

## Grammatical Errors of Perfekt Sentences in the Writing of 2nd Semester Students in Sprachkompetenz 2 Course

Istiqlal Masfirotul Li'munawar<sup>1</sup>; Mutiara Feby Sufriono<sup>2</sup>\*; Rosyidah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> State University of Malang, Indonesia, [istiqlal.masfirotul.2202416@students.um.ac.id](mailto:istiqlal.masfirotul.2202416@students.um.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup> State University of Malang, Indonesia, [mutiara.feby.2202416@students.um.ac.id](mailto:mutiara.feby.2202416@students.um.ac.id)

<sup>3</sup> State University of Malang, Indonesia, [rosyidah.fs@um.ac.id](mailto:rosyidah.fs@um.ac.id)

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\*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

[istiqlal.masfirotul.2202416@students.um.ac.id](mailto:istiqlal.masfirotul.2202416@students.um.ac.id)

### Abstract

Grammatical errors often occur when learning a language. This study aims to identify the forms of errors made by students when writing essays using past tense or tempus perfekt in German. The research method used is qualitative method with content analysis data collection technique. The subjects of this study were 2nd semester students of the UM German language education study program who attended the Sprachkompetenz 2 course. Data sources were obtained from the results of essay assignments in the form of perfekt sentences about activities carried out at the end of the year. From the results of the study it can be concluded that there are 3 main forms of errors that are often made in grammatical writing errors using tempus perfekt, including: (1) position errors in the sentence, (2) inaccurate use of hilfsverb or auxiliary verb and verben or verb in the sentence, and (3) mismatch of cases used.

**Keywords:** *writing errors, German language, grammatical, perfekt*

### Introduction

In learning German as a foreign language (Deutsch als Fremdsprache/DaF), the development of writing skills is increasingly recognized as a complex process and requires a diverse approach and this skill is not enough just to master grammar and vocabulary (Reitbrecht, S. et. al. 2019). According to Fix (2006), writing is not just an activity of putting words on paper. As he stated, "*Schreiben ist eine komplexe kommunikative Tätigkeit, die kognitive, sprachliche und pragmatische Kompetenzen verlangt.*" meaning, writing is a fairly complicated communication process because it requires not only mastery of language, but also the ability to think and understand the situation and rules of communication. In learning German as a foreign language (DaF), writing exercises are an important way for learners to understand the structure of the language as well as train themselves to be able to communicate in writing properly and effectively.

Forms of writing can be distinguished based on the purpose of communication and the context in which it is used. Böttcher et al. (2010) categorize several main types of writing. First, *Informierendes Schreiben* or informative writing, which includes texts such as reports, summaries, and news articles. Second, *Argumentierendes Schreiben* or argumentative writing, such as opinion essays, reader letters, and writing that aims to convince readers. Third, *Erzählendes Schreiben* or narrative writing, which includes short stories, personal experiences, or fictional narratives. Last, *Kreatives Schreiben* or creative writing, for example in the form of poetry, prose, or more free and imaginative language games. In Sprachkompetenz II, students do a lot of *Erzählendes Schreiben* or narrative writing in

practicing their writing skills and poured in the form of past tense or *perfekt*.

*Perfekt* sentences are usually used in oral form or daily conversation. However, the use of *perfekt* sentences can often cause confusion for students, because it involves a combination of the auxiliary verb "*haben*" or "*sein*" and verbs in partizip II form, especially for students whose language background is different from German (Jubran et al., 2023).

The German Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Letters, State University of Malang (UM) has a writing and speaking-based course program, namely *Sprachkompetenz 2*. *Sprachkompetenz 2* courses are obtained by students of the UM German Language Education study program in semester 2 with a weight of 8 credits (Semester Credit Units) which are divided into 4 credits per meeting. Based on the catalog of the Department of German Literature in 2024, the standard for Graduate Learning Outcomes (SLOs) of students is to be able to master the theoretical concepts of spoken German language skills and language elements to communicate effectively, spontaneously, and systematically in German, both formally and informally. This is supported by the Course Learning Outcomes (CPMK), that students can understand and use simple sentences related to daily life and are able to speak and write simple sentences on certain themes receptively and productively. In practice, students are expected to be able to introduce themselves, make past reports, make appointments, justify something, understand information on the homepage, describe restaurants, and so on using past tense or *perfekt* sentences that refer to the Course Learning Outcomes (CPMK).

In fact, there are still many students who do not understand the proper construction of *perfekt* sentences, for example, 2nd semester students of the UM German Language Education study program who take *Sprachkompetenz 2* courses and study the grammatical structure of *perfekt* sentences. Errors that are often found are the inaccurate placement of the position of sentence elements (subject, *hilfsverb* or auxiliary verb, and *verben* or verb) and the inappropriate use of *Akkusativ* and *Dativ* cases in the construction of their sentences. In addition, students also have difficulty distinguishing the use of "*haben*" or "*sein*" with the right *verben*. Corder states that both native and non-native speakers are equally likely to make mistakes in language, showing that errors are not unique to foreign speakers (Nafinuddin, 2020). In addition, Muzaki et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of analyzing these errors to understand the second language acquisition process. In their research, identifying and describing the various errors made by foreign speakers can make it possible to improve language skills more effectively.

Good research needs to carry out one important process, namely the process of finding elements of novelty or what is commonly called Novelty (Haqqi & Risnita, 2023). Novelty in this study focuses on two things, the subject and the research techniques used. The subjects or participants studied are different from the existing literature, because this research takes data from 2nd semester students of the German Language Education study program at the State University of Malang. The research technique used is document analysis by analyzing the writings or essays of students in the *Sprachkompetenz 2* course.

This research aims to identify the types of grammatical errors that most often occur in writing *perfekt* sentences by students in learning German as a foreign language. However, the errors that occur are not only faced by students, but also for teachers or lecturers who guide students in mastering German. Therefore, the importance of this research is to find out the factors that cause the most errors found in writing *perfekt* sentences from the 3 main categories of writing errors.

## Method

This research uses qualitative method with content analysis. The content analysis used is the results of essay assignments in the form of past tense or *Perfekt* by 2nd semester

students. Qualitative research is research that aims to describe the findings of the research that has been conducted. According to Sugiyono (2017), qualitative research is a research method that usually examines natural conditions (not experiments), research results also emphasize meaning rather than generalization, and collection techniques are done by triangulation (combined). In qualitative research, humans have a very important role because humans are considered the most flexible and sensitive instruments. This happens because qualitative research involves direct interaction with participants or direct review of existing literature. In connection with that, the key instrument in this research is the human instrument or the researcher himself.

All data obtained was collected by analyzing documents and taking notes. The important steps of analyzing documents and taking notes in this study include (1) reading all students' essays written in Perfekt form; (2) marking positional errors in the formation of Perfekt sentences, the inappropriateness of the case used in the sentence, and the inaccuracy of Hilfsverb and verben used; (3) categorizing and coding the data; (4) grouping the data according to the categories; and (5) entering the data into the table.

## Results

The results of data analysis obtained from the essays of 2nd semester students in the *Sprachkompetenz 2* course show that there are still many *perfekt* sentence formation errors in writing German essays. Errors that are often found are (1) positional errors in sentences, (2) inaccurate use of *hilfsverb* or auxiliary verbs and *verben* or verbs in sentences, and (3) mismatch of cases used.

### (1) Positional errors in *perfekt* sentence formation

Positional errors in the formation of *perfekt* sentences are found in some data in the essays of offering A students class of 2024 who take *Sprachkompetenz 2*. Here are some examples of data on positional errors made by students in the formation of *perfekt* sentences:

a). *Danach ich habe zum Cafe in dem Stadtzentrum gegessen.* (MA 1.2)  
'After that I ate at the cafe in the city center'

b). *Danach ich bin zum Schwimmbad in Lembah Dieng geschwommen.* (CS 1.2)  
'After that I swam in the Dieng Valley swimming pool'

c). *Später ich bin in der Kayutangan Straße gegangen.* (ZA 1.3)  
'Then I went to Kayutangan street'

The sentence in data a) is incorrect, because the verb should be placed in the second position and the *hilfsverb* placed in the third position. The sentence should be '*Danach habe ich zum Cafe in dem Stadtzentrum gegessen*'. The position of verbs in German also depends on the use of conjunctions. Data b) also shows a position error between the *hilfsverb* and the subject after the conjunction '*danach*'. The sentence should be '*Danach bin ich zum Schwimmbad in Lembah Dieng geschwommen*'. There is also a positional error in data c), which is a positional error between the *hilfsverb* and the subjekt after the conjunction. The correct sentence is '*Später bin ich in der Kayutangan Straße gegangen*'. In some of the students' essays above, it can be concluded that the *hilfsverb* should be placed in the

second position after the conjunction. The conjunctions that are widely used by students are *danach*, *dann*, and *später*. These conjunctions are included in *Konjunktion mit Inversion* or conjunctions with the verb position placed right after the conjunction.

**(2) Inaccurate use of *hilfsverb* or auxiliary verb with *verben* or verb in the formation of *perfekt* sentences.**

The error of inaccurate use of *Hilfsverb* with *verben* is found in some data in the essays of offering A students class of 2024 who take *Sprachkompetenz 2*. The error data can be found in the following examples:

a). *Letztes Jahr habe ich mit meine Mutter und meine Schwester gegangen.* (RM. 2.1)  
'At the end of last year, I went with my mother and my older sister.'

b). *Letztes Jahr bin ich mit meiner Freunden getroffen.* (ZA. 2.1)  
'At the end of last year, I met my friends.'

c). *Zum Schluss war ich mit meinem Onkel und meiner Tante schwimmen und im Restaurant essen.* (KM. 2.4)  
'In the end, I went swimming with my aunt and uncle and ate at the restaurant.'

The sentence in data a) is incorrect, because the verb "*gegangen*" should use the *hilfsverb* "*sein*". The verb "*gegangen*" which means 'to go' indicates a movement of place or action of a person. The correct sentence is '*Letztes Jahr bin ich mit meine Mutter und meine Schwester gegangen*'. Data b) also shows the inaccurate use of *hilfsverb* and *verben*. The verb "*getroffen*" should use the *hilfsverb* "*haben*", as it doesn't indicate a movement of place or action. The correct sentence is '*Letztes Jahr habe ich mit meiner Freunden getroffen*'. In addition, data c) also shows a similar error, because the *hilfsverb* and *verben* used are not in the *perfekt* form. The verb "*geschwommen*" should use the *hilfsverb* "*sein*" and "*gegessen*" uses the *hilfsverb* "*haben*". The correct sentence is '*Zum Schluss bin ich mit meinem Onkel und meiner Tante geschwommen und habe ich im Restaurant gegessen*'. There are two auxiliary verbs in tempus *perfekt*, namely "*haben*" and "*sein*" and their use depends on the verb used. The auxiliary verb "*haben*" is used for verbs that do not show movement of place, such as *gegessen*, *gesprochen*, *gespielt*, usw., while "*sein*", is used for verbs that show movement of place and action of a person, such as *geschwommen*, *gefahren*, *gegangen*, usw.

**(3) Incongruity of case used.**

Another error that is often found in student essays in tempus *perfekt* is the mismatch of cases used. In German level A2 there are 2 types of cases used, namely *Akkusativ* and *Dativ*. Case mismatch errors are found in some data in the essays of offering A students class of 2024 who take *Sprachkompetenz 2* courses. The error data can be found in the following examples:

a). *Letztes Jahr habe ich einen Urlaub gemacht. Zuerst bin ich mit meinen Freund einen Berg gewandert.* (BS 3.1)  
'Last year I took a vacation. First I went hiking to the mountain with a friend'

b). *Danach habe ich mich mein Zeit nicht nur auf dem Hügel aber mit meinen*

**Freundinnen verbracht. (A 3.3)**

'After that I spent my time not only on the hill but also with my friends.'

**c). Später habe ich meine Freund getroffen. (RM 3.3)**

'Last year I went jogging on Asia Africa street.'

**d). Danach hab ich mich mit vielen meiner Freunde getroffen. (PA 3.2)**

'Then I met my friends.'

The sentence in data a) is incorrect, because the preposition "mit" should be followed by the *Dativ* case and the *Nomen* or noun "Freund" has the article *der*. The correct sentence is 'Letztes Jahr habe ich einen Urlaub gemacht. Zuerst bin ich mit meinem Freund einen Berg gewandert'. Data b) also shows a case mismatch, because the *Nomen* "freundinnen" has the article *die* and is plural. The sentence should be 'Danach habe ich mich mein Zeit nicht nur auf dem Hügel aber mit meinen Freundinnen verbracht'. Then, data c) also shows a similar error, which should use the *Akkusativ* case, because "getroffen" comes from "sich + treffen" which is a verb with the *Akkusativ* case. In addition, the *Nomen* "Freund" has the article *der* and changes to *den* in the *Akkusativ* case. The correct sentence is 'Später habe ich mich meinen Freund getroffen'. Last, data d) shows a similar error, namely the use of "vielen" which is in the *Dativ* plural form should not need to be included, because there is a *verben* "Freunde" which can be converted into a *Dativ* plural form by adding ending 'en' to become "Freunden", so the use of "vielen" in the sentence makes it ambiguous and the grammatical structure is incorrect. The correct sentence should be 'Danach hab ich mich mit meinen Freunden getroffen.' In some of the student essays above, it can be concluded that students still have difficulty determining the *Akkusativ* and *Dativ* cases constructed in sentences. The most common error found is the inaccuracy of declaring *Nomen* (*der*, *die*, *das*) in singular or plural form in *Akkusativ* and *Dativ* cases.

Based on the results of the study, several causes of errors in the formation of *perfekt* sentences can be identified. The results of data analysis from the results of essay assignments using *perfekt* sentences show that most students have difficulty and often make mistakes in determining the case in sentences. A study conducted by Müller (2020), shows that the case system in German, such as *Nominativ*, *Akkusativ*, *Dativ*, and *Genitiv*, is one of the most difficult elements for foreign learners, including those who speak Indonesian. The reason is the absence of a case system in Indonesian, which relies on particles and word order to express grammatical roles. In addition, it shows that the gender of German nouns (masculine, feminine, neuter) often leads to errors in the use of articles (*der*, *die*, *das*) by Indonesian speakers (Hartmann, 2019). This finding is reinforced by the results of Wijaya and Becker's research in 2022, which indicated that German learners who come from Indonesian backgrounds tend to ignore gender rules because a similar system does not exist in their home language.

## Discussion

This research discusses to highlight the forms of errors in writing *perfekt* sentences in student essays. the importance of this research is to identify the most error categories found in essay writing using *tempus perfekt* from the 3 main error categories found, so that further intensive learning and practice questions that focus on grammatical structures can be held so that students' abilities increase as a whole.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of the identification results of the forms of errors in writing perfekt sentences in student essays is divided into 3 main categories, namely errors in the positioning of sentence elements, inaccurate use of hilfsverb and verben, and inappropriate cases used. From the results of the study, the most common error found is that students have difficulty in determining and declaring Nomen with the right case (Akkusativ or Dativ). Therefore, there is a need for intensive learning related to the use of cases in German language learning as well as exercises that focus on the construction of perfekt sentences so that students' grammatical skills can improve as a whole

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