

**EXAMINING THE CHALLENGES OF GRAMMAR IN SPOKEN  
ENGLISH : A STUDY ON STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES**

**THESIS**

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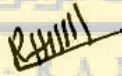
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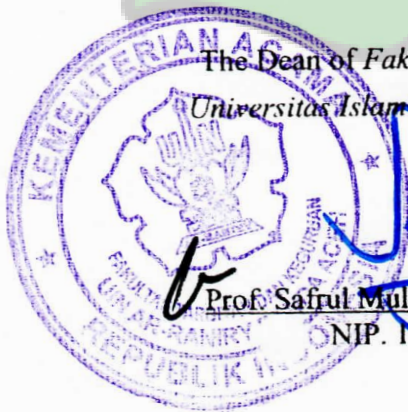


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Menyatakan dengan sesungguhnya bahwa skripsi yang berjudul :

### **Exploring Students Challenges In Mastering Grammar**

**Adalah benar-benar karya saya, kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya.** Apabila terdapat kesalahan dan kekeliruan di dalamnya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggung jawab saya. Demikianlah surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya.

Banda Aceh, 12 April 2025

Saya yang membuat pernyataan



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## ABSTRACT

Name : Raisha Az Zahra  
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This study aims to examine the number of students in Islamic boarding schools who still struggle with using grammar correctly. Grammar, in this context, refers to the rules that govern sentence structure, verb usage, and word order in English (Ur, 2012) and to explore the reasons behind their difficulties in achieving better grammatical accuracy in English. Despite having exposure to English learning, many students continue to face challenges in constructing grammatically correct sentences, which affects their overall language proficiency. This research investigates factors contributing to these difficulties, including first-language interference, teaching methods, and learning environments. For example, students whose first language is Indonesian may say “She go to school” instead of “She goes to school” due to the absence of subject-verb agreement in Indonesian. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through observations and questionnaires to identify key challenges and patterns in students' grammar usage. The findings highlight the need for more effective teaching strategies and supportive learning environments to improve students' grammatical competence. This study provides valuable insights into enhancing grammar instruction in Islamic boarding schools, helping students develop stronger English communication skills.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of five parts, starting from background of study, research question, research aims, significance of study and terminology.

### **A. Background of Study**

Grammar is the cornerstone of effective communication, both in writing and speaking. In academic and professional contexts, students' ability to express their thoughts clearly and correctly is paramount to their success. However, many students, particularly those learning English as a second or foreign language, face significant challenges in mastering grammar. These challenges not only affect their overall language proficiency but also hinder their academic performance and communication skills. The complexity of English grammar, interference from students' native languages, and traditional teaching methods are among the key factors that contribute to these difficulties.

The problem begins with the inherent complexity of English grammar itself. With its vast array of rules concerning verb tenses, articles, sentence structure, and parts of speech, English grammar can be particularly challenging for non-native speakers. For instance, the use of articles in English can be difficult for students whose native languages do not require articles, leading to frequent omissions or misuse. Similarly, English tenses and word order differ significantly from those in many other languages, creating confusion for students as they try to apply these rules correctly. In addition, the presence of numerous exceptions to grammar rules

further complicates the learning process, making it even more difficult for students to internalize and apply the rules consistently.

Moreover, students' first languages often interfere with their understanding and use of English grammar. Language interference, a common issue in second language acquisition, occurs when students apply the grammatical rules and structures of their native language to English, resulting in errors. For example, students whose first language does not have a future tense may struggle to grasp the concept of tense usage in English. Similarly, students from languages with different sentence structures may find it difficult to form sentences in the correct English word order, leading to grammatical mistakes. This linguistic interference can create confusion and frustration for learners, preventing them from fully mastering the grammatical rules necessary for effective communication.

In addition to these linguistic challenges, the methods used in teaching grammar often fail to address the complexities of language learning in a way that engages students. Traditional approaches to grammar instruction, which often rely on rote memorization of rules and repetitive exercises, tend to treat grammar as a set of isolated, abstract concepts rather than as a tool for meaningful communication. Such methods do not provide students with opportunities to apply grammar in real-life contexts, leaving them unprepared to use grammar effectively in everyday interactions. This lack of engagement and practical application can lead to disengagement and diminished motivation, as students may fail to see the relevance of grammar in their lives.

The formulation of the problem lies in the realization that these challenges – the inherent difficulty of English grammar, interference from students' first languages, and ineffective grammar teaching methods – all contribute to students' struggles with mastering grammar. This creates a cycle of frustration and disengagement that prevents students from developing the necessary skills to communicate effectively in English. In turn, this affects their academic performance, as grammar is crucial not only for writing assignments but also for speaking exams, presentations, and other forms of academic assessment.

The main objective of this study is to identify and understand the specific challenges that students face in mastering English grammar. By examining the role of first-language interference, the impact of teaching methods, and students' perceptions of grammar instruction, the study aims to uncover the root causes of these difficulties. The research also seeks to explore the effectiveness of current grammar teaching practices in addressing these challenges. Additionally, the study will examine how these difficulties affect students' overall language proficiency and their ability to communicate effectively in academic and real-world contexts.

In response to these issues, this study will propose several solutions to improve grammar instruction and support students in overcoming their difficulties. One potential solution is to shift from traditional grammar teaching methods to more interactive, communicative approaches that emphasize the practical application of grammar. Task-based learning, for example, encourages students to use grammar in meaningful tasks, such as debates, writing assignments, and discussions, allowing them to internalize grammatical rules in context. Another

solution is to provide more personalized feedback on students' grammar errors, helping them understand their mistakes and correct them in real-time. Incorporating technology into grammar instruction can also play a significant role, as digital tools and apps offer students the opportunity to practice grammar in a more engaging and individualized way. Finally, fostering a positive, supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes and asking questions can help reduce anxiety and encourage active participation in grammar learning. By addressing these issues and offering practical solutions, this study aims to enhance students' grammatical proficiency and overall language skills, ultimately helping them communicate more effectively in both academic and real-world settings.

### **B. Research Question**

In this thesis, the research question is what are the factors faced by the students that make them struggle with grammar in speaking?

### **C. Research Aim**

The purpose of this study is to find out the inhibiting factors in using grammar correctly. It also aims to explore why students still have difficulty speaking English with better grammar, even though they may have learned the rules. This research looked deeper into what causes these struggles and how they affect students' speaking performance.

### **D. Terminologies**

To avoid any confusion related to terms used in this research, the researcher define several terms for the general public to get insight from this research in its complete state.

## 1. Challenges

One of the biggest challenges students face in mastering grammar is the complexity and variety of rules in English. According to Krashen (1982), secondlanguage learners often struggle because they must not only understand new grammatical rules but also apply them correctly in different contexts. Another significant challenge is first-language interference, where students transfer the grammatical rules of their native language into English, often resulting in errors. For instance, learners whose first language does not use articles may omit them in English. Additionally, grammar can be difficult for students because it is not always explicitly taught in a way that encourages active use. James (1998) highlights that students often learn grammar rules through rote memorization, which doesn't always help them apply the rules in practical communication, leading to challenges in both writing and speaking.

## 2. Grammar

In this study, grammar refers to the structural components of the English language that are essential for constructing correct and meaningful sentences. These include verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, article usage, and sentence structure. The focus is limited to these areas, as they are the most observed difficulties among students in both written and spoken English in exploring students' challenges in mastering grammar, particularly for standardized tests like TOEFL and IELTS, several key issues arise. Grammatical interference from students' first languages often leads to errors in syntax and tense usage, particularly in TOEFL writing, where incorrect sentence structures can make lower scores. Morphological

complexity, such as issues with verb conjugations and article use, is a common struggle, especially for students from languages with minimal morphological variation. Overgeneralization of rules occurs when students incorrectly apply learned grammar rules to unfamiliar contexts, which is evident in TOEFL speaking tasks. Error fossilization is another challenge, with recurring mistakes like subject-verb agreement affecting TOEFL writing and speaking scores. Insufficient explicit grammar instruction limits students' understanding of advanced grammar, while cognitive overload in timed exams like TOEFL can cause students to make mistakes under pressure. Finally, students often struggle with contextualized grammar application, unable to adjust their grammar for different contexts, such as formal writing versus speaking tasks in the TOEFL. These challenges highlight the complexities of mastering grammar for high-stakes language proficiency exam.

