



INVESTIGATING GRAMMAR, MECHANICS AND REGISTER ERRORS IN DIALOGUE WRITING: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY ON COMMUNICATION SCIENCE STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH KARANGANYAR 2024/2025

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Abstract

This study investigates grammar, mechanics, and register errors in dialogue writing produced by Communication Science students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Karanganyar during the 2024–2025 academic year. Applying a descriptive qualitative design, the writing of ten student groups was analyzed to identify common error patterns and classify them into three categories: grammar, mechanics, and register. Data analysis revealed that grammar common errors included sentence fragments, awkward word choices, and incorrect verb forms. In addition, mechanical errors involved capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and inconsistent time notation. Furthermore, register issues were also frequent such as students relying on informal and social media expressions that were inappropriate for academic writing. The findings indicate that their written accuracy was often limited by weaknesses in grammar and mechanics. Many of the errors reflected direct transfer from spoken Indonesian or the influence of online communication styles. The results show that teaching writing in English as a Foreign Language should combine grammar, mechanics, and register, not treat them as separate areas. The study recommends classroom activities that combine error analysis, peer editing, and register transformation tasks to foster both accuracy and appropriacy in student writing. Those approaches may help English as a Foreign Language learners produce clearer, more professional written communication in academic settings.

Keywords: *Error Analysis, Grammar, Mechanics, Register, Dialogue Writing*

INTRODUCTION

Writing stands as the most challenging skill in English as a Foreign Language learning because it needs students' accuracy, organization, and command of language. It engraves a permanent trace of every mistake and how to revise it, and it is to measure the linguistic competence. Harmer (2007) states that writing demands the careful integration of linguistic knowledge, organization, and accuracy. Furthermore, Raimes (1983) stresses that its complexity lies in forcing learners to juggle content, form, and audience awareness simultaneously. Within this demanding context, dialogue writing offers particular value because it combines the communicative parts of language use such as grammar and mechanical precision. Dialogue writing shows simulating authentic interaction in written form of information. Recent findings showed that the quality of English as a Foreign

Language learners' writing advances in corpus-based and computational approaches have enabled researchers to map recurring error patterns more effectively, providing useful insights for targeted teaching interventions (Pardede, 2023). Therefore, writing has enormous challenges, and they are necessary to investigate.

Writing challenges are various among students. it exposes gaps in linguistic knowledge more, and brings difficulties specifically in grammar and mechanics. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) argue that many of these errors can be traced to first language transfer and incomplete acquisition of English grammar rules. In addition, Richards and Schmidt (2010) confirm that English as a Foreign Language students commonly face problems with verb tense, subject and verb agreement, punctuation, and capitalization. Recently, Ehsanzadeh and Dehnad (2024), in their learner corpus study of medical students, reported that lexical grammatical errors consistently appeared in student writing, indicating that even advanced learners are not immune to such issues. Finally, Hussain (2024) further emphasizes that article misuse, inaccurate grammar, and interference from learners' first language remain dominant categories of errors in English as a Foreign Language writing. Those, an action is needed to investigate error patterns, particularly in the specific area such as dialogue writing among students from non-English departments. To address these challenges, it is important to focus on three fundamental aspects.

Grammar, mechanics, and register are essential elements that determine dialogue writing. these three aspects bring the clarity, appropriateness, and communicative effectiveness of texts. Grammar regulates sentence structure and meaning. Mechanics covers spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Register provides the choice of words, tone, and style. As Halliday (1978) proposes, register is shaped by field, tenor, and mode, which influence how meaning is expressed in different contexts. In addition, Biber and Conrad (2009) emphasize its role in distinguishing between formal academic writing and informal conversation. So, mastering these three elements is vital.

Error Analysis offers a systematic approach to identify, categorize, and interpret learner errors as indicators of interlanguage development. Understanding learner errors is fundamental to improve language teaching and learning. Proposed by Corder (1967), Error Analysis views errors not simply as signs of failure but as valuable evidence of learners' interlanguage development. Corder (1981) categorizes errors into four types

such as omission, addition, mis-formation, and mis-ordering. In dialogue writing, Error Analysis is significant because students often struggle with the accuracy of grammar and mechanics, such as sentence fragments, verb form errors, and misuse of punctuation or capitalization, as well as with register issues when they employ slang, abbreviations, or overly informal expressions.

Dialogue writing remains relatively underexplored compared to essays, reports, or other academic genres. As Nation (2009) emphasizes, spoken-like writing tasks such as dialogues challenge learners to select words and structures that simulate authentic interaction. Dialogue writing often reflects a conversational style for students' daily lives. Therefore, examining students' dialogue writing through the framework of Error Analysis not only highlights persistent difficulties in grammar and mechanics but also reveals the influence of informal registers.

This study focuses on identifying and analyzing errors in students' dialogue writing, with particular attention to grammar, mechanics, and register. The researcher seeks to uncover the types and patterns of errors that emerge in English Foreign Language learners' written dialogues. By systematically classifying these errors, the study aims to provide deeper insights into learners' interlanguage development and highlight the influence of spoken-like and informal features in academic writing tasks. Beyond theoretical contribution, the study also points to practical implications: it recommends classroom activities that integrate error analysis, peer editing, and register transformation tasks as effective ways to foster both accuracy and appropriacy in students' writing.

LITERARY REVIEWS

Writing

Writing is said that it is more difficult than other skills (speaking, listening, and reading) because it requires a combination from many aspects. Harmer (2007) states that writing demands a careful combination of linguistic knowledge, structural organization, and accuracy. According to Raimes (1983) that the complexity of writing lies in forcing learners to juggle content, form, and audience awareness at the same time. Furthermore, Byrne (1988) defines writing as the production of graphic symbols that must be meaningful and communicative for the reader. In addition, Hyland (2003) emphasizes

that writing is not merely a cognitive activity but also a social act that reflects interaction between the writer and the context. These theories indicate that writing poses challenges and provides an improvement on learners' competence.

Dialogue Writing

Dialogue writing is the activity of composing written information between two or more participants that simulate natural spoken interaction. It combines elements of grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and register that reflect authentic communicative situations. Nation (2009) asserts that spoken-like writing tasks such as dialogues challenge learners to select words and structures that mirror authentic conversational exchanges. Harmer (2007) shows that written dialogues allow students to practice communicative use of the language while maintaining structural accuracy. In addition, Brown (2001) also points out that dialogue-based tasks provide learners with authentic practice in meaningful communication. In summary, dialogue writing is an effective strategy that allows learners to engage in authentic communicative practice. By combining grammar, mechanics, and register, it not only fosters accurate language use but also develops students' ability to convey meaning in conversational contexts.

Grammar, Mechanics, and Register

Grammar, mechanics, and register are absolutely important specifically in dialogue writing. Grammar provides knowledge about constructing meaningful and correct sentences. According to Brown (2001), mastery of grammar is essential not only for clarity but also for effective communication, as it governs how ideas are organized and interpreted within a text. Mechanics (encompassing spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) although sometimes seen as superficial, play a critical role in enhancing readability and preventing misinterpretation (Corder, 1981). In addition, Harmer (2004) emphasizes that mechanical errors can obscure meaning even when the grammar of a sentence is otherwise accurate. Last, Register appears the choice of words, tone, and style according to context, tenor, and mode (Halliday, 1978). Moreover, Hyland (2003) stresses that awareness of register is essential for aligning language use with audience expectations. So, comprehending grammar, mechanics, and register is necessary for producing a clear, accurate, and appropriate dialogue writing.

Error Analysis

Error Analysis provides a systematic framework for identifying, categorizing, and interpreting learner errors as basic indicators of interlanguage development. Corder (1967) said that learner errors should not be regarded as signs of failure but as evidence of the learning process. Then, Corder (1981) classified errors into four types (omission, addition, misformation, and misordering) which continue to be widely used in second language research. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) further emphasized that learner errors are natural outcomes of language acquisition, often caused by first language transfer or incomplete mastery of the target language. Selinker (1972), through his interlanguage theory, maintained that learner errors reflect the transitional linguistic system constructed by learners. Therefore, it is relevant for investigating errors in grammar, mechanics, and register in students' dialogue writing.

Previous Error Studies in EFL Writing

Several studies have applied Error Analysis to examine EFL writing across different genres.

Table 1. Previous Researches

No	Author & Year	Focus of Study	Key Findings	Relevance to Present Study
1	Hussain (2024)	Error analysis in Saudi EFL learners' writing	Article misuse, verb tense confusion, and first language interference	Confirms grammatical difficulties persist across contexts
2	Putri (2024) Capitalization errors in Indonesian EFL students' journal article titles	Mechanics errors in academic publishing	Found recurring capitalization problems in journal titles	Shows that mechanics errors persist even in advanced academic contexts
3	Ehsanzadeh & Dehnad (2024)	Learner corpus study of medical students' writing	Lexical-grammatical errors were most frequent and systematic	Demonstrates even advanced students face persistent grammar issues
4	Maneepakthorn (2023)	Dialogue journal writing in EFL classrooms	Improved fluency and reflection but frequent grammar/mechanics errors	Shows dialogue writing is valuable but under-researched

5	Seddik (2023)	Error analysis of Moroccan EFL learners' essays	Confirmed persistence of Corder's categories of error	Validates use of Error Analysis framework in modern EFL contexts
6	Dewi (2021)	Spoken conversation practice among Indonesian learners	Frequent tense and shifts in incomplete sentences	Suggests oral errors transfer into written dialogue
7	Qin & Uccelli (2020)	Flexibility of register in EFL writing	EFL learners showed variation in register flexibility between academic and casual writing; flexibility did not always align with language proficiency	Highlights the importance of teaching register to enhance learners' communicative competence
8	Sermsook, Liamnimitr, & Pochakorn (2017)	Error analysis of Thai EFL students' written sentences	Frequent errors in verb tense, article usage, and sentence structure	Highlights common grammar errors in Asian EFL contexts, supporting grammar focus in this study

Finally, it becomes some evident that substantial research has examined errors in essays, academic articles, and general English Foreign Language writing. Dialogue writing remains as untouchable. Moreover, although dialogue writing offers a unique context that mirrors spoken interaction, the persistence of (grammatical, mechanical, and register) suggests that further investigation is required, particularly among students from non-English departments. Therefore, this study positions itself to address this gap by systematically analyzing errors in grammar, mechanics, and register within students' dialogue writing, aiming to provide both theoretical insights into interlanguage development and practical implications

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study applied a descriptive qualitative design. The purpose of this design was to explore, describe, and analyze the types of errors made by students in writing dialogues, with specific attention to grammar, mechanics, and register. As a qualitative study, the focus was not on quantifying errors but on identifying patterns and providing interpretative explanations of learners' interlanguage development.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at Universitas Muhammadiyah Karanganyar during the academic year 2024/2025. The participants were ten groups of Communication Science students enrolled in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. These students were chosen because they represented non-English department learners who frequently face difficulties in academic writing, particularly in dialogue writing.

Data Source

The primary data of this study consisted of students' written dialogues. Each group was asked to compose a written dialogue simulating authentic communicative situations. The texts produced were collected and analysed to identify instances of grammar, mechanics, and register errors.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through several steps. First, assigning dialogue writing tasks to the student groups. Then, collecting the written dialogues submitted by each group. Finally, organizing the texts for analysis by categorizing them into grammar, mechanics, and register aspects.

Data Analysis

The analysis was carried out using the Error Analysis framework proposed by Corder (1967, 1981). The process moves from identification of errors (locating grammar, mechanics, and register errors in the student texts). Then, it is classification of errors (grouping errors into categories such as omission, addition, mis-ordering, and mis-ordering for grammar; punctuation, capitalization, and spelling for mechanics; informal or inappropriate expressions for register). Third, it is interpretation of errors (analysing

the causes of errors, such as first language interference, incomplete acquisition of grammar rules, or influence of online or social media language). Last, it is the description of error Patterns (presenting the recurring patterns to highlight students' weaknesses).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the analysis of students' dialogue writing from 10 groups, a total of 24 errors were identified, consisting of 7 grammar errors, 10 mechanics errors, and 7 register errors. Grammar errors mainly involved verb tense misuse, sentence fragments, awkward collocations, and inappropriate word choices. Mechanics errors were the most frequent, particularly capitalization problems, punctuation mistakes, spelling slips, and inconsistent time notation. Meanwhile, register errors appeared when students used slang, abbreviations, exaggerated informal expressions, and slogans that reflected the influence of social media and spoken language styles. These errors are presented in the table 2.

Table 2. Errors Data

Group	Identification of Errors (Excerpt)	Classification	Interpretation	Description of Error Patterns	Suggestion
Group 1	"You don't have to run far, just be regular."	Grammar – misformation (word choice); comma splice	Non-idiomatic phrasing, possible L1 transfer	Awkward word choice & incorrect joining of clauses recur	"You don't have to run far; just be consistent." / "... just do it regularly."
	"Aye aye, captain! Haha."	Register – slang/informal	Influence of online/social media / spoken style	Informal/slang register frequent	"Alright, let's do it!"
Group 2	"I'm a big fan of Fortnite."	Mechanics – quotation marks	Carelessness in punctuation	Wrong quotation mark at the beginning.	"I'm a big fan of Fortnite."
	"Thanks for...."	Mechanics – spacing & punctuation	Formatting issues	Dialogue punctuation inconsistent	"D: 'Thanks for ...'"
	"It's very fun."	Grammar – misformation (word choice)	Direct translation from L1	Non-idiomatic expressions	"It's a lot of fun."

Group 3	"We have english first."	Mechanics – capitalization	Lack of awareness of proper noun rules	Consistent capitalization errors	"We have English first."
	"You're welcome, see you to."	Grammar – misformation; comma splice	L1 interference (Indonesian "ke" → "to")	Wrong word + fused sentence	"You're welcome. See you too."
Group 4	"Jog and glow!"; "Jogging squad activated!"	Register – informal slogans	Social media/chat influence	Informal slogans inappropriate in academic writing	"Let's go jogging!"; "We're ready for jogging!"
Group 5	"My name is iqbal. I'm zaki."	Mechanics – capitalization	Carelessness, incomplete acquisition of writing conventions	Names written in lowercase repeatedly	"My name is Iqbal. I'm Zaki."
	"I live in bakdalem sukosari, jumantono."	Mechanics – capitalization	Carelessness, incomplete acquisition of writing conventions	Place names lowercase	"I live in Bakdalem Sukosari, Jumantono."
	"Okay. One... two... three..."	Mechanics – punctuation (ellipsis overuse)	Overuse from chat style	Ellipsis repeated	"Okay. One, two, three..."
	"Okay, but I hide now."	Grammar – verb tense	Incomplete grammar acquisition	Wrong verb tense common	"Okay, I'll hide now."
Group 6	"Good afternoon it's good to see you!"	Grammar (run-on sentence)	L1 interference (no period in Indonesian)	Run-on errors appear	"Good afternoon. It's good to see you!"
	"15:00 p.m." etc.	Mechanics (time format)	Mixing 24-hour with p.m.	Systematic inconsistency in time notation	"3:00 p.m." / "15:00" (consistent)
	"Byeee!"	Register (exaggerated)	Chat-style influence	Informal expressions	"Bye!"
Group 7	"Well, definitely good hiking shoes..."	Grammar (sentence fragment)	Missing subject/verb; incomplete grammar	Sentence fragments appear	"Well, you definitely need good hiking shoes, warm clothes, a

					headlamp, and enough water.”
	“Btw...”	Register (abbreviation)	Social media influence	Chat abbreviations used	“By the way, ...”
Group 8	“before presentesing”	Mechanics (spelling/verb form)	Carelessness; incomplete acquisition	Spelling slips	“before presenting”
	“7.00 in the library”	Mechanics (time format)	Mixing local notation	Time inconsistency	“7:00 in the library”
	“see you tomorrow... tomorrow together ahaha”	Register and punctuation	Influence of chat	Redundancy & informal register	“See you tomorrow, haha.”
Group 9	“7:45 AM”	Mechanics (style inconsistency)	Lack of awareness of standard	Time notation inconsistent	“7:45 a.m.” (consistent)
Group 10	“My name is Yusuf ... I’m from Karanganyar ...”	Mechanics (punctuation)	Missing full stops	Punctuation weakness	“My name is Yusuf. I’m from Karanganyar.”
	“Be careful on the road”	Grammar (collocation)	L1 transfer from Indonesian	Collocation unnatural	“Be careful on your way.”
	“okey”	Mechanics (spelling)	Influence of chat style	Non-standard spelling	“okay”

Discussion

The analysis of students’ dialogue writing revealed some difficulties with grammar, mechanics, and register which affected the accuracy and appropriacy of their written communication. The errors identified across Groups 1 to 10 demonstrate that while students were able to produce dialogues that conveyed meaning, their writing was characterized by fragmented sentences, non-standard word choices, mechanical inaccuracies, and informal register expressions that are not suitable for academic tasks. The findings of this study prove that students’ dialogue writing tasks reveal systematic weaknesses in grammar, mechanics, and register.

The first discussion is about grammatical errors. Several patterns were revealed. Some groups produced incomplete sentences, such as Group 7’s “*Well, definitely good hiking shoes, warm clothes, a headlamp, and enough water*”, which lacks a verb and thus

results in a sentence fragment. Similar issues appeared in Group 1 with *"just be regular"*, where the phrase is grammatically possible but semantically awkward, requiring a more natural construction such as *"be consistent"* or *"do it regularly"*. Verb form errors were also evident in Group 5 (*"but I hide now"* instead of *"I'll hide now"*) and Group 8 (*"presentesing"* instead of *"presenting"*). Such errors indicate insufficient mastery of English tense/aspect forms and morphological rules, consistent with earlier findings in English Foreign Language contexts where learners rely on literal translation or first-language transfer.

Mechanics errors were the most common in almost every group. Capitalization issues were noted in Group 3 (*english* instead of *English*) and Group 5 (*iqbal, zaki* without capitalization). Time formatting proved particularly problematic: Group 6 repeatedly combined the 24-hour system with *p.m.* (e.g., *15:00 p.m.*), while Group 8 used a dot instead of a colon (*7.00* instead of *7:00*). Punctuation errors were also frequent, including run-on sentences as in Group 6 (*"Good afternoon it's good to see you!"*), excessive ellipsis use in Group 5 (*"One... two... three..."*), and missing final periods in Group 10. Quotation formatting was another issue, illustrated by Group 2's misuse of quotation marks (*H: "I'm a big fan of Fortnite."*). These findings underscore that students need explicit instruction on English writing conventions, as such mechanical problems reduce clarity and professional quality.

In addition to grammar and mechanics, register errors were widespread. Many groups relied on spoken or digital communication styles, such as Group 1's *"Aye aye, captain! Haha"*, Group 4's slogans *"Jog and glow!"* and *"Jogging squad activated!"*, Group 6's exaggerated spelling *"Byeee!"*, and Group 7's abbreviation *"Btw"*. Group 10 also used overly casual farewells (*"Be careful on the road"*; *"Will do, safe journey"*). Lack the formality expected in written academic work was a risky problem. These cases demonstrate the influence of oral communication and social media language on students' writing. This aligns with previous studies that highlight how English Foreign Language learners often struggle to distinguish between informal conversational English (not in their L1 styles) and the formal written register required in academic contexts.

All in all, from some paragraphs above, those indicate the need for a more integrated approach to writing instruction. Grammar-focused exercises should be

complemented with mechanics editing tasks and activities that raise awareness of register differences. For example, students could practice rewriting informal dialogue excerpts into formal equivalents, while also correcting capitalization, punctuation, and verb tense errors. By combining grammatical accuracy, mechanical correctness, and register appropriacy, English Foreign Language students can gradually develop greater control over their written English. So, certain classroom approaches can effectively enhance English Foreign Language students' writing in academic contexts. Activities such as error analysis, peer editing, and register transformation tasks help improve grammatical accuracy, writing mechanics, and register appropriacy. Error analysis enables students to identify and correct mistakes in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure, to improve the precision of their writing. Peer editing fosters collaborative evaluation, reinforcing both mechanical accuracy and professional writing quality. Meanwhile, register transformation tasks train students to adjust their language according to different academic contexts, promoting appropriacy.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated grammar and mechanics errors in dialogue writing produced by Communication Science students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Karanganyar during the 2024–2025 academic year. The analysis of ten groups revealed that while students were able to express ideas meaningfully through dialogues, their writing contained frequent inaccuracies that reduced clarity and academic quality. These errors were categorized into three main areas: grammar, mechanics, and register. Grammar-related issues included sentence fragments, awkward word choices, incorrect verb forms, and etc. Mechanics errors were common, ranging from capitalization and punctuation mistakes to time notation inconsistencies and spelling errors. Finally, register problems were observed when students relied on overly informal, spoken, or digital communication styles that were not appropriate in written academic contexts.

The findings highlight a gap between students' communicative fluency and their mastery of written accuracy. Many errors reflected direct transfer from spoken Indonesian expressions or the influence of social media language, which shaped students' written

choices. The recurrence of basic mechanical mistakes, such as capitalization of proper nouns and punctuation, suggests that these areas have not been sufficiently emphasized in instruction. Similarly, inappropriate register choices reveal that students may not yet fully grasp the distinction between conversational and academic writing. Such patterns align with previous English Foreign Language research, which emphasizes the need for targeted instruction not only in grammar but also in mechanics and register awareness.

These results imply that writing instruction for English Foreign Language students must adopt a more comprehensive approach that integrates grammar, mechanics, and register. Instructors should design classroom activities that encourage students to revise and edit their own dialogue writing, paying attention to verb forms, capitalization, punctuation, and time expressions. In addition, raising awareness of register differences through comparative exercises (transforming informal dialogue into formal equivalents) can help students adjust their writing to academic expectations. Future research could expand this study by examining how explicit corrective feedback on grammar and mechanics impacts students' writing development over time. In summary, addressing these errors systematically can significantly improve the clarity, accuracy, and professionalism of English Foreign Language students' written communication.

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