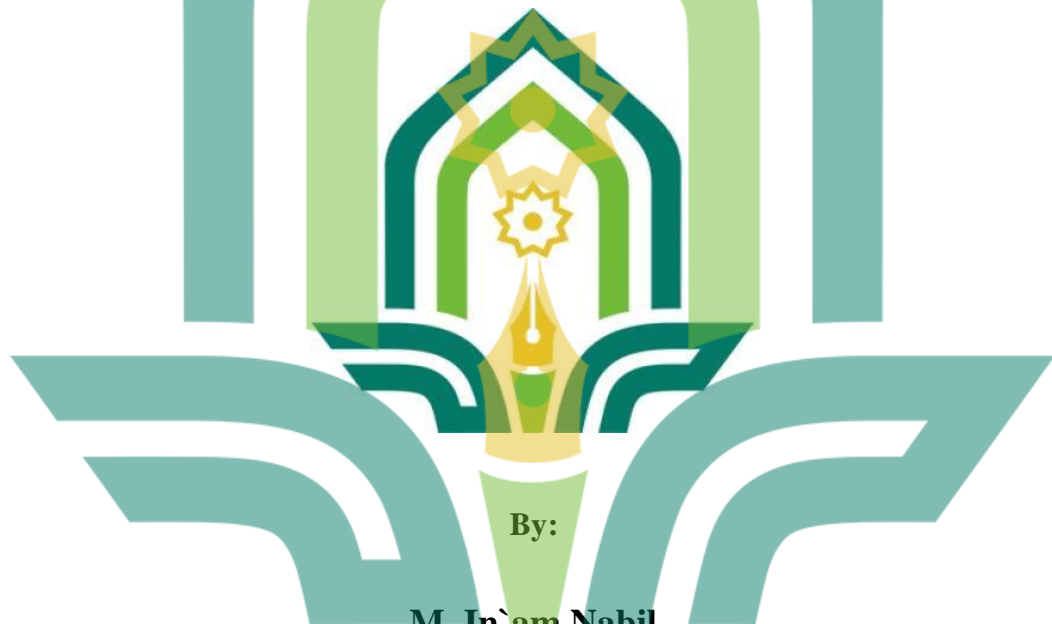


**"GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY IN UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' THESIS PROPOSAL WRITING: A
STUDY OF TENSES, SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT,
AND PUNCTUATIONS"**

A THESIS

**Submitted to fulfill one of the Requirement for *Sarjana* Degree
in English Education Department**



By:

M. In`am Nabil

2519005

**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID
PEKALONGAN**

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2025

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Kepada

Yth. Dekan FTIK UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan
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di
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Assalamu'alaikum W.W.

Setelah diadakan penelitian dan perbaikan, maka bersama ini saya kirimkan naskah skripsi:

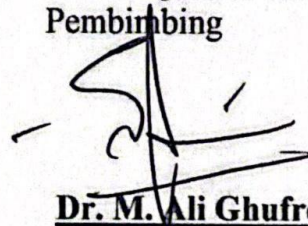
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Judul : **"GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' THESIS PROPOSAL WRITING: A STUDY OF TENSES, SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT, AND PUNCTUATION"**

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Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatian bapak/Ibu, saya sampaikan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum W.W.

Pekalongan, 23 Juni 2025
Pembimbing



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APPROVAL SHEET

The dean of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, approved this thesis by

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Has been established through an examination held on Monday, 30th June 2025 and accepted in partial fulfillments of requirements for the degree of Sarjana Pendidikan (S.Pd.)

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With the deepest sincerity, I express my endless gratitude to Allah SWT, the Almighty, the Supreme Teacher of all mankind, by will this undergraduate thesis has been completed. May this humble work bring blessings and benefits to the field of English education. I also send my prayers and peace upon Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the truthful and trustworthy, who illuminated the path of truth and guided us from darkness and selfishness. May Allah's mercy and blessings always be upon him. No words can fully express my gratitude for his courage and greatness in guiding us to truth. I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has contributed to the completion of this work. Without your unwavering support and selfless assistance, this thesis would have remained only a distant dream.

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2. I would like to sincerely thank my thesis supervisor, Mr. Dr. M. Ali Ghufon, M.Pd., for her invaluable guidance and support throughout the process of writing this thesis.
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4. To all my dear friends and fellow students, I express my gratitude and pride for having you as companions in my academic journey, including all English Education Department students of 2019.
5. As I reach the end of my college journey, I thank myself for the hard work and self-belief that have brought me to this point. This reminds me that new challenges await, and I am determined to keep striving for the future and to be the best in my entire family line.



MOTTO

“Life doesn’t stop when someone doesn’t choose you, doesn’t stop when you make a mistake, and doesn’t stop when you are left behind. But all of them can change your life.”

M. In`am Nabil

“The future influences the present just as much as the past.”

Friedrich Nietzsche



ABSTRAK

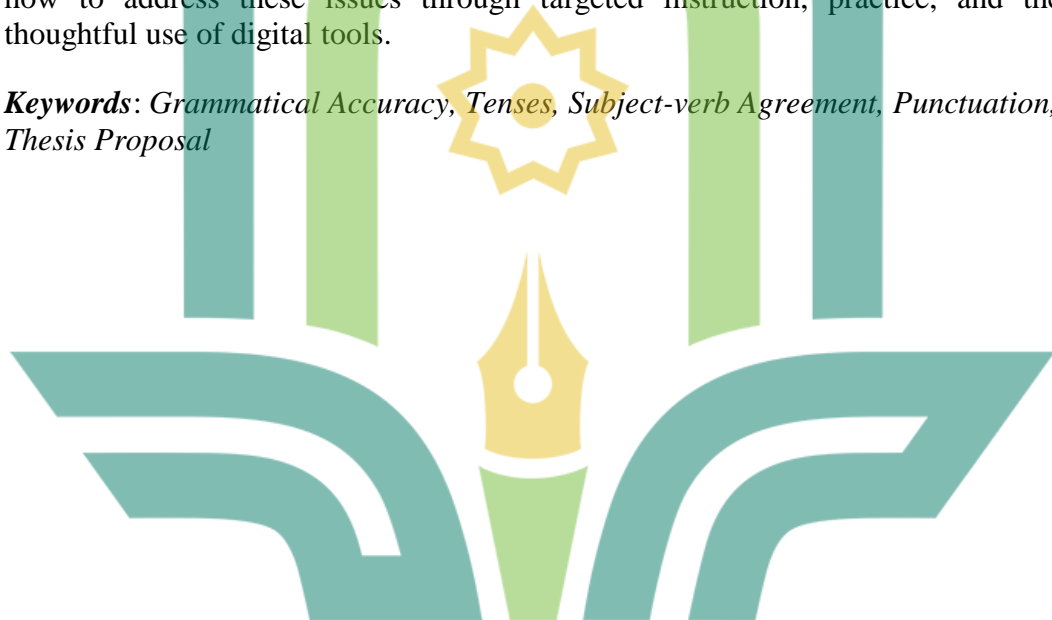
Penelitian kualitatif ini menyelidiki kesalahan tata bahasa yang umum terjadi terkait tenses, subject-verb agreement, dan tanda baca yang ditemukan dalam penulisan proposal tesis mahasiswa dan bagaimana kesalahan tata bahasa ini berdampak pada kualitas keseluruhan karya tulis mereka. Peneliti menggunakan analisis dokumen dan wawancara semi-terstruktur untuk mengumpulkan data dan menggunakan analisis kesalahan oleh (Richards, 1971) untuk analisis kesalahan dan (Braun & Clarke, 2006) analisis tematik untuk analisis data. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tanda baca adalah jenis kesalahan yang paling sering ditemukan dalam tulisan siswa dengan total 42 kemunculan (72,5%). Kesalahan tata bahasa dalam bentuk kalimat adalah jenis kesalahan kedua yang paling sering muncul dalam tulisan siswa dengan total 12 kemunculan (20,5%). Jenis kesalahan terakhir yang muncul dalam tulisan siswa adalah pada subject-verb agreement dengan total 4 kemunculan (7%). Penelitian ini diakhiri dengan rekomendasi untuk siswa, pendidik, dan peneliti di masa depan tentang cara mengatasi masalah ini melalui instruksi yang ditargetkan, latihan, dan penggunaan alat digital yang bijaksana.

Kata kunci: Akurasi Tata Bahasa, Bentuk Kata, Kesepakatan Kata Kerja, Tanda Baca, Proposal Tesis

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated the common grammatical errors related to tenses, subject-verb agreement, and punctuation marks found in university students' thesis proposal writing and how do these grammatical errors contribute to the overall quality of their written work. The researcher used document analysis and semi-structured interviews to collect data. Then, used error analysis by Richards (1971) for error analysis and Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis for data analysis. The findings showed that punctuation is the most frequent type of error found in students' writing with a total of 42 occurrences (72,5%). Grammatical errors in tenses are the second most frequent type of errors in students' writing with a total of 12 occurrences (20,5%). The last type of error that appears in students' writing is in subject-verb agreement with a total of 4 occurrences (7%). The study concluded with recommendations for students, educators, and future researchers on how to address these issues through targeted instruction, practice, and the thoughtful use of digital tools.

Keywords: *Grammatical Accuracy, Tenses, Subject-verb Agreement, Punctuation, Thesis Proposal*



PREFACE

All praises and gratitude are directed to Allah SWT, who has bestowed upon me His blessings, guidance, health, and patience to complete my thesis, entitled "Grammatical Accuracy in University Students' Thesis Proposal Writing: A Study of Tenses, Subject-verb Agreement, and Punctuation". This thesis is submitted to the English Education Department of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan as one of the requirements for obtaining a Bachelor of Education degree in the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. ...

1. Prof. Dr. H. Zaenal Mustakim, M.Ag. as the Rector of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
2. Prof. Dr. H. Muhlisin, M.Ag. as the Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
3. Mr. Ahmad Burhanuddin, M.A. as the Head of the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
4. Mr. Dr. M. Ali Ghufroon, M.Pd. as my supervisor who has provided guidance, support, and time during the writing of this thesis.
5. All lecturers and staff of the English Education Department, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, who have provided knowledge, support, and information.

6. My beloved parents who have given me endless support, prayer, advice, and motivation during the writing of this thesis.
7. My beloved family who provides endless prayers, support and advice motivation during the writing pf this thesis.
8. As well as my friends who took part in providing support.
9. All parties who have contributed to the writing of this thesis.
10. As I mark the end of my college journey, I express gratitude for myself, for the hard work and trust that have brought me to this point. All parties who have contributed to the writing of this thesis.

Pekalongan, 20 Juni 2025


The Researcher

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is one of the productive skills for learners to achieve ensure communicative competence (Fitria, 2021). The study of grammatical accuracy in writing is an essential area of research in the field of language acquisition and education (Suryani, 2020). As writing is a crucial skill in academic and professional settings, the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences is vital for effective communication (Parmawati, 2018). As a matter of fact, grammar is one of the language components that is very instrumental in English as a foreign language (EFL) writing. In academic writing, EFL students' writing quality will show their intelligibility and comprehension, which is always underscored in higher education (Yang, 2018).

University students, who are often at a higher level of academic achievement, are expected to demonstrate proficiency in writing, especially when it comes to mastering the particulars of English grammar (Tukan, 2024). To be grammatically correct is a must because it is also one of the criteria determining the quality of writing as well as enhancing the comprehension of readers (Astawa, 2017). Students must be aware of numerous grammatical rules, from sentence structure and forms to even the use of articles besides developing their ideas to write (Ibda, 2019).

Due to this complexity, students can feel discouraged and demotivated to learn writing (Karyuatry, 2018).

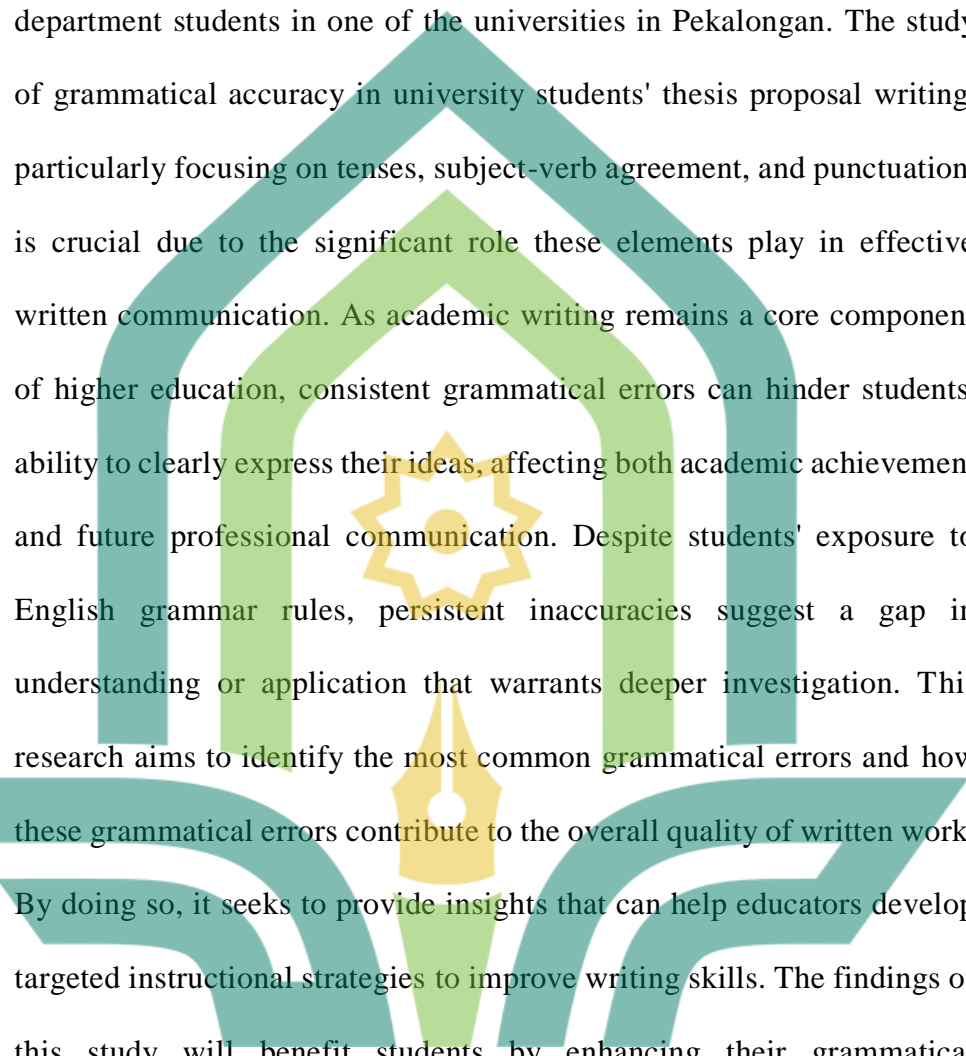
One type of academic writing that university students struggle with is when writing a thesis proposal (Barus, 2022). In the Indonesian setting, this type of writing is called *proposal skripsi*. Articulating the objectives, presenting the gap from previous studies, reviewing relevant literature, and describing the proposed methodology is a new experience for students (Sagala, 2018). This document is an embryo, a crucial element, and a significant step of the whole process defining the success of undergraduate thesis writing that contains the plan and design of research (Yanti, 2018). Many students continue to face challenges in their writing in thesis proposals, particularly when it comes to using appropriate tenses, subject-verb agreement, and punctuation (Erdel, 2024).

Tense is one of the significant aspects of thesis proposal writing. The role of tenses is not only in locating situations in time relative to speech time but also in relating situations in time relative to one another to form temporally coherent discourse (Jufrizal, 2018). Attention is paid to the relations between tenses (Ratnaningsih, 2019). Students who study English as a second or foreign language sometimes struggle to comprehend its grammar, especially its tenses (Rusdin, 2022).

On the other hand, subject-verb agreement also is equally important to learn (Jackson, 2018). The agreement between the subject and the verb is the relationship between two grammatical units in which one of them

displays a particular feature that is suitable with a displayed feature in the other (Hasanah, 2020). A brief description of subject-verb agreement also comes from (Hidayatullah, 2017), where they state that subject-verb agreement demands that a subject in the singular be followed by a finite verb in the singular and that a subject in the plural be followed by a finite verb in the plural.

Another element not less important is punctuation. Punctuation is an attempt to compensate. It entails using punctuation (commas, periods, dashes, colons, interrogation points, and so on) to help the reader understand what is being said (Wati, 2021). Most students produce the text and ignore the punctuation in the writing process (Păiș, 2021). They may be perfectly capable of using proper punctuation, but they accidentally overlook it due to the numerous other demands on their time (Hussain, 2021). The text message may not be easily understood or may be misleading without correct punctuation. For example, "Let's eat, Mom" and "Let's eat Mom" are significant differences. As a result, it's critical to assist them in becoming more automatic in applying the rules. Regarding this, (Hutauruk, 2016) stated that, commonly, English learners demonstrate their ability in writing form by communicating experience and knowledge. It may be demonstrated that there are flaws to be found in the selection of acceptable words, grammar, and punctuation usage in writing.



Based on the problem described above, the researcher is interested in analyzing the grammatical faults in thesis proposal writing of English department students in one of the universities in Pekalongan. The study of grammatical accuracy in university students' thesis proposal writing, particularly focusing on tenses, subject-verb agreement, and punctuation, is crucial due to the significant role these elements play in effective written communication. As academic writing remains a core component of higher education, consistent grammatical errors can hinder students' ability to clearly express their ideas, affecting both academic achievement and future professional communication. Despite students' exposure to English grammar rules, persistent inaccuracies suggest a gap in understanding or application that warrants deeper investigation. This research aims to identify the most common grammatical errors and how these grammatical errors contribute to the overall quality of written work. By doing so, it seeks to provide insights that can help educators develop targeted instructional strategies to improve writing skills. The findings of this study will benefit students by enhancing their grammatical competence and overall writing quality and support educators and curriculum developers in designing more effective grammar instruction tailored to actual student needs.

1.2 Identification of the Problems

Academic writing, particularly thesis proposal writing, requires a high degree of grammatical accuracy to ensure clarity, coherence, and credibility.

When writing a thesis proposal, the accurate use of tense is critical in the writing, as it helps explain research background, current knowledge, and proposed future work. Subject-verb agreement is also a fundamental grammatical rule in thesis proposal writing that requires verbs to agree in number with their subjects. Further, correct punctuation is essential for conveying meaning and ensuring textual coherence. However, numerous studies have indicated that university students continue to exhibit difficulties in applying fundamental grammatical rules. Among the most frequently observed issues are incorrect tense usage, errors in subject-verb agreement, and inappropriate punctuation. These errors not only compromise the readability of academic texts but also reflect a lack of linguistic competence that may affect students' academic success and professional awareness.

1.3 Limitation of the Problems

The scope of this study covered university students in Pekalongan as English language learners who have completed academic writing and English grammar courses. The researcher explored in more detail the common mistakes made by university students in writing thesis proposals related to tenses, subject-verb agreement, and punctuations.

1.4 Formulation of the Problems

1. What are the common grammatical errors related to tenses, subject-verb agreement, and punctuation marks found in university students' thesis proposal writing?

2. How do these grammatical errors contribute to the overall quality of their written work?

1.5 Aim of the Study

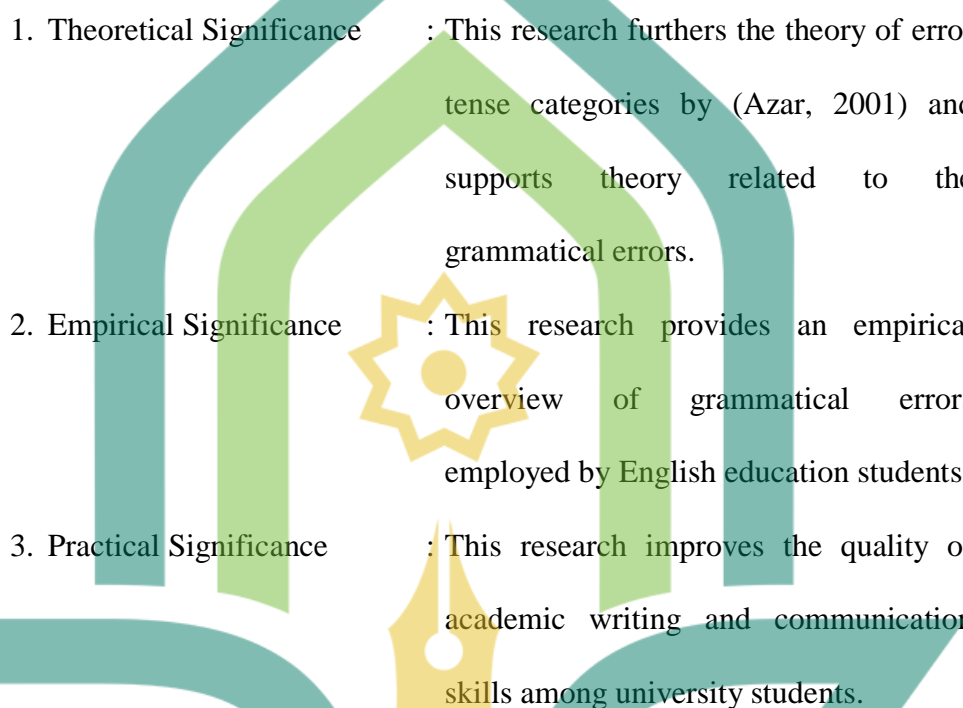
1. Analyzing the common grammatical errors related to tenses, subject-verb agreement, and punctuation marks found in university students' thesis proposal writing.
2. Analyzing how grammatical errors contribute to the overall quality of their written work.

1.6 Operational Definition

1. Grammatical accuracy/error: Grammatical errors can be defined as the errors that involve a failure to conform with the standard in supplying any portion of word classes: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, and preposition (Liao, 2016).
2. University students : University students were defined as undergraduate or postgraduate ('graduate') students, regardless of their mode of enrolment (e.g., full-time, part-time, on-campus, or online) (Matošková, 2015).
3. Thesis proposal writing : A thesis proposal is a document that outlines three chapters detailing key components:

introduction, theoretical framework, and research methodology (Kivunja, 2016).

1.7 Significances of the Research

- 
1. Theoretical Significance : This research furthers the theory of error tense categories by (Azar, 2001) and supports theory related to the grammatical errors.
 2. Empirical Significance : This research provides an empirical overview of grammatical errors employed by English education students.
 3. Practical Significance : This research improves the quality of academic writing and communication skills among university students.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter synthesizes key findings from the study, drawing upon the conclusions and discussions presented regarding grammatical accuracy in university students' thesis proposal writing. Furthermore, it provides actionable recommendations for relevant stakeholders, including students, instructors, educational institutions, and future researchers, as constructive follow-ups to the study's outcomes.

4.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings and analysis, it can be concluded that grammatical accuracy plays a vital role in shaping the quality of university students' thesis proposals. Among the most prominent issues found were errors related to the use of tenses. Many students struggled to maintain consistency in tense usage, especially in the research design section. These errors often led to confusion about whether the actions described were completed or planned, which affected the clarity of the proposal.

In terms of subject-verb agreement, most participants demonstrated a basic understanding, as reflected by the relatively low number of errors. However, the mistakes that did occur were usually found in longer or more complex sentences where the subject and verb were not placed closely together. These instances suggest that while students may be familiar with

the rules, they tend to overlook them when writing more elaborate sentences. Therefore, greater attention is needed when drafting complex academic content to ensure accuracy.

Punctuation errors were more common, particularly involving periods and commas. These mistakes were often found in the way students cited previous studies or structured their sentences. Misuse of punctuation affected the flow and readability of the proposals, sometimes making the intended meaning unclear. This highlights the need for a stronger emphasis on teaching proper punctuation use in academic writing, as it significantly contributes to the overall coherence of a text.

The combined contribution of these grammatical issues directly influences the overall quality of thesis proposal writing. Although the content and research ideas may be strong, poor grammar and weak writing mechanics can undermine the professionalism and credibility of the work. Clear, grammatically correct writing helps convey ideas more effectively and allows readers to engage with the research without distraction or confusion.

To improve the quality of students' thesis proposals, it is essential for academic programs to provide targeted support in grammar and academic writing. Workshops, writing tutorials, and the integration of AI-based grammar tools can assist students in identifying and correcting errors. However, these tools should be used as aids rather than

replacements for independent thinking and writing practice. With the right support and consistent effort, students can develop stronger writing skills and produce higher quality academic work.

4.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions presented, the researcher acknowledges that this study still has certain limitations. Therefore, several recommendations are proposed to enhance grammatical accuracy in university students' thesis proposal writing. It is hoped that these recommendations can serve as a useful reference for EFL learners, educators, and future researchers in developing more optimal and sustainable learning strategies.

1. EFL Learners

First, for EFL learners, it is important to actively engage in improving their understanding of English grammar, particularly in the areas of tenses, subject-verb agreement, and punctuations. Students are encouraged to regularly practice academic writing and seek feedback from peers, mentors, or writing centers. In addition, the use of trusted AI-based tools such as Grammarly and QuillBot can be helpful in identifying common errors. However, students should use these tools critically and avoid relying on them entirely. Independent practice and awareness of grammatical rules remain essential for long-term improvement.

2. Educators

Second, for educators, more emphasis should be placed on integrating grammar instruction into academic writing courses. Teachers should provide explicit guidance on the correct use of tenses, subject-verb agreement, and punctuations in the context of research writing. Regular writing exercises, peer-review sessions, and individualized feedback can help students become more aware of their grammatical weaknesses. Educators are also encouraged to create opportunities for students to apply grammar rules in meaningful writing tasks that reflect real academic situations, such as writing literature reviews or research proposals.

3. Future Researchers

Lastly, for future researchers, this study opens several avenues for further exploration. Future studies could involve a larger and more diverse sample to examine whether similar grammatical issues occur across different fields of study or educational institutions. Researchers might also investigate the effectiveness of specific teaching strategies or digital tools in reducing grammar errors among EFL students. Additionally, a longitudinal study could be conducted to assess how students' writing skills develop over time with consistent support and feedback.

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