

# Uncovering Common Errors in Gerunds and Infinitives among EFL Students

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| Informasi Artikel                                                                                                                                 | Abstrak                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            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| <p><b>Diterima</b> : 10-07-2026</p> <p><b>Direvisi</b> : 13-07-2026</p> <p><b>Diterima</b> : 13-07-2026</p> <p><b>Dipublikasi</b>: 14-07-2026</p> | <p>Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap kesalahan umum dalam penggunaan gerund dan infinitive di kalangan mahasiswa EFL dalam penyusunan kalimat dan penulisan paragraf. Penelitian ini melibatkan 40 mahasiswa sarjana EFL dan menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif dengan tugas menulis serta wawancara semi-terstruktur sebagai instrumen utama pengumpulan data. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa sering melakukan kesalahan terkait penyalahgunaan gerund dan infinitive. Kesalahan yang paling dominan adalah penggunaan infinitive yang salah setelah kata kerja yang seharusnya diikuti gerund, diikuti oleh penggunaan struktur “to + kata kerja-ing” serta penggunaan kata kerja dasar yang tidak tepat dalam konteks yang memerlukan pola pelengkap kata kerja tertentu. Kesalahan-kesalahan berulang ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa cenderung menggeneralisasi aturan tata bahasa secara berlebihan dan mengandalkan struktur kalimat yang disederhanakan ketika mereka ragu mengenai bentuk yang benar. Hasil wawancara lebih lanjut menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa mengalami kebingungan karena kata kerja yang berbeda memerlukan pola tata bahasa yang berbeda pula, sementara beberapa kata kerja dapat diikuti baik oleh gerund maupun infinitive dengan perubahan makna. Mahasiswa juga melaporkan kesulitan dalam menciptakan struktur kalimat yang bervariasi dan alami sambil tetap menjaga keakuratan tata bahasa. Untuk mengatasi masalah ini, sebagian besar peserta mengandalkan strategi menghafal, catatan tata bahasa, contoh daring, dan diskusi dengan teman sebaya. Namun, strategi-strategi ini tidak selalu efektif dalam mengembangkan pemahaman tata bahasa yang lebih mendalam dan penggunaan bahasa yang otomatis. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kompleksitas pola pelengkap kata kerja dalam bahasa Inggris, latihan tata bahasa yang kurang kontekstual, serta kegiatan menulis komunikatif yang tidak memadai berkontribusi secara signifikan terhadap kesulitan tata bahasa yang dialami mahasiswa. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar dosen bahasa Inggris memberikan pengajaran tata bahasa yang lebih interaktif dan kontekstual melalui berbagai latihan, kegiatan kolaboratif, serta umpan balik korektif yang terperinci. Selain itu, mahasiswa sebaiknya meningkatkan paparan mereka terhadap materi bahasa Inggris otentik untuk memperkuat pemahaman dan penggunaan praktis gerund serta infinitive dalam kegiatan menulis. Secara teoritis, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada perkembangan penelitian tentang penguasaan tata bahasa Inggris dengan memberikan bukti empiris bahwa kesalahan yang dilakukan peserta didik sangat dipengaruhi oleh generalisasi berlebihan terhadap aturan dan penguasaan yang belum sempurna terhadap pola pelengkap kata kerja. Temuan ini juga memperluas penelitian Analisis Kesalahan dengan mengintegrasikan wawasan kualitatif dari wawancara dengan mahasiswa, sehingga menawarkan pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif mengenai faktor-faktor kognitif dan instruksional yang mendasari kesulitan peserta didik dalam menggunakan gerund dan infinitive.</p> <p><b>Kata kunci:</b> Kesalahan, Gerund; Infinitive; Mahasiswa EFL.</p> <p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>This study aimed to uncover common errors in the use of gerunds and infinitives among EFL students in sentence construction and paragraph writing. This study involved 40 EFL undergraduate students and employed a qualitative descriptive design using writing tasks and semi-structured interviews as the primary instruments for data collection. The findings revealed that students frequently made errors related to the misuse of gerunds and infinitives. The most dominant error was the incorrect use of infinitives after verbs that require gerunds, followed by the use of “to + verb-ing” structures and inappropriate use of base verbs in contexts requiring specific verb complementation patterns. These recurring errors indicated that students tended to overgeneralize grammar rules and relied on simplified sentence structures when they were uncertain about the correct forms. The interview results further showed that students experienced confusion because different verbs require different grammatical patterns, while some verbs can be followed by both gerunds and infinitives with changes in meaning. Students also reported difficulties in creating varied and natural sentence structures while maintaining grammatical accuracy. To overcome these problems, most participants relied on memorization strategies, grammar notes, online examples, and peer discussions. However, these strategies were not always effective in developing deeper grammatical understanding and automatic language use. The study concluded that the complexity of English verb complementation patterns, limited contextualized grammar practice, and insufficient communicative writing activities contributed significantly to students’ grammatical difficulties. Therefore, the study recommends that English lecturers provide more interactive and contextualized grammar instruction through varied exercises, collaborative activities, and detailed corrective feedback. In addition, students should increase their exposure to authentic English materials to strengthen their understanding and practical use of gerunds and infinitives in writing activities. Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of research on English grammatical acquisition by providing empirical evidence that learners’ errors are strongly influenced by rule overgeneralization and incomplete mastery of verb complementation patterns. The findings also extend Error Analysis research by integrating qualitative insights from student interviews, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the cognitive and instructional factors underlying learners’ difficulties with gerunds and infinitives.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Error; Gerunds; Infinitives; EFL Students</p> |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English grammar competence plays a crucial role in developing learners' overall language proficiency, particularly in academic writing, speaking accuracy, and syntactic control. Among the many challenging grammatical areas encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, gerunds and infinitives remain one of the most persistent sources of difficulty. These structures are often considered problematic because they involve not only morphological forms but also syntactic, semantic, and lexical constraints that require learners to master verb complementation patterns. There are some important differences between gerund and infinitive. A gerund can be used as a subject, direct object, or object of a preposition. Meanwhile, infinitive can be used as an adjective, direct object, or subjective complement (Ulfah et al, 2021). Unlike simpler grammatical rules governed by predictable patterns, gerunds and infinitives frequently depend on verb-specific rules, contextual meaning, and idiomatic usage, making them difficult for EFL students to acquire accurately. This complexity often results in recurring learner errors such as misuse of infinitives after prepositions, confusion between verbs followed by gerunds or infinitives, omission of the "to" marker, and inaccurate selection of forms where both structures are possible but carry different meanings. Such errors indicate that learners' challenges go beyond memorization and involve deeper problems in grammatical competence and interlanguage development (Jama, 2022).

Existing studies have demonstrated that EFL learners frequently struggle with gerunds and infinitives due to the complexity of English verb complementation patterns. However, the majority of previous research has concentrated on error identification and frequency without sufficiently explaining the cognitive processes, learning strategies, and instructional factors underlying these errors. In addition, most studies have analyzed isolated sentences or grammar tests, leaving limited evidence regarding learners' use of gerunds and infinitives in authentic paragraph writing. Moreover, few studies have integrated qualitative data, such as learner interviews, to explain why these errors persist despite years of English instruction. This gap highlights the need for an integrated error analysis approach that combines written production with learners' perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of grammatical difficulties and inform more effective pedagogical practices.

The study of learner errors has long occupied a central place in second language acquisition (SLA) because errors provide insight into the processes learners use to construct linguistic knowledge. The error analysis referred to in this research is the analysis of errors in the grammatical aspect (Bakir et al, 2025). Within the framework of Error Analysis, learner errors are not viewed merely as failures but as evidence of developmental stages in language learning. In the context of gerunds and infinitives, analyzing learners' errors can reveal systematic patterns of misunderstanding related to verb complementation, rule overgeneralization, and first language transfer. A gerund is a noun made from a verb by adding "-ing." Gerunds are often used when actions are real, fixed, or completed (Ibrahim, 2019). The functions of gerund are not only as a subject but also as object, complements, preposition object, and some other cases usually found in both written and spoken forms. As important as gerund, to infinitives are also used very often in

sentences (Gulo and Unggul, 2017). Contemporary studies continue to demonstrate that EFL learners frequently produce errors in these forms despite years of grammar instruction. For example, recent studies found that misformation errors, particularly selecting infinitives where gerunds are required or vice versa, remain dominant among EFL learners, suggesting that students struggle with rule restrictions and lexical patterns associated with these structures.

One major reason gerunds and infinitives are difficult lies in the inherent complexity of English verb complementation. Certain verbs, such as “enjoy,” “avoid,” and “consider,” are followed by gerunds, while others such as “decide,” “plan,” and “hope” require infinitives. More challenging still are verbs like “remember,” “stop,” and “try,” which can take both gerunds and infinitives but differ semantically depending on the structure used. In English grammar, some verbs must be followed by gerunds (as in “She enjoys drinking iced tea”). Discuss, anticipate, despise, consider or deny are included in this category. On the other hand, verbs such as agree, ask, decide, expect or plan must be followed by infinitives (such as on “He needed to sell his car”) (Ruiz, 2023). For EFL students, mastering these distinctions requires more than understanding form; it requires sensitivity to meaning relationships and contextual usage. This creates difficulties especially for learners whose first language lacks parallel grammatical distinctions. Research has shown that many learners attempt to simplify this complexity through overgeneralization, often applying a single rule to all contexts, which results in systematic errors (Alsuhaibani, 2022).

The problem becomes even more significant in EFL contexts where grammar instruction often emphasizes rule memorization rather than contextualized language use. The good language use should be correct in grammar and spelling which give emphasis and ease to the reader (Widiyawati, 2018). Students need to be aware of proper grammar use, sentence structure, and ways to communicate in order to understand English (Fijratullah et al, 2025). In many classrooms, gerunds and infinitives are taught as isolated lists of verbs followed by exercises focused on mechanical drills. While such instruction may help students recognize patterns temporarily, it often fails to develop deeper grammatical awareness or productive competence. As a result, students may perform well in controlled grammar exercises but continue to make errors when using these forms in authentic writing or spontaneous speech. This gap between declarative knowledge and procedural use has been highlighted in recent studies suggesting that traditional grammar instruction alone may be insufficient for helping learners internalize complex verb patterns.

The difficulties surrounding gerunds and infinitives are particularly evident in EFL writing. It is still commonly found the error in using it in students’ written production. Ignoring the use of gerunds in grammar will lead to misunderstandings when conveying or communicating ideas, especially in the context of writing (Irianti et al, 2023). Writing requires learners not only to retrieve grammatical rules but also to apply them accurately while generating ideas, organizing sentences, and maintaining coherence. Under these cognitive demands, learners often revert to incomplete or unstable grammatical knowledge, making errors more likely to occur. Research on EFL learners’ writing has shown that errors involving gerunds and

infinitives frequently appear in sentence construction, argument development, and academic compositions. In some cases, learners avoid using complex structures altogether to reduce the risk of making mistakes, which may limit syntactic variety and overall writing quality. Such avoidance strategies suggest that the problem is not simply incorrect usage but also reduced confidence in using these structures productively.

Another contributing factor to these errors is first language interference. In many learners' native languages, verb complementation systems differ substantially from English or may not distinguish between nominalized verbs and infinitival constructions in the same way. Consequently, learners often transfer L1 structures into English, producing forms that reflect native-language patterns rather than target-language rules. Recent research involving Indonesian EFL learners, for instance, identified mother tongue interference as a significant cause of errors in gerund and infinitive usage, alongside overgeneralization and insufficient grammatical awareness. These findings support the view that learner errors are influenced by both internal developmental processes and cross-linguistic transfer.

In addition to language transfer, limited exposure to authentic input contributes to learners' difficulties. Many EFL learners encounter gerunds and infinitives primarily through textbook examples rather than through frequent interaction with natural language use. Without sufficient exposure to authentic input, learners may struggle to develop intuitive awareness of verb patterns and usage frequency. Corpus-based studies have argued that exposure to authentic examples can help learners recognize patterns more effectively than isolated rule instruction. Research on corpus-informed grammar instruction has further shown that learners who engage with authentic language data demonstrate improved understanding of confusing grammatical structures, including gerunds and infinitives.

The increasing attention given to learner errors in gerunds and infinitives also reflects broader shifts in language pedagogy. Rather than treating grammar as a set of fixed rules to be memorized, current perspectives emphasize usage-based learning, contextualized instruction, and learner-centered approaches. From this perspective, errors are viewed as valuable diagnostic tools that can inform pedagogy. Identifying recurring error patterns can help teachers design targeted instructional interventions that address learners' actual needs rather than relying solely on traditional grammar syllabi. For example, if students consistently misuse gerunds after prepositions, instruction can focus specifically on prepositional patterns in meaningful contexts. If students confuse dual-function verbs such as "stop" and "remember," instruction can emphasize semantic contrasts through contextual examples. Error analysis thus serves not only descriptive but also pedagogical purposes.

Recent pedagogical innovations have further explored alternative ways to address these persistent challenges. Studies involving corpus-based instruction, gamification, and digital learning tools have reported promising outcomes in improving learners' mastery of gerunds and infinitives. Corpus-based approaches allow learners to observe authentic usage patterns, while gamified platforms increase engagement and repeated exposure. Such findings suggest that traditional grammar instruction may benefit from integration with interactive and contextualized learning strategies. Nevertheless, before designing effective

interventions, it is necessary to understand precisely what errors learners commonly make and what factors contribute to those errors.

Despite growing scholarship on grammatical errors in EFL contexts, research specifically focusing on gerunds and infinitives remains relatively limited compared to studies on tense, articles, or subject-verb agreement. Moreover, existing studies often focus on identifying errors without sufficiently examining patterns of occurrence or the underlying sources of learner difficulties. Some studies treat gerunds and infinitives as part of general grammar errors rather than as a distinct area requiring specialized attention. Given the unique complexity of these structures, there remains a need for more focused investigation into the types, frequency, and causes of errors learners make in using gerunds and infinitives.

This need is particularly relevant in higher education contexts, where EFL students are expected to demonstrate increasing grammatical accuracy in academic tasks. University students frequently engage in essay writing, presentations, and research reporting, all of which require control over complex grammatical structures. Persistent errors in gerunds and infinitives may affect not only linguistic accuracy but also clarity of expression and academic performance. Understanding these errors is therefore important not merely as a grammar issue but as part of supporting broader academic literacy.

Furthermore, examining common errors in gerunds and infinitives contributes to theoretical discussions in interlanguage development. Most students do not realize that they make an error of using gerund because gerund has many functions in a sentence (Nuzirwan et al, 2018). According to interlanguage theory, learner language reflects a dynamic and evolving system shaped by hypotheses, restructuring, and interaction between L1 and L2 knowledge. Making mistakes in learning a language can't be avoided. There is always a chance of making mistakes or errors in the process of learning a language (Yunita, 2010). Errors in gerunds and infinitives can be interpreted as evidence of learners' developing grammatical systems. For example, consistent overuse of infinitives may indicate simplification strategies, while inconsistent use of dual-function verbs may reflect partial semantic understanding. Investigating such patterns can contribute to understanding how learners acquire complex grammatical relationships over time. Learning grammar is very important as a part of mastering English (Febriyanti, 2019).

The relevance of this topic has increased in recent years as researchers have highlighted the importance of grammar accuracy within communicative competence. While communicative approaches have often prioritized meaning over form, recent scholarship argues that grammatical form remains essential for effective communication, particularly in academic and professional settings. Errors involving gerunds and infinitives can lead not only to grammatical inaccuracy but also to meaning distortion. For instance, confusing "remember doing" and "remember to do" changes the intended meaning substantially. Such distinctions illustrate why mastery of these forms is critical for communicative precision.

Another issue motivating this research is the inconsistency often found in learners' performance. Students may correctly use certain gerund or infinitive structures in one context but misuse them in another, indicating unstable knowledge rather than complete lack of understanding. This inconsistency suggests that

learners may possess partial knowledge that requires reinforcement and deeper conceptual development. Investigating recurring error patterns can help identify where this instability occurs and how instruction might address it.

Moreover, many previous studies have focused on learners' written errors, while fewer studies have connected these errors to broader instructional implications. Identifying errors alone does not necessarily improve teaching unless the findings are translated into pedagogical recommendations. By uncovering common error patterns and analyzing their causes, this study seeks to contribute not only to descriptive research but also to practical improvements in grammar teaching.

This study is grounded in Error Analysis (EA) theory, which views learners' errors as valuable evidence of the language learning process rather than merely as signs of failure. Learner errors provide important insights into how second language learners develop their linguistic competence and construct their interlanguage. Building on this perspective, Error Analysis enables researchers to identify recurring error patterns, determine their underlying sources, and evaluate learners' developmental progress. Furthermore, Error Analysis serves not only as a diagnostic tool for describing learners' linguistic difficulties but also as a foundation for designing more effective instructional strategies and corrective feedback. In the context of gerunds and infinitives, Error Analysis provides a systematic framework for examining learners' deviations from target language norms, identifying whether the errors result from overgeneralization, incomplete rule application, first-language interference, or insufficient exposure to authentic language input. Therefore, applying Error Analysis in this study facilitates a deeper understanding of the linguistic and cognitive factors underlying EFL learners' difficulties and offers evidence-based implications for improving grammar instruction.

The present study, therefore, seeks to uncover common errors in gerunds and infinitives among EFL students and analyze the factors contributing to these errors. Specifically, it investigates what types of errors learners most frequently make, which errors occur most dominantly, and what linguistic or instructional factors may underlie these difficulties. By focusing on a specific grammatical area often overlooked in broader error studies, this research aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of learner difficulties in English grammar.

This study is significant for several reasons. Theoretically, it contributes to error analysis and interlanguage research by examining learner difficulties in a complex grammatical domain. Practically, it provides insights for teachers seeking to improve grammar instruction through targeted pedagogical interventions. Empirically, it adds to the growing body of research on EFL learners' grammatical errors, particularly in relation to gerunds and infinitives, where recent scholarship remains relatively limited.

Ultimately, uncovering common errors in gerunds and infinitives is important because these errors reflect broader issues in language acquisition, instructional effectiveness, and learner development. Understanding why learners struggle with these structures can help educators move beyond rule memorization toward more meaningful and effective approaches to grammar teaching. Through systematic

analysis of learner errors, this study seeks to contribute to improved teaching practices and support EFL students in achieving greater grammatical accuracy and communicative competence.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to uncover common errors in the use of gerunds and infinitives among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students and to analyze the factors contributing to these errors. A descriptive qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on identifying, classifying, and interpreting learner errors rather than measuring causal relationships or testing the effectiveness of a treatment. This design enabled the researcher to examine the nature of students' grammatical errors in depth and provide a detailed description of recurring error patterns related to gerunds and infinitives. In addition, error analysis as an analytical framework was used to support the investigation, as it allows researchers to identify systematic learner difficulties and trace possible sources of those errors.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings, the instruments used in this study were carefully developed and validated before data collection. The writing tasks and semi-structured interview guidelines were reviewed by experts in English language teaching and applied linguistics to ensure content validity, clarity, and alignment with the research objectives. The writing tasks were designed to elicit students' authentic use of gerunds and infinitives in sentence construction and paragraph writing, while the interview questions were developed to explore students' perceptions, learning strategies, and difficulties in applying these grammatical structures.

The reliability of the instruments was maintained through several procedures. First, the consistency of error identification and classification was ensured by applying a systematic Error Analysis framework based on established linguistic categories. The researcher repeatedly examined students' written productions to minimize inconsistencies in identifying and categorizing errors. Second, the interview data were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed systematically to maintain accuracy and consistency of interpretation. Furthermore, data triangulation between writing tasks and interview responses was conducted to strengthen the credibility of the findings. These procedures ensured that the data collection instruments were reliable and capable of providing a comprehensive representation of students' difficulties in using gerunds and infinitives.

The study was conducted at the university level involving EFL students enrolled in an English course. The participants were selected through purposive sampling because they met the criteria relevant to the objectives of the study. The participants consisted of students who had previously received instruction on gerunds and infinitives but continued to demonstrate difficulties in applying these structures accurately. This criterion was important because the study aimed to investigate persistent learner errors rather than errors resulting solely from lack of exposure to the target structures. A total of 40 students of Universitas Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya participated in the study, representing intermediate-level EFL

learners. Their proficiency level was considered appropriate because learners at this stage are generally expected to have encountered gerunds and infinitives in formal instruction while still experiencing developmental difficulties in mastering their use.

The primary data source in this study was students' written responses collected through a grammar test designed specifically to elicit the use of gerunds and infinitives. The instrument consisted of task type to capture different dimensions of learners' grammatical performance. The section of the test included sentence construction tasks that required students to produce a short paragraph writing task was included to examine students' use of gerunds and infinitives in a more natural writing context.

The grammar test was developed based on common grammatical patterns involving gerunds and infinitives, including verbs followed by gerunds (e.g., enjoy, avoid, consider), and verbs followed by infinitives (e.g., decide, plan, hope). The test item was adapted from grammar references and previous studies related to gerunds and infinitives to ensure content relevance.

To complement the grammar test, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to explore factors contributing to their errors. A smaller group of participants was chosen based on the frequency and patterns of errors identified in the test results. The interviews aimed to gain insights into learners' perceptions of difficulties in using gerunds and infinitives, their learning experiences, and possible influences such as first language interference, confusion about grammar rules, or insufficient exposure to authentic usage. The interview data served as supporting evidence to enrich the interpretation of findings from the written data.

Data collection was carried out in several stages. First, the grammar test was administered during a scheduled class session under controlled conditions. Participants were given sufficient time to complete all sections of the test independently. Their responses were collected and coded for analysis. Second, the researcher reviewed the test results to identify recurring errors and select participants for follow-up interviews. Third, interviews were conducted individually, recorded with participants' consent, and transcribed for analysis.

The data were analyzed using the procedures of error analysis proposed in second language acquisition research, involving identification, classification, description, and interpretation of errors. The first step involved identifying errors related to gerunds and infinitives in students' responses. Each error was examined to determine whether it represented incorrect form selection, omission, addition, or misordering.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the findings of the study on common errors in gerunds and infinitives among EFL students based on data obtained from sentence construction tasks and paragraph writing, and semi-structured interviews. The findings are organized according to the types of errors identified, the frequency

of occurrence, and the factors contributing to these errors. The analysis revealed that students produced systematic and recurring errors, indicating persistent difficulties in mastering English verb complementation involving gerunds and infinitives.

Based on the analysis of students' written responses, two major categories of errors were identified: (1) misuse of infinitives instead of gerunds and (2) misuse of gerunds instead of infinitives.

### 3.1. Misuse of Gerunds

The error found in the data was the misuse of base verb in contexts where gerund was required. Student 1 produced sentence such as *he enjoying work with me* instead of *he is enjoying working with me*. This pattern appeared consistently in paragraph writing task.

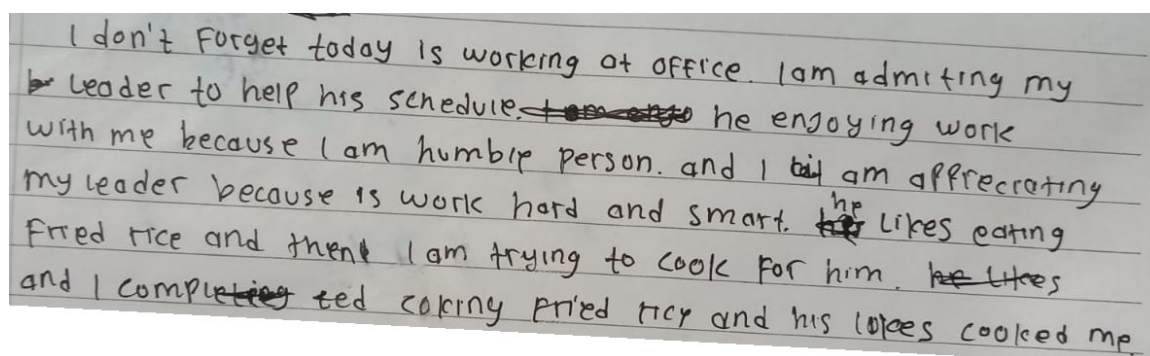


Figure 1. Student's Error in Gerund 1

This finding suggests that student tended to overgeneralize the use of base verb as a default form after verbs. In this case, student seemed to assume that verbs are commonly followed by "base verb," regardless of verb-specific complementation patterns. This tendency may reflect oversimplification strategies often used by EFL learners when confronted with grammatical uncertainty.

The errors found in the data were the misuse of to plus verb-ing and base verb in contexts where gerunds were required. Student 2 produced sentence such as *Deny go to fishing* instead of *Deny goes fishing*. This pattern appeared consistently in paragraph writing task. He also produced sentence such as *Deny enjoy delay* instead of *Deny enjoys delaying*.

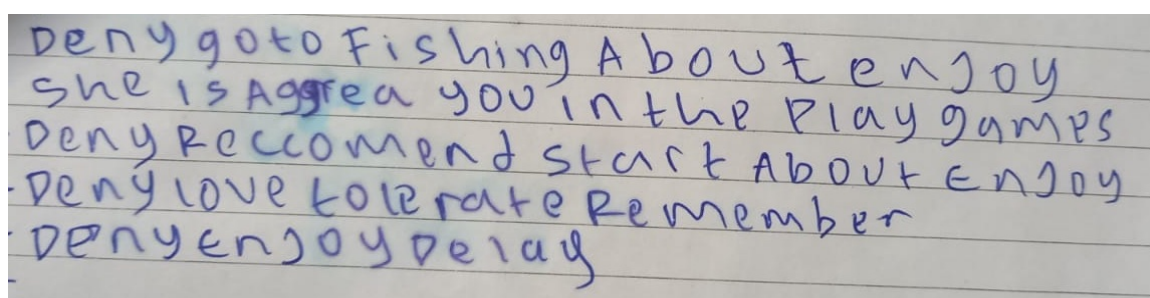


Figure 2. Student's Error in Gerund 2

This finding suggests that student tended to overgeneralize the use of to plus verb-ing and base verb as a default form after verbs. In this case, student seemed to assume that verbs are commonly followed by “to + verb-ing,” regardless of verb-specific complementation patterns. This tendency may reflect oversimplification strategies often used by EFL learners when confronted with grammatical uncertainty.

### 3.2. Misuse of Infinitives

The error found in the data was the misuse of base verb in contexts where infinitive was required. Student 3 produced sentence such as *I will to start study make a journal* instead of *I will start to study in making a journal*. This pattern appeared consistently in paragraph writing task.

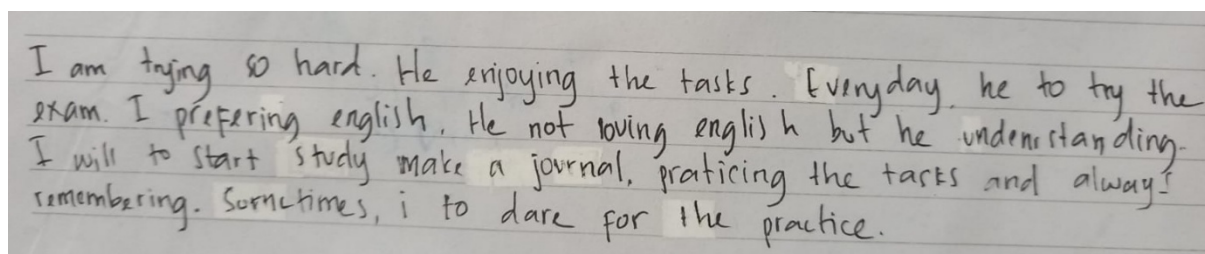


Figure 3. Student's Error in Infinitive 1

This finding suggests that student tended to overgeneralize the use of base verb as a default form after verbs. In this case, student seemed to assume that verbs are commonly followed by “base verb,” regardless of verb-specific complementation patterns. This tendency may reflect oversimplification strategies often used by EFL learners when confronted with grammatical uncertainty.

The error found in the data was the misuse of to plus verb-ing in contexts where infinitive was required. Student 4 produced sentence such as *he want to watching movie at cinema* instead of *he wants to watch movie at cinema*. This pattern appeared consistently in paragraph writing task.

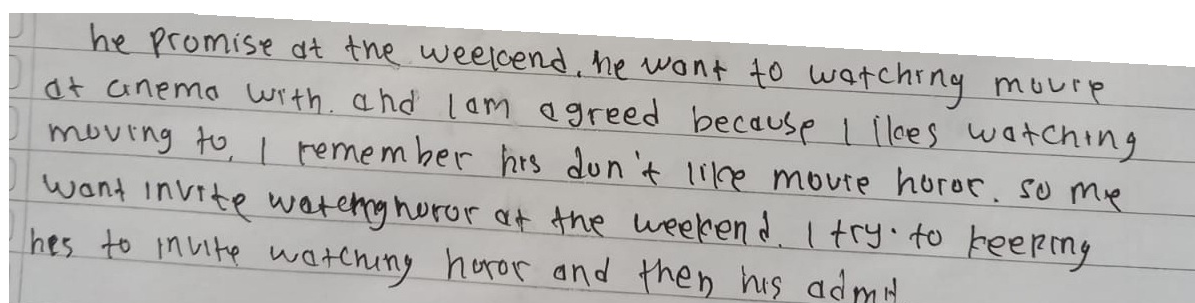


Figure 4. Student's Error in Infinitive 2

This finding suggests that student tended to overgeneralize the use of to plus verb-ing as a default form after verbs. In this case, student seemed to assume that verbs are commonly followed by “to + verb-ing,” regardless of verb-specific complementation patterns. This tendency may reflect oversimplification strategies often used by EFL learners when confronted with grammatical uncertainty.

A total of 4 grammatical errors related to gerunds and infinitives were identified from the students' written productions. The errors were classified into two major categories: misuse of gerunds (2 errors, 50%) and misuse of infinitives (2 errors, 50%).

### 3.3. Students' Interview

The interview results revealed that many students experienced difficulties in distinguishing the use of gerunds and infinitives while writing paragraphs in English. One participant explained that confusion often occurred because different verbs follow different grammatical patterns. Some verbs require gerunds, while others must be followed by infinitives. The student admitted that this inconsistency made writing more challenging, especially when trying to construct grammatically correct sentences. To overcome this problem, the participant usually searched for examples in grammar books or online resources and reviewed lists of verbs commonly followed by gerunds or infinitives. This finding indicates that students still rely heavily on memorization and external references to understand grammatical patterns.

Another participant stated that using gerunds and infinitives in paragraph writing was difficult because they were still uncertain about when to use the “-ing” form and when to use the “to + verb” form. The student also mentioned the desire to make sentences sound natural rather than awkward or overly formal. As a result, the participant needed to pay close attention to sentence construction in order to avoid grammatical errors. Furthermore, the student highlighted that some verbs can be followed by both gerunds and infinitives, but with different meanings, which often created additional confusion. This finding demonstrates that students not only struggle with grammar rules but also with understanding subtle differences in meaning and natural language use.

The interviews also showed that students had difficulty creating sentence variations while still maintaining grammatical accuracy. One participant explained that they often repeated the same sentence patterns because they were afraid of making mistakes when using gerunds and infinitives in different ways. The student admitted that varying sentence structures while applying correct grammar required a deeper understanding of verb patterns. To address this issue, the participant attempted to memorize commonly used verb combinations and practice them repeatedly in writing activities. This suggests that limited mastery of grammatical structures may reduce students' confidence in producing more varied and sophisticated sentences.

In addition, another participant explained that forgetting grammar rules was one of the major causes of errors in using gerunds and infinitives. The student stated that some verbs can be followed by either form, but the meanings may change depending on the structure used. This situation often caused uncertainty when writing paragraphs because the student had to ensure that the sentences remained coherent and grammatically correct. To solve this problem, the participant usually reviewed grammar notes, checked learning modules provided by the lecturer, searched for examples online, and reread previous assignments. Sometimes, the student also discussed the problem with classmates who had a better

understanding of the topic. This finding highlights the importance of collaborative learning and continuous practice in improving grammatical competence.

First student's interview:

*When I'm writing, I often get confused about which form to use. I think that's confusing because not all verbs follow the same rules. Some require a gerund, while others require an infinitive. I usually handle it by looking at examples in books or online, or by checking a list of verbs that typically use a gerund or an infinitive.*

Second student's interview:

*Sometimes I find it a bit difficult to use gerunds or infinitives when writing paragraphs. The difficulty usually arises because I'm still often confused about when to use the "ing" form in a gerund and when to use the "to" form in an infinitive. Besides that, I also want the sentences I write to sound natural and not stiff. So I need to be careful not to misuse these verb forms. Gerunds and infinitives are quite confusing because some verbs can be followed by both, but their meanings can differ. Well, it's little things like that that often cause confusion when writing paragraphs. I also find it difficult to create sentence variations that still use gerunds and infinitives correctly without repeating the same pattern. I usually handle it by memorizing common verb patterns.*

Third student's interview:

*Sometimes I find it a bit difficult because I tend to forget when to use a gerund and when to use an infinitive. Gerunds and infinitives can be confusing when writing paragraphs because some verbs can be followed by either, but the meanings often differ. Besides, the rules aren't always consistent, so I often make mistakes. I have to make sure the sentences stay coherent and the grammar is correct. When choosing between a gerund and an infinitive, I usually look through my grammar notes or the module you gave us, search for examples online, or - at previous assignments to jog my memory, and sometimes I also ask a friend who might understand it better.*

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that EFL students still experienced significant difficulties in using gerunds and infinitives accurately in sentence construction and paragraph writing. The analysis identified recurring errors related to the misuse of gerunds and infinitives, particularly the inappropriate use of base verbs and "to + verb-ing" structures in contexts where specific verb complementation patterns were required. These errors demonstrated that students tended to overgeneralize grammatical rules and relied on simplified sentence structures when they were uncertain about the correct forms. The consistent occurrence of these errors indicated that students had not yet fully mastered the grammatical distinctions between gerunds and infinitives in English writing.

Furthermore, the interview results supported the findings from the writing tasks by showing that students frequently felt confused about choosing between gerunds and infinitives. The participants explained that different verbs follow different grammatical patterns, which made writing more challenging. Students also reported difficulties in understanding verbs that can be followed by both gerunds and infinitives with changes in meaning. In addition, they struggled to create varied and natural sentence structures while maintaining grammatical accuracy. These findings suggest that the complexity and

inconsistency of English verb complementation patterns significantly affect students' confidence and writing performance.

The study also revealed that students relied heavily on memorization strategies, grammar notes, online examples, and peer discussions to overcome their difficulties. Although these strategies helped students reduce errors to some extent, they were not always sufficient for developing deeper grammatical understanding and automatic language use. The findings indicate that limited exposure to contextualized grammar practice and insufficient opportunities for communicative writing activities may contribute to the persistence of these errors. Therefore, students require more meaningful learning experiences that allow them to apply gerunds and infinitives in authentic communicative contexts rather than merely memorizing grammar rules.

Based on these findings, it is suggested that English lecturers implement more interactive and contextualized grammar instruction focusing on the practical use of gerunds and infinitives in writing activities. Teachers should provide students with varied exercises, sentence-completion tasks, collaborative learning activities, and detailed corrective feedback to strengthen their understanding of verb patterns. In addition, students are encouraged to increase their exposure to English through reading, writing, and engaging with authentic English materials such as articles, videos, and conversations. Future researchers are also recommended to conduct broader studies involving larger populations and different educational contexts to gain a more comprehensive understanding of grammatical errors related to gerunds and infinitives among EFL learners.

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