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"*What rain today?*": low students' questioning skills and The premature use of grammar

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study aims at highlighting students' ability in formulating questions words in English. This study is intended to make sure that students are able to express question words which enable them to communicate well in English. Therefore, a set of questions were administered and analyzed to identify the student's ability in developing question words. The study employed 40 student's English department at the 3rd semester at the odd semester 2022 in Universitas Islam Lamongan. Meanwhile, there were 5 categories of questions asked to the students involving auxiliary verb or yes/no questions. The results showed there were 14 and 11 students answering correctly for auxiliary 'do' there were 5 and 6 students correctly answered for question words using auxiliary 'does. Additionally, there were no correct answer regarding the question using the verb' rain'. The premature use of grammar and the insufficient knowledge on students' literacy on the use of question words are identified as the major cause of the students' difficulty in formulating good questions respectively. Further, there is also the effect of first language interference as well as the insufficient cognitive aspect on related vocabulary use.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The main function of language is to communicate and interact. In the context of mother tongue language or in the first language context, students will not face language barriers, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. However, in the context of a second language or foreign language, students who are not native speakers will face language barriers, which are mainly related to grammar or structural patterns, spelling, and vocabulary. Additionally, questioning skills and expertise are one of the keys to students' success in communicating. Asking and delivering questions considered as essential component of social challenges and critical thinking. The ability to ask and answer questions is at the core of learning. For a long time, questions have been an integral part of language learning.

Questions should play a central role in the learning process. Therefore, the teacher plays an important role in ensuring that students can formulate interrogative sentences according to the grammatical rules of the target language. Teachers need to plan appropriate learning patterns; the training materials they need according to the level of difficulty they are experiencing. As well as comprehensive questions to familiarize students with communicative question patterns.

The main focus in this study is on how students are able to communicate and interact in a foreign language well and fluently. In simple terms, interactive communication will occur when one party asks a question and the other party responds, answers, or responds. In fact, students have difficulty in formulating interrogative sentences constrained by their low grammatical skills in English (Male, 2013; Agustina, 2013; Larsen, 2015; Schenck, 2017). Several studies on error analysis have been carried out in the context of language learning, including on translation and the effect of language interference (Tyas, 2018). Analysis of errors in writing skills was also carried out in the context of higher education (Barnaba & Rahmawan, 2019; Ananda, Gani & Suhardin, 2014; Zhou, Busch, & Cumming, 2014; Harun, *et al*, 2020, Lailly, 2000, Milaningrum, 2018). In the context of speaking skills (Munandar & Damayanti, 2021) analyzing student errors by focusing on vowels.

Unraveling the mistakes made by students when formulating the question sentences, one of the factors that contributed to these errors was the influence of first language interference. This is supported by the opinion of Lightbown and Spada (2001:165) that most of the mistakes made when learning a language are caused by interference from the first language. This is especially the case if the learners do not learn the grammatical patterns of the target language properly, so that they are not trapped in the pattern of translating word for word, phrase per phrase or sentence per sentence. This will later be seen in the examples of sentences made by students in this study.

A study on first language interference was also conducted in Iran (Drakhshan & Karimi, 2015) which focused on the similarities and differences between the first language and the target language. By focusing on these two things, it will help students learn the target language patterns. Sinha, et al (2009) in a study in the context of higher education in India discussed that the limited use of the target language in the learning process was an inhibiting factor for language acquisition and learning given the strong interference of the first language. Thus, teacher exposure, massive and dominant feedback on the target language must be the main focus both in learning inside and outside the classroom.

Furthermore, Lightbown and Spada (2001) say another thing that must be considered in learning a foreign language is that language learning is mostly done by imitation, motivation is the main factor for a person's success in learning a language, simple and easy language patterns should be introduced and and taught before complex language patterns. And what is no less important is that the mistakes made by students must be corrected immediately so that the formation of bad habits is not formed. From these problems, the role of feedback is very important. Whether it's direct or indirect feedback, feedback from teachers or colleagues is still important.

Related to grammatical instruction and learning, several studies on grammatical learning have been carried out including on writing skills (Ananda, Gani & Suhardin, 2014) regarding the analysis of students' errors in writing skills. The interesting thing about the findings in this study is related to writing errors caused by low grammatical understanding so that it has an impact on the low quality of writing.

Further, still related to writing skills (Harun and Abdullah, 2020) in the context of students in Malaysia also face the same difficulties in grammar, in this case specifically on the use of tenses in addition to problems in cohesion and coherence, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. Pandapatan (2020) also analyzes grammatical abilities specifically on students' subject-verb agreements, the results of which show that student errors are caused by first language interference factors that affect the sentence patterns they make as well as limited vocabulary.

Previous studies conducted on error analysis in several language skills, such as writing, sentence patterns, grammar, vocabulary, and their relevance to first language interference have been carried out. Based on the observations and studies of researchers, there are not many studies that specifically investigate the

analysis of errors in formulating interrogative sentences. In fact, the ability to ask is very crucial in communicating. Thus, researchers are interested in knowing: (1). what mistakes did the students make in formulating the interrogative sentence? (2). what factors encountered these errors and recommendations for good practice to teachers in learning grammar based on context.

There are many categories of questioning skills. In this research, the questions related to communication skills are discussed as the followings: First, Open Questions. These are useful in getting another person to speak, they often begin with: What, why, When, Who, how. Sometimes they take the form of, 'Tell me about…' or 'Give me one examples of….'. Open questions can provide a great deal of information. Closed Questions, these questions require a "yes" or "no" answer. They should be used with care, however, as too many closed questions can damage rapport or shut down the conversation. Specific Question, these are used to determine facts, and like closed questions, they tend to elicit a one-word factual response e.g. "How much did you spend on that?". Probing questions, these check for more detail or clarification. Probing questions allow the students to explore specific areas. However, be careful because they can easily make people feel they are being interrogated. Hypothetical questions, these pose a theoretical situation in the future, e.g. "What would you do if….?". They can help others to think or consider what might happen in new situations and are particularly useful in interviews for example, to find out how people might behave at work. Reflective questions, these are 'mirror questions' that reflect back what you have heard and check understanding. You can also reflect back the speaker's feelings, which is useful when dealing with angry or difficult people, and in defusing emotional situations. Leading questions, these are used to gain acceptance of your view, or to influence someone through the use of a question. They are not useful in providing honest views and opinions. If you say to someone "You're not going to have to have the last piece of cake, are you?" then it's pretty clear how you feel about it. Experiment with using a series of different types of questions.

However, the category Closed Questions is implemented to investigate further the students' ability in formulating these questions. The closed questions are regarded as the easiest part of question category. For this reason, the researchers employed 5 questions which reflected on the instruments of in this research. These questions require a "yes" or "no" answer is implemented. They should be used with care, however, as too many closed questions can damage rapport or shut down the conversation.

Some studies related to grammar instruction were held. Bleghizadeh and Oladrstam (2011) compare the effectiveness of three instructional methodas: games, dialogued practiced through role-play, and unfocused task. This study implied that there is no difference between the types of methods applied. In other words, it is the opportunity for communication which counts and matters not the type of procedures applied. Meanwhile, another view is also suggested by Handoyo (2010) proposed semantico-syntactic translation practice appears to be an effective strategy to develop subconscious grammar competence when carried out through some procedure's practical procedures. First, a group of linguistic features to be taught is identified. Second, the group of linguistic features is then analyzed todetermine the sequence for presentattion. The third, the group of the sequenced linguistic features is broken down into a number of subgrooups, which are estimated to be still within the capacity limit of the students' short-term memory.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study investigates the ability of students to formulate question words in English, aiming to ensure that students can effectively use these structures to communicate. It was conducted at Universitas Islam Lamongan, the research targeted third-semester students in the English department during the odd semester of 2022. The study utilized a set of questions to assess students' abilities and identify difficulties in developing question words. The research is designed as a descriptive study aiming to evaluate and analyze students' proficiency in formulating question words in English.

The study involved 40 third-semester students from the English department at Universitas Islam Lamongan. These students were chosen because they were at an intermediate level of their English studies, making them ideal subjects for assessing the ability to formulate question words. Their responses provided a representative sample of the challenges faced by learners at this stage of English language acquisition. In collecting the data test was employed which consisted of questions designed to evaluate the students' ability to formulate 'yes/no' questions and questions involving auxiliary verbs

In this study, the researchers employed a flow method by using the theory from Ellis (1997) which includes, firstly collecting information from student test results. The test is made in the form of 5 questions

with a grid to identify students' difficulties in formulating simple interrogative sentences in the form of 'yes/no' questions. Second, identify errors and categorize them according to the typology of errors and calculate the percentage of these errors. Next, analyze and explain the causes of these errors based on the theories of language acquisition and language learning.

In analyzing the data identifying correct and incorrect responses, error categorization, and analyzing causes of errors were employed. The influence of students' native language on their English question formation was noted.

3.   RESULTS AND ANALYSIS
1. The analysis of the Students' Errors in Interrogative Questions
a. The Use of Interrogative Questions Using Auxiliary 'do'

The researchers provided some questions to find out know inverinvestigatePeneliti memberi instruksi pada mahasiswa untuk membuat kalimat pertanyaan dalam bahasa Inggris dengan kalimat 'Apakah kamu tahu ?'.
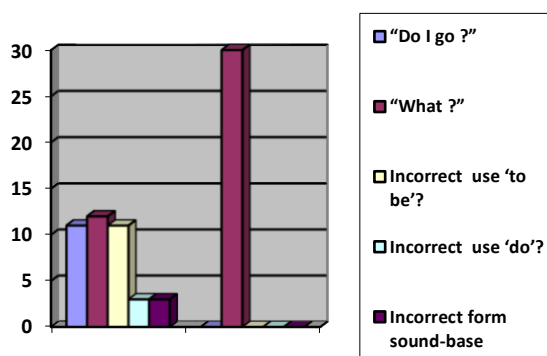
Chart 1
Question: "Apakah kamu pergi ?"
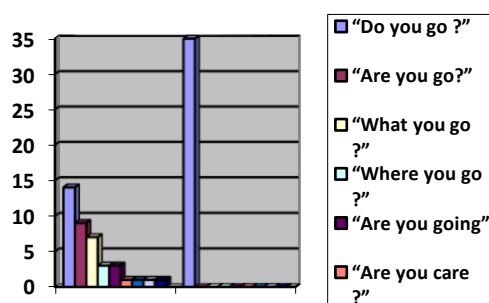
The correct answer "do you go ?" is 14 (35 %), answer. Students answered "are you go ?" is 9 (22,5 %). Students answered 'what you go ?' 7 (17,5 %). Students answered "where you go ?" 3 (7,5 %). Students answered "are you going ?" 3 (7,5 %). Students answered "are you care ?" 1 (2,5 %) . students answered "you go ?" 1 (2,5%). Students answered "do you going ?" (2,5 %). Students answered "how ?" 1 (2,5 %).

Although introgative sentence "Apakah kamu tahu ?" known as common questions and often uttered by the students, yet still there were many students unable to answer correctly. There were only total 14 students answered correctly out of 40 items.

Based on the table above, researchers can make categories of wrong answers with 9 types of errors. Among them the use of the word 'what' (what do you go ?, what do you go ?), where (where you go ?, where go do you go ?) as many as 3 students. Meanwhile, the use of what (what you go ?, what a you go ?, what do you go ?, what your going ?) was also written by 7 students. There is 1 student using how (how you to go?). In fact, there were also students who answered with Are you care? (1 student) which is actually very far from the context of the question being asked. In addition, there were also students who answered using interrogative intonation (u go?). This indicates that the pattern of asking questions that they usually use in their daily social language is also used in the pattern of English.

In chart 2, the researchers used a similar sentence pattern, namely by using the auxiliary verb 'do' this is intended so that researchers can see the consistency of student answers in answering similar questions. Thus it can be used as a measure of the reliability of the answer.

Chart 2
Question: "Apakah saya pergi ?"

Based on the results from chart 2, there were 11 students answered "do I go ?" or (27,5 %), there were 12 studnts answered "what ?" or (30 %). Meanwhile, there were incorrect use of "to be" 11 students (27,5 %) and 3 students wrote incorrect use "do" (3,75 %), and also 3 incorrect form sound-base many 3 (7,5) were written by the students.

As found in table 1, there are similarities in the results of the answers in table 1 and table 2 or in the answers to questions 1 and 2. The following are the mistakes made by students in formulating interrogative sentences with various types. The use of the word 'what' is 12 variants (*what is I am to go ?, what me go ?, what I'm go ?, what do I go ?, what I am go ?, what are I go ?, what I am going ?, what ever go does, what ever go back ?).* Errors made by students by using 'what' in making interrogative sentences, are clearly interference from the use of the first language (first language interference). In Indonesian, all question words that begin with whether, automatically for students who do not understand English grammar, will use 'what' as the question word used.

Meanwhile, there were 11 students formulated interrogative questions using 'to be' (*are me go ?, are am going ?, are I am go ?, are I going ?, are me going ?, I are go ?, am I go*). The use of 'to be' in interrogative sentences containing verbs, shows premature knowledge in English grammar, where 'to be' is only used in nominal sentences, not in verbal sentences when compiling interrogative sentences.

Further, the incorrect use of 'do' (*do I gone ?, do I went ?, do you go ?*) were also done by the students. Those three answers explained the confusion in using the 2nd form of the verb and the 3rd form which should use the first form (verb.1). As in the analysis of the previous explanation, the error is caused by the lack of knowledge of English grammar pattern.

Another form of students' answers are the use intonation of interrogative question. This can be seen from the following examples (*I go ?, I am go ?, I am going ?*) which emphasized on the intonation. This kind of question is influenced by model of questioning in *bahasa* and in jJvanesse language as well.

b. The Use of Interrogative Questions Using Auxiliary 'does'

In the next table (table 3 and 4), the auxiliary verb used 'does'. This research aims to determine whether students are able to distinguish and formulate interrogative sentences with the use of different subjects. The results can be seen in chart 3 as follows:

Chart 3
Question: "Apakah dia (lk) pergi ?"
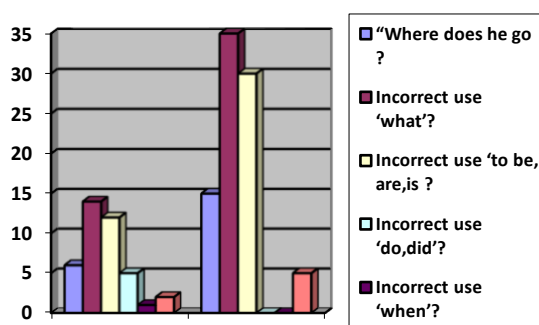
As can be seen from chart 3, there were 6 students answered "where does he go ?" or (15 %). While, there were 14 students wrote incorrect use 'what' or around 35 %. The incorrect use 'to be, are, is ? were also done by 12 students (30 %). The incorrect use 'do,did'? were also done by 5 students or about 12,5 %. And incorrect use 'when ?' was also written by 1 students (2,5). There were 2 students did not answer (5 %).

In sum, there were 6 students who answered correctly. Of course this is not a good finding because only 15% of students answered correctly. While 85% or 35 students who cannot make interrogative sentences use 'does'.

As can be seen from chart 1 and chart 2 at chart 3, it was found that most of the students answering 'what' to formulate 'yes/no' question. Meanwhile, there were 40 students or 35 % wrote 'what' as the question word. They tend to use 'what' (*what is him to go ?, what he go ?, what..go ?, what does he go ?, what his is go it ?, what her is go it ?,what he is go ?, what he goi ?, what is he go ?, what he going ?, what do you hi ?, what do you ?, what do back ?*).

Therefore, what can be implied from the stuidents' answers ?. It can be inferred that from the use of 'what' and its varieties. Regarding the effect of first language interference, the students' cognitive and knowledge base on grammar patterns are considered low.

Surprisingly, the students' answers in term of the use 'to be' there were 12 students (30 %) with some varieties of 'to be' such as, "*are he go ?, are hi to go ?, are his going*, *are…go ?, are they he go ?. is he go ?. it* This implies on the students' premature use on grammar or structural pattern of English language as 'to be' can be used as interrogative question in verbal sentence.

Meanwhile, the use of 'do, 'did' are considered inappropriate shown in the students' answers with total number 12,5 %. The interrogative form *do he go ?, do he gone ?did he is go ?,* showing that the students definitely did not understand the context of *subject and verb agreement.* Additionally, the students had no idea the use question word 'when' that asking about time. Therefore, the answer *when her is go it ?* at the students' sheet is definitely incorrect.

At chart 4, there is no significant different patterns of questioning between chart 3 and chart 4. The difference is on the subject use. At chart 3 the subject is 'he" meanwhile, at chart 4 the subject is 'she". This type of question is intended to investigate the students' consistency in using auxiliary verb 'does'. The results of the students' answers can be seen in chart 4.

Chart 4
Qustion: "Apakah dia (pr) pergi ?"
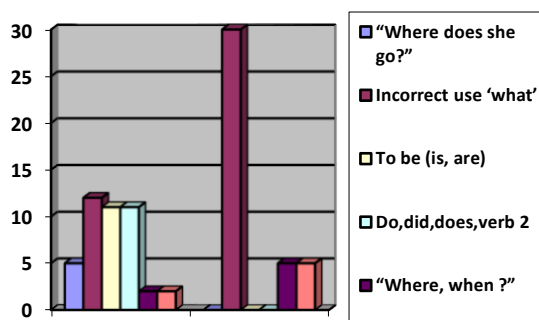
Regarding the finding shown at chart 4, there were 5 students answered "where does she go ?"(12,5 %). The incorrect use 'what' written by 12 students (30 %). Meanwhile, to be 'is, are' were also used by 11 students (27,5 %). Thus, the incorrect use 'do, did,does,verb.2' were also done by 11 students (27,5 %). There were also the improper use wh-questions 'where, when' done by 2 students (5 %). While, 2 students (5 %) left thir papers blank in other words, they did not answer.

Additionally, there were 5 students answered correctly. Meanwhile, 12 students (30 %) using 'what' in formulating interrogative questions the followings are samples of th students' answer regarding to this category: *what is him to go ?, what he go ?, what..go ?, what does he go ?, what his is go it ?, what her is go it ?, what he is go ?, what is he go ?, what he going ?, what do you hi ?, what do you ?, what do back ?*. Several students answered with the same answer. From these answers, the researcher analyzed a similar pattern from the answers to the previous questions. The pattern is the existence of the first language intervention where in Indonesian the word 'Are' its equivalent in English is 'what'. So most of the students answered by using 'what' without thinking grammatically.

The use 'to be' dan 'do' , 'did' , 'does' took the same portion which is 27,5 % for each. In other words, the number of 11 students believed the use 'to be' in verbal sentence. The examples are as follows: *are he go ?, are hi to go ?, are his going ?, are…go ?, are they he go ?, he are going ?, is he go ?*. The use of 'to be' in verbal sentences shows the absence of literacy in the use of yes/no questions in verbal sentences for students. Likewise, the presence of errors in writing pronouns and the use of inappropriate pronouns (subject pronouns) also shows the weak basic vocabulary of students. Such as writing 'hi' when referring to the subject pronoun 'he' which is not appropriate. The next error is that there is redundancy or repetition in the subject of the sentence which is also unusual, as is the use of 'to be' on the wrong subject.

There are 2 improper use of question words (when her is go it?, where her is go it?). There are 2 things that are unusual in the formulation of this answer, first the use of question words that are not appropriate to the question in question, namely 'what', the question word; 'when' and 'where' ask 'when' and 'where' so that the choice of question words used is very inappropriate. Furthermore, the structure of writing interrogative sentences is not appropriate. So based on the formulation of the sentence, it can be concluded that students do not have sufficient knowledge-base in English grammar. And there were 2 students who did not answer the questions, so the researchers could not analyze the difficulties faced by students in formulating questions using auxiliary verbs.

The last table (table 5) is the last question or question that the researcher made to investigate the mistakes made by English education students in formulating question sentences using double-function words or words that have 2 functions, namely as verbs and also as nouns. depending on the context of the sentence. Examples of words that have multiple functions, including 'present', which

can have the meaning of a gift (noun) and present (verb). Another example, 'record' which means recording (verb) and recording (noun). The word 'help' which has the meaning of helping (verb) and assistance (noun) and several other similar words. The following are the results of student answers that have been categorized by researchers based on answer categories.

Chart 5
Question: "Apakah hari ini hujan ?"
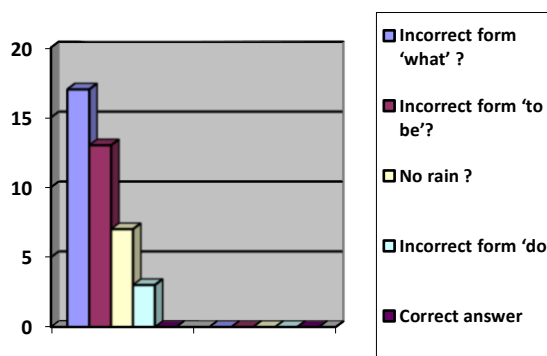
Referring from chart 5, there were 5 Incorrect form 'what'. Meanwhile, there were 17 students (42,5 %), used incorrect form 'to be" 13 (32,5 %), students answered "no rain" 7 (17,5 %), incorrect form to be 3 (7,5 %), and surprisingly there were no correct answer from the students for this question or 0 (0 %).

As the researchers assumed, there were no correct answered for question number 5. Most of the students formulated interrogative sentence using 'what' with the total number 19 students (42,5 %). The followings are the samples of the students' interrogative sentences: *what rain in the day ?, what today rain ? (4), ?what day a rain ?, what today is rain ?, what do day rain ?, what is today rain ?, what to day rain ?, what this today a rain ?, what is raining today ?, what this rain ?, what is raining ?, what rain is going ?, what they rain today ?.*

Further, based on these answers, it is clear that students assume that 'rain' in the interrogative sentence is a 'noun', whereas 'rain' in the sentence is a 'verb' (verb). In addition, the influence of the first language 'what' which is linear with 'what' in English is the main and most basic factor why they choose 'what' as a question word that is considered appropriate.

At the second level, there were 13 (32,5 %) students answered using to be. The samples of the students' answers with its varieties are as follows: a adalah: *is rain today ?, today are rain ?, it today rain ?, are day rain ?, are today rain ?, are it today rain ?, are rain day ?, are you day' rain ?, is the day rain ?, are rain today ?, is it today rain ?, are today is rain ?, is it raining today ?.* The researchers also convey a similar argument related to the use of 'to be' by students, namely the assumption that 'rain' is a 'noun' whereas in this context 'rain' is interpreted as rain as a verb.

The third option is the answer 'no rain' (7 students) or about 3.75% and absurd answers like: no rain ?(2), rain today ?, rain ? (2),……?(no answer). Furthermore, the use of 'do' which is not in accordance with grammatical rules; do today rain ?, do are rain today ?, do the day rain ?sentence structure which does not conform to the rules of writing interrogative sentences. The category of errors made by these students clearly shows that there is no interrogative sentence pattern in English that they understand.

To sum up the 5 tables representing the students' questions' category can be seen in table 1 below.

Table 1 . The recapitulation of the students' correct answers

Table	Correct answer	%
Table 1	14	35
Table 2	11	27,5
Table 3	6	15
Table 4	5	12,5
Table 5	17	5
Total	53 out of 200 items	26,5

Accumulatively, from the results of students' correct answers in question pattern 1 (35%), pattern 2 (27.5%), pattern 3 (15%), pattern 4 (12.5) and pattern 5 (0%), the researcher categorizing students' ability in formulating question sentences is low. There were no students who answered correctly above 27.5% of the total 40 students. This finding is of course surprising, considering that basic grammar learning like this should have been obtained by them since they were at the elementary and junior high school levels. But when this happened when they were in college, of course, it was astonishing. It is interesting to study further about language learning at the basic level.

Provide a statement that what is expected, as stated in the "Introduction" chapter can ultimately result in "Results and Discussion" chapter, so there is compatibility. The causal factors and some recommendations for problem solving in grammatical problems. Based on the errors in points 1-5 in the findings of this study, the researcher analyzed several factors that caused these errors. First, the cognitive factor or the weakness of students' grammatical knowledge. This can be seen from the inability of students to formulate even simple sentence patterns. In this case the subject-verb agreement pattern of students' abilities is very premature. Therefore, the researchers might conclude that students do not understand to be, auxiliary verbs, pronouns, verb categories, noun categories, singular/plural forms, all of which need to be understood in formulating question sentences.

The second factor is the dominant of the first language interference on the mastery of the target language. This is normal for language learners, but this usually does not happen if students know the grammatical patterns of the language they are learning. Almost 50% more students' errors reflect students' premature ability to English grammar. Based on the two factors that cause these errors, the researcher assumes that students have low motivation in trying to learn English independently (autonomous learning).

Richards and Rippen (2014) recommend that teachers do several things in learning grammar, including identifying the grammar learning materials and resources needed by students, such as when asking what grammar patterns are needed. In addition, it provides opportunities for students to practice meaningful communication, such as conducting dialogue related to the grammar patterns that have been studied. Thus, English is practiced in communicating as it functions. Likewise, the use of metacognitive strategies (Furwana, 2017) can also be used considering students' preferences for these strategies in learning languages.

Research related to error analysis has an important role so that students get feedback on language learning. Several studies on error analysis on grammatical aspects of writing skills were carried out by Fitrawati and Dian (2021) who concluded that the low level of grammatical ability of students contributed greatly to writing errors. In another study, Agustina (2013) stated that the main factor in the success of language learning is the mastery of grammar and vocabulary. This is an important feedback for students and also teachers in providing motivation and reinforcement on these aspects in the learning process in the classroom.

4.   Conclusions

The ability to ask questions plays a crucial role in communication. When communicating in English, students are required to be able to formulate question sentences in a grammatically correct and meaningful way. When students experience grammatical difficulties in formulating questions, it is certain that they cannot communicate actively in English. By analyzing students' mistakes in formulating this question, the language learning theory stated by Lightbown & Spada (2001) teachers

should convey and teach grammatical patterns and rules and students are expected to practice them gradually starting from the pattern from the simplest to the most complex, making it easier for students to learn.

5. Acknowledgements

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