



SURFACE LINGUISTIC ERRORS IN ORAL PRESENTATION: A CASE STUDY OF SECONDARY STUDENTS IN 3T REGION KUPANG TIMUR

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the types and frequency of surface linguistic errors in English oral storytelling by junior high school students from the 3T (frontier, outermost, disadvantaged) region of Kupang Timur. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 15 students and analyzed through Dulay et al.'s Surface Strategy Taxonomy, with error analysis following Ellis's framework: identification, description, explanation, and evaluation. The results show that omission errors were most frequent (47%), followed by addition (27%), misformation (20%), and misordering (6%). Frequent mistakes included the omission of "to be" verbs and possessive apostrophes, indicating limited mastery of basic English grammar in spoken form. These findings highlight the specific grammatical challenges faced by learners from remote, under-resourced areas. The study offers valuable implications for English language instruction, suggesting the need for targeted teaching strategies and curriculum development that address the unique needs of students in 3T regions. By focusing on an underrepresented group in Indonesian educational research, this study provides new insights into how linguistic background and educational access shape oral language proficiency, advocating for more inclusive and context-sensitive language teaching practices.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Surface Strategy Taxonomy, Oral Presentation, 3T region

1. INTRODUCTION

As a global lingua franca, English plays a pivotal role in facilitating international communication across critical domains such as finance, medicine, technology, and education. Its dominance in these sectors underscores the necessity for individuals to develop competence in the four core language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Apoko, 2024). This imperative has catalyzed the growth of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, a field dedicated to learners acquiring English either as a second or foreign language (Garces-Manzanera, 2021; Jaya et al., 2025). The expansion of EFL

education reflects two fundamental assertions: first, that acquiring English is no longer optional but essential; and second, that educational institutions bear a central role in facilitating this linguistic acquisition. Consequently, the integration of English into national curricula in non-English-speaking countries signifies a strategic effort to equip citizens for global participation and competitiveness (Bachtiar & Puspitasari, 2024; Fadilah et al., 2023). This trend not only demonstrates the shifting linguistic priorities within educational systems but also reveals a broader sociopolitical commitment to preparing future generations to navigate

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and contribute to an increasingly interconnected world.

The integration of English language teaching into the Indonesian curriculum is implemented with two fundamental objectives which include the nation's further global participation and professional prospects of the learners (Mauliska & D'Angelo, 2024; Jaya et al., 2025a). One of the language skills necessary to the aforementioned objectives is English speaking skill. In fact, the attainment of English speaking proficiency signifies both language acquisition and effective communication because it enables the students to express their opinions and reach communication goals (Rusdin & Purwati, 2023; Akteruzzaman et al., 2023). Consequently, the emphasis on English speaking competence is prevalent in the Indonesian classrooms since it is the only way for the students to optimize their speaking practice. As a productive skill, speaking activities engaged by the students include classroom activities such as speaking based on pictures, speaking based on sound, telling stories, interviews, discussion, debate and giving speeches (Helal, 2019). Such activities provide students with immense benefits through oral presentation which can influence their speaking confidence, motivation, fluency, grammar comprehension and vocabulary (Burhanuddin, 2021; Guo et al., 2020; Bahufite et al., 2023). Consequently, the ability of the students to deliver successful English oral presentation highlights their communicative abilities and subject matter comprehension (Pervaiz et al., 2022; Algouzi et al., 2023).

Attaining proficiency in English speaking continues to pose a significant challenge for Indonesian learners. As English is positioned as a foreign language within the Indonesian educational framework, students are often deprived of meaningful exposure to authentic communicative contexts (Apoko, 2024). This limited exposure is compounded by inadequate command of key linguistic

components—namely vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar—further reinforcing students' reluctance to engage in spoken English (Purwati et al., 2020; Fahmi & Rachmijati, 2021; Salim et al., 2020). Such linguistic deficiencies directly impact classroom speaking performance, frequently resulting in errors such as mispronunciation, incorrect grammatical structures, and inappropriate word choice. These inaccuracies not only distort intended meaning but also compromise fluency and overall communicative competence (Rojabi, 2021; Jaya et al., 2022; Agung Prasajo et al., 2023). Consequently, many students exhibit a pronounced fear of oral performance, often avoiding speaking tasks altogether (Sahan et al., 2022). This form of speaking anxiety is particularly concerning given that oral presentations constitute a vital component of productive language use, offering learners an avenue to cultivate confidence and fluency. Unfortunately, this potential remains largely untapped, as students' apprehension—rooted in persistent linguistic errors—continues to hinder both the development and demonstration of oral proficiency in the classroom context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

English speaking difficulties are particularly pronounced among students residing in Indonesia's Underdeveloped, Frontier, and Outermost (3T) regions. A growing body of research has identified several critical factors contributing to the poor oral performance observed in learners from these areas. Notably, many students in 3T regions struggle even with the use of standard Indonesian, which poses significant obstacles to the acquisition of English vocabulary, accurate pronunciation, and foundational grammatical understanding—elements essential for basic spoken communication (Febriana et al., 2018; Vail, 2023; Jaya et al., 2022; Aji Tamara Putra et al., 2023; Uddiniyah & Silfia, 2020; Nakul & Murtafi'ah, 2024). Kupang Timur, as one

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such region categorized under the 3T classification, reflects similar linguistic challenges. Learners from this sub-district frequently exhibit symptoms of speaking anxiety, cognitive fatigue due to complex grammatical structures, mispronunciation, and recurring oral errors (Pajangu et al., 2024). These difficulties often intensify during oral presentations—a task that many students perceive as intimidating and anxiety-inducing (Sahan et al., 2022). Consequently, rather than serving as a platform for communicative practice, oral presentations become high-stress encounters that exacerbate existing speaking deficiencies and hinder students' oral language development.

The persistent challenges concerning speaking performance errors among Indonesian students, particularly the students from 3T areas, have prompted the need for a well-defined framework of analysis. One of the most effective framework analysis to address the speaking errors and provide relevant pedagogical and remedial insights is the Surface Strategy Taxonomy provided by Dulay et al. (1982). Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy categorizes primarily four common errors such as omission, addition, misformation and misordering. Omission refers to the lack of essential item in an utterance for instance 'I watching TV now.' Addition, on the other hand, refers to the addition of an unnecessary component in an utterance such as 'I am agree with you.' Misformation specifically deals with the misapplication of morpheme or structure in an utterance for instance 'we study English last week.' This sentence indicates misformation because the verb "study" does not corroborate past tense as the event of the utterance happened in the past based on the adverb of time "last week." The last type of error is misordering which refers to utterances with wrongly placed morphemes or words for instance "you are angry?". This sentence indicates misplacement of to be (are) and subject (you) which should be "are you angry?". The

implementation of Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy is prevalent in the various recent research. The application of the aforementioned Taxonomy allows a systemic analysis approach through structured identification of common errors committed by the students which is essential in effectively identifying the challenges and providing calculated evaluation and direction (Supriadi, 2021; Bobe, 2024; Endang Susilowati et al., 2024).

The research investigation into the speaking errors among Indonesian students has been prevalent due to the English oral presentation importance. Several studies have been previously conducted concerning the challenges faced by the learners in producing accurate and fluent spoken English particularly in the context of oral presentations. However, the contextual exploration in underrepresented regions of 3T (Underdeveloped, Frontier, Outermost) in Indonesia including Kupang Timur remains limited. A crucial contribution to this research focus was a study conducted by Sahan et al. (2022) exploring oral presentation performance among third-semester students of English department at Timor University. The study revealed that even though the oral performance of the students was satisfactory with an average score of 82, students generally experienced challenges concerning mispronunciation (13%) and lack of fluency (5%). Some underlying factors were highlighted such as the speaking anxiety, lack of preparation and insufficient opportunities to practice. This study provides great relevance in its local focus however it primarily focused on the pronunciation and fluency without closer investigation into the analysis of grammatical and syntactic errors. Another significant study was conducted by Susilowati et al. (2024) focusing on the grammatical errors in the oral presentation of the non-English major students in Central Java by employing Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The findings of the study indicated that omission (47.06%)

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was the most dominant error type, followed by misformation (33.82%), addition (14.71%) and misordering (4.41%). Further findings of the study identified intra-lingual interference as the primary cause of errors. This study provided relevant evidence of the effectiveness of Surface Strategy Taxonomy application however it lacked contextual exploration of the 3T region as it focused on the university students in Central Java. Similarly, Bobe (2024) conducted research focusing on the grammatical errors in translation tasks among the senior high school students of SMA Negeri 9 Kupang. The findings revealed that misordering was the most common error (57.84%), followed by omission (33.48%) and fewer indications of addition and misformation. This study provided a contextual relevance concerning the 3T region as it was conducted in Kupang. However, the focus was on written translation not oral production and therefore, it lacks the insights into the oral performance of the students.

This current study attempts to address the clear research gap involving the lack of research implementation focusing on the surface linguistic errors in the oral presentation among secondary school students in 3T region of Kupang Timur by utilizing a structured framework of Surface Strategy Taxonomy. Furthermore, this current study's contribution is chiefly based on the following aspects including the underrepresented population of 3T region in Kupang Timur, application of Surface Strategy Taxonomy and strategic insights into teaching feedbacks to address the linguistic needs of the students in rural and disadvantaged education background.

3. METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative research approach, recognized for its

precision in capturing and interpreting data through statistical measures such as frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores (Creswell, 2014). The utilization of this method enabled a systematic and in-depth examination of surface linguistic errors produced by students. The investigation centered on students' oral storytelling performances, with particular attention to the classification of errors based on Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy. In response to the limited scholarly attention on surface linguistic errors within Indonesia's 3T (underdeveloped, frontier, outermost) regions, this study specifically focused on junior high school learners in Kupang Timur, East Nusa Tenggara. A total of 15 students across different grade levels participated in the research by delivering oral presentations of narratives that had been predetermined by the researcher. This design not only facilitated structured data collection but also offered insight into the recurring linguistic patterns and challenges encountered by students in linguistically and educationally marginalized contexts.

Focusing on the error analysis concerning surface linguistic taxonomy, this research adopted error analysis procedures proposed by Ellis (1994) consisting of collecting a sample, identifying errors, describing errors, explaining errors and evaluating errors. In the sample collecting step, the data was collected from the storytelling presentation of 15 students from Kupang Timur region and then the data of the storytelling presentation was transcribed for a better error identification process. Afterwards, the identified errors were described based on Dullay's Surface Linguistic Taxonomy for an effective explanation in terms of error frequency and evaluation process. The error identification of students' oral storytelling presentation utilizing Dulay's is based on the following table:

Table 1: Analysis Guide Based on Errors' Criteria

Errors	Criteria
Omission	An omission of an element that should be

Addition	present in a well-formed sentence A presence of an element which should not be presence in a well-formed sentence
Misformation	The use of a well-formed grammar in place of another grammar form
Misordering	Incorrect order of morpheme in sentence

On the other hand, the error percentage was calculated by utilizing the formula:

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

P: Error percentage

F: Error frequency

N: Total number of Errors

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on Dulay's taxonomy, there are four types of errors identified from the students' oral presentation of storytelling such as omission, addition, misinformation

and misordering. The results of error identification from the students' presentation are described in the following table:

Table 2. The Total Errors Committed by the Students

No	Types of Error	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Omission	35	47%
2.	Addition	20	27%
3.	Misformation	15	20%
4.	Misordering	5	6%
	Total	75	100%

The table above illustrates that the highest percentage of errors committed by the students fall under the category of omission (47%) followed by addition (27%), misinformation (20%) and misordering (6%).

Omission

Omission errors are the result of the absence of necessary components in a

sentences or utterance (Dulay, 1982). The students participating in this research omitted important elements in the utterances of their oral presentation which rendered them unable to construct good utterances in the target language as they presented their English storytelling. The distribution of omission error types committed by the students is illustrated in the following table.

Table 3. Distribution of Omission Errors

No	Types of Error	Sample of Errors	Correct Forms	Number of Errors	(%)
1.	Omission of to be	<i>He (the elephant) not like anything you said</i>	<i>He is not like anything you said</i>	15	42.8%
		<i>He (the elephant) exactly like a wall</i>	<i>He is exactly like a wall</i>		
		<i>Anyone can see that the elephant like a snake</i>	<i>Anyone can see that the elephant is like a snake</i>		

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2.	Omission of possessive apostrophe	<i>The first one happened to put his hand on the elephant side</i>	<i>The first one happened to put his hand on the elephant's side</i>	12	34.2%
		<i>We must respect with other people opinions</i>	<i>We must respect with other people's opinions</i>		
		<i>The third happened to take the elephant tusk</i>	<i>The third happened to take the elephant's tusk</i>		
3.	Omission of –ing in continuous sentences	<i>When they were talk by the road</i>	<i>When they were talking by the road</i>	5	14.2%
		<i>When they were talk about the beast</i>	<i>When they were talking about the beast</i>		
4.	Omission of 'to' in to-infinitive sentences	<i>So they could get see him</i>	<i>So they could get to see him</i>	1	2.8
5.	Omission of preposition	<i>The elephant was driven the road</i>	<i>The elephant was driven down the road</i>	2	6%
Total				35	100%

In terms of omission error types, the table above indicates that the two most common errors that the students committed in their oral presentation of storytelling are *the omission of to be* with 42.8 % of errors and *omission of possessive apostrophe* consisting of 34.2% of errors. Other omission error types are of minor percentage such as *omission of –ing in continuous sentences* (14.2%), *omission of –to in to infinitive sentences* (2.8%) and *omission of prepositions* (6%).

The most common omission errors committed by the students were the omission of “to be” (42.8%) and the omission of possessive apostrophes (34.2%). Such dominant errors indicate that junior high school students in Kupang Timur generally struggle with the comprehension of basic sentence construction and proper grammatical structure. Furthermore, these findings coincided with the previous findings of the study conducted by Susilowati et al. (2024) which indicated that omission was the leading error of the oral presentations among the university students. However, the severity of the omitted elements in this study such as “*He (the elephant) exactly like a wall, he (the*

elephant) not like anything you said, we must respect with other people opinions, the third happened to take the elephant tusk” reveals an even elementary syntactic development among the students in 3T region. Therefore, such prevalent omission errors among the junior high schools in Kupang Timur reveal the challenges of internalising grammatical rules when embarking on an earlier stage of grammatical development. In addition, such challenges were also reported by Devi Syahfira Nakul & Banatul Murtafi'ah (2024) revealing the prevalent struggles among students in 3T regions who often experience constant interference of their mother tongue which affects the sentence constructions in the target language such as the use of “to be” in nominal sentences which is not the case in the sentence construction of their mother tongue.

Addition

Addition errors arise when unnecessary elements are added to the utterances which renders the utterances incorrect in terms of the linguistic basis of the target language. In the oral presentation of the storytelling of the students, several

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addition errors were identified as illustrated in the following table.

Table 4. Distribution of Addition Errors

No	Types of Error	Sample of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Addition of to be	<i>They were asked the driver to let them see the elephant</i>	13	65%
		<i>The fourth blind man was only felt the elephant's leg</i>		
		<i>They were called each other bad names</i>		
		<i>Phytias was stood at the door</i>		
		<i>They were asked the driver to stop</i>		
2.	Addition of preposition	<i>We must respect with other people</i>	7	35%
		<i>The fifth blind man put with his hand of the elephant's tail</i>		
Total			20	100%

The table above illustrates the distribution of addition error types committed by the students in their oral presentation of storytelling. The data indicates that nearly more than half (65%) of the addition errors were concerning the *addition of to be* in the utterances. On the other hand, the remaining addition error type is related to the *addition of preposition* (35%).

The addition errors committed by the junior high school students in Kupang Timur accounts for 20% of the total errors, higher than the data of the previous research conducting by Susilowati et al. (2024) which accounts for only 14.7%. The elementary errors committed by the students such as *they were asked the driver to let them see the elephant*, *the fourth blind man was only felt the elephant's leg*, *we must respect with other people* and *the fifth blind man put with his hand of the elephant's tail* reveal the common challenges by the students concerning the interference of the mother

tongue leading to the frequent use of prepositions commonly accepted in their mother tongue but not in the target language. In addition, the recurrent addition of *to be past (was, were)* in the verbal past sentences indicates an overgeneralisation of grammatical rules leading to the overreliance on memorized language chunks rather than rule-based construction. Consequently, as reported by Pajangu et al. (2024), the students coming from most 3T regions tend to replicate patterns without any strong grammatical understanding.

Misformation

The result of misformation errors is the ungrammatical sentences or utterances. Misformation errors are related to the misuse of structure or morpheme which results in grammatically incorrect utterances. In the oral presentation of the storytelling, several misformation errors were committed by the students in their presentation which can be illustrated in the following table.

Table 5. Distribution of Misformation Errors

No	Types of Error	Sample of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
		<i>Our opinions are different</i>		

	<i>with others</i>		
1.	Misformation of preposition <i>They didn't agree to each other</i> <i>People are not interested with other opinions</i>	5	33%
2.	Misformation of plural form <i>They could feel what kind of animals he was</i> <i>Put me in place of my friends, Phytias</i> <i>The elephants was driven down the road</i>	10	67%
Total		15	100%

The table above indicates that the most common misformation type of error is *the misformation of plural forms* consisting of 67% errors. Whereas the other error type constituting misformation error is *misformation of preposition* (33%).

The data above reveals two primary challenges encountered by the junior high school students in Kupang Timur as they presented their oral storytelling presentation. The recurrent error that the students committed is the interference of the mother tongue leading to the misformation of prepositions such as *they didn't agree to each other*, *they could feel what kind of animals he was* and *people are not interested with other opinions*. Such misformation of preposition errors occurred due to their unfamiliarity with the correct syntactic rules in the target language which led them to use the prepositions based on the sentence structures

of their mother tongue. As for the misformation of plural forms such as *the elephants was driven down the road*, *put me in place of my friends, Phytias* and *they could feel what kind of animals he was*, these errors indicated that even though the students were aware of the existence of grammatical rules concerning plural nouns, they failed to implement it in their oral presentation. Hence, these findings were consistent with the study reported by Supriadi (2021) highlighting the consistent challenges in terms of inflection such as pluralization.

Misordering

Misordering errors occur when morphemes or words are arranged incorrectly in the utterances or sentences. The following table reveals the indication of misordering error types committed by the students in their oral presentation of storytelling.

Table 6. Distribution of Misordering Errors

No	Types of Error	Sample of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Misordering of modifiers	<i>The tyrant evil was surprised</i> <i>The king on the throne angry</i> <i>When they were told that the beast great was before them</i>	3	60%
2.	Misordering of object placement	<i>A need in friend is a friend indeed</i> <i>Pythias greeted Damon and gave to the guard</i>	2	40%

himself up

Total**5****100%**

Constituting the smallest percentage of error category, the table above illustrates the distribution of misordering error types. From the oral presentation of storytelling of the students, the most common type of error is *misordering of modifiers* consisting of 60% errors and followed by the other minor error such as *misordering of object placement* (40%).

Despite the small number of misordering errors committed by the students in their oral presentation, these findings indicate significant insights into the students' basic understanding of sentence constructions in English. The misordering of modifiers such as *the tyrant evil was surprised, the king on the throne angry, when they were told that the beast great was before them, a need in friend is a friend indeed* and *Pythias greeted Damon and gave to the guard himself up* reveals students' difficulty in properly arranging the adjectives and nouns as modifiers in their oral presentation. Misordering errors were reported to be the most dominant issues in written translation among the students in Kupang (2024) and based on this current study, such issues remain consistent and even more challenging concerning oral presentation where pressure and preparation could affect the students' oral storytelling presentation.

The aforementioned findings reveal the prevalent linguistic challenges experienced among the secondary students in 3T region of Kupang Timur in oral presentation. The recurring errors concerning foundational English sentence construction and constant interference of the mother tongue reveal a greater concern. Despite the integration of English as a compulsory subject in the curriculum, students from geographically and economically disadvantaged regions such as 3T regions

often experience greater challenged in English language learning (Febriana et al., 2018; Vail, 2023; Jaya et al., 2022; Aji Tamara Putra et al., 2023; Nurul Dwi Uddiniyah & Efa Silfia, 2020; Devi Syahfira Nakul & Banatul Murtafi'ah, 2024). These issues were evident as suggested from the errors committed by the students in their oral storytelling presentation. In addition, the widespread errors concerning omission and addition indicate the students struggle with even the elementary elements of grammatical understanding to properly construct correct English sentences.

5. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to examine surface linguistic errors manifested in the oral storytelling performances of junior high school students in Kupang Timur, a region categorized within Indonesia's 3T (Underdeveloped, Frontier, and Outermost) areas. Utilizing Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy as the analytical framework, the study identified key patterns in the types, frequency, and characteristics of linguistic inaccuracies. Findings revealed that omission and addition errors emerged as the most prevalent, underscoring persistent linguistic deficits in students' spoken English proficiency. These recurring error types reflect a broader issue of limited grammatical competence, likely stemming from inadequate exposure to structured English instruction and constrained speaking opportunities within the local educational context.

The prominence of these surface errors points to an urgent need for pedagogical strategies that emphasize foundational grammar in communicative contexts. Therefore, English instruction in such under-resourced regions should prioritize grammar-integrated speaking exercises, with consistent teacher-led feedback and scaffolded practice to reinforce accurate usage. Teachers should design classroom environments that foster sustained

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oral interaction, error awareness, and corrective reinforcement.

Future research is recommended to adopt longitudinal or intervention-based designs to explore the efficacy of grammar-focused speaking instruction in 3T contexts. Additionally, comparative studies across various 3T regions could offer broader insights into regional variations and inform context-sensitive pedagogical models for improving oral language development.

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