend to use simple and repetitive sentence structures, which can reduce clarity and diversity in conversation. In situations that require formal communication such as academic presentations, limited vocabulary can also affect a person to use the right vocabulary according to the context.

# Students' difficulties in understanding grammar rules

Some grammar rules can be quite complicated and confusing, especially for students who are learning a foreign language because even native speakers are still wrong. Understanding and remembering grammar rules can be a challenge. according to(Listia & Emma, 2020)The largest number of errors produced by the students were in English tenses. Regarding the effect of grammatical marking, one may argue that students' seemingly nonexistent generic understanding of the masculine is mainly a problem of comprehension. The problem that is very closely related to speaking is the difficulty of constructing sentences. These difficulties make someone speak carelessly and mix up both tenses, changes in vocabulary, and rules that are not quite right.

Furthermore, the thing that encourages students to ignore the importance of grammar is the stigma that saying grammar is not important. The students think that the most important thing is to be able to speak fluently. But without realizing it, it limits students' desire to learn the language properly and correctly. It is also continuous with the student learning environment. The problems lead to a number of additional issues which are closely related to anxiety, personality traits, self-esteem, poor environment for communication outside the classroom and inhibition in which students feel afraid of making mistakes(Kashinathan & Abdul Aziz, 2021). Most students use local English which is informal and according to what they understand. That is the cause of the lack of interest in students understanding the function of grammar in speaking skills in depth.

Students may learn grammar rules applying well, but they still have difficulty correctly speaking them. They may make mistakes in word choice, tenses, or sentence structure. Usually, learners do not recognize the error. The word 'error' to mean utterances that are either superficial or grammatically distorted(Hampp et al., 2021)due to the gap of language knowledge and unable to correct it. Apart from the reasons for mistakes in applying the grammar above, another cause that cannot be forgotten is the fear of being wrong. The fear usually comes from both outside and inside, the fear from within comes from psychological problems that say this is wrong.

#### Students lack of self-confidence

The difficulty of understanding and applying grammar rules correctly can make students less confident in speaking. Students' English speaking performance is negatively affected by psychological factors as they have a good level in English grammar and vocabulary but are not confident while speaking English is concerned(Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020). They may worry about making grammar mistakes and being embarrassed or not being understood by the other person. Uncertainty in the use of language can make a person worry about making mistakes or not sounding right. Their low self-esteem and doubts about themselves can make them feel uneasy when speaking using grammar.

Low understanding is often an obstacle for students because there are many rules that must be used properly. Things may come to mind that the use of grammar is confused or even uses grammar that is not in their realm. That is the trigger for the emergence of students' lack of confidence in speaking using grammar. US(Riadil, 2020)stated that negative experiences in speaking with good grammar, such as being repeated or corrected excessively can also reduce students' self-confidence. They worry about making mistakes again and feel uncomfortable if their grammar is criticized. This is a common incident in the educational environment even though they are aware of the importance of using grammar properly and correctly.

Students also often compare their competence with friends or native speakers. It also becomes the trigger of feelings and inferiority to arise which results in fear of speaking. They often worry that they will be seen as unintelligent or uneducated if they sound weird and make mistakes on their own. The struggle to maintain this image also greatly impacted the performance of enthusiasm in the class(Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). Plus, there are still many students who feel afraid to compete with students who are considered smart in class. This

problem is classified as a personal problem but is very often found in real educational environments. Students' mentality becomes a stimulus for the progress of their thinking and self-development.

# Lack of practice

Learning grammar requires consistent practice. Students may face difficulties in getting the opportunity to practice speaking using the grammar rules they are learning. Usually, after studying grammar, students practice only with written media, such as answering tests without practicing speaking so grammar is only applied writing skills(Pakul, 2019). Meanwhile, when practicing speaking students are given directions not to pay attention to grammar so they don't have confusion with the topic of conversation. The opportunity to use combinations of speaking using grammar rules is very low. It has an impact on students' fluency in speaking using the correct grammar rules.

Not having a partner is one of the reasons students cannot practice using grammar when communicating. In this case students need friends who have good skills in grammar and fluency. Lecturers as facilitators should be able to provide and create good class designs as teaching strategies where students can practice as often as possible as partners in speaking practice. Teaching strategies also contribute to this problem as they are inadequate, and they do not put emphasis on speaking, which results in a greater development of this skill(Maulidar et al., 2019). It is also not easy to create interactive class designs because campus facilities are lacking. Formal rules on campus also don't give freedom to speak so it can't be equated with the learning process in courses. for this reason.

# **CONCLUSION**

Many of the students were constrained by difficulties in understanding grammar so that they prevented them from using it when speaking. How ever, this requires a lot of pillars that must be mastered as vocabularies such as understanding, good pronunciation, and fluency. As EFL students, students must have a good mastery of English. Students should have a complex comprehending at all aspects of English because without those understanding, speakers will not be able to use interactive communication. They may have difficulty constructing sentences that comply with grammar rules. Other factors are grammar rules, student's lack of self-compliance, and lack of practice.

Some grammar rules can be quite complicated and confusing, especially for students who are learning a foreign language because even native speakers are still wrong. The difficulty of understanding and applying grammar rules correctly can make students less confident in speaking. It also gives effect of Learning grammar requires consistent practice. Students may face difficulties in getting the opportunity to practice speaking using the grammar rules they are learning. Then the students said that grammar was not too important to use because it was too standard and the best grammar was when you could use it and understand each other.

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