

Grammatical Analysis of Students' Narrative Writing

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ABSTRACT

In foreign language learning, grammar is a crucial element in communication, and without the correct organization of grammar, language exchange is intruded. This study explored grammatical issues in students' narrative writing. Data were collected from students' narrative writing products that belonging to an English One class of the Accounting Diploma III Program of Bina Sarana Informatika University, Jakarta, Indonesia. The collected data were analyzed to examine grammatical issues encountered by the students using Dulay (1982) surface strategy taxonomy, which covers omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering errors; and Sadiah and Royani (2019) for verb of tenses, punctuation and preposition. Results showed there were totally 51 grammatical errors identified in the students' writing products, specifically, existed 30 errors of others, 8 omission errors, 6 misinformation errors, 4 misordering errors, and 3 addition errors. It is expected that the findings can assist teachers and learners in overcoming grammatical issues, so that the teachers can use better solutions in teaching grammar and the learners can improve their English grammar and writing skills.

Keywords: Grammatical Analysis; Grammatical Error; Narrative Writing

INTRODUCTION

In learning English, students focus on four skills, which are reading, listening, speaking and writing. Those skills should be mastered and practiced by the students, and among the four language skills, writing is among the least liked by many ESL students (Hanim, Rahmat Noor; Arepin, Mazlen ; Yunos, D. Rohayu Mohd; Rahman, 2021). In the learning and teaching process, writing skill involves planning, writing, editing and in some cases, rewriting, so this skill considered to be the most difficult and complicated skill for the students in every level of study. The practice is needed to become good at something and in this case, writing needs a lot of practice, as it is time-consuming and takes a lot of concentration as well as guidance and needs effort by both teachers and students themselves (Hinkel, 2013).

There are many components of writing need to be considered in producing good and comprehensible piece of writing essay or paragraph. Meyers (2005:2) stated that writing is a process of discovering, organizing, and putting ideas on paper, reshaping, and revising. Writing can be defined as the process of doing something dealing with problems and difficulties in discovering interesting ideas,

organizing, and putting them on the paper that is appropriate with the writing project.

One of the types of writing is narrative. It is a story of a string of events occurring in space and time which is ordered in a series of events connected by the logic of cause and effect. Purba (2018:9) said that a narrative text is a type of text which tells a story that happened in the past, the purpose of this text is to give moral value and to entertain the reader with a story. In writing narrative text students should follow the generic structure and language features of this text. In this case, they have to write narrative text step by step, starting with the orientation, complication, and resolution. Koilara and Tambunan (2020:157) many students feel difficulty in writing narrative text with a generic structure because they do not understand the generic structure of the narrative text. While activities to develop learners' conversational fluency or narrating personal experiences are typically less work and more fun for both teachers and students, they have not demonstrably equipped students for success in university-level academic courses (Bacha, 2002).

An important aspect of writing is the appropriate use of grammar (Hinkel, 2013). Writing needs well knowledge and hard thinking when the students produce words, sentences, paragraph at the same time with good English grammatical. Many students have problems in understanding and using English grammar. Quirk (2000) said that grammar as complex system in which all parts of grammar are mutually defining and there is no simple linear path we can take in explaining one part in terms of another. The grammatical correctness is described as analyzing and explaining in a sentence while the letter is focused in the attempt of making the learners understand how to use the language in a real context. Patterson (2001) explained that through low understanding of grammar, students will have no insight knowledge of what they should do when they write also fail in expressing their ideas in written production.

Errors in language learning is natural. It plays a fundamental role in investigating, identifying and describing second language learners' errors and their causes (Al Kresheh, 2016). There are many aspects that can cause the learners of English as a foreign language make errors, and sometimes mother tongue interference also became one of the caused. Error Analysis is the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes, and consequences of unsuccessful language (James, 1998) . It is an activity to identify, classify and interpreted or describe the errors made by someone in speaking or in writing and it is carried out to obtain information on common difficulties faced by someone in speaking or in writing English sentences. Most importantly, Error Analysis can enable second language teachers to find out different sources of second language errors and take some pedagogical precautions towards them. Moreover, Error Analysis can provide a good methodology for investigating second language learners' errors (Al Kresheh, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing Skill

Writing is more difficult rather than the other language skills because it needs well knowledge and hard thinking when they are produce words, sentences and paragraphs with a good grammatical. Written text has a number of conventions which separate it out from speaking. Apart from differences in Grammar and Vocabulary, there are issues of letter, word, and text formation, manifested by handwriting, spelling, and layout and punctuation. Writing is the process of using symbols, letters of the alphabet, punctuation and spaces to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form and it is a medium of human communication that involves the representation of a language with symbols (Al-Atabi, 2020). Writing has been an essential part of language as it is a mean of communication. Writing is the way to produce language and express ideas, feelings, and opinions. It is a process that what people write is often heavily influenced by the constraints of genres, and then these elements have to be present in learning activities (Harmer, 2004:31).

One of the types of writing is narrative text. Narrative text is a kind of text which used to tell a story that occurs in past events Mahendra and Rosa (2014:79), while Herman (2014:31) added that narrative is introduced to amuse or entertain the readers with actual or imaginary experience in different ways, and it always deals with problems that lead to the climax and then turn into a solution to the problem. Narrative text is generally distinguished into two forms, fiction and non fiction, and it can be fairy story, fable, personal experience, folks, and many more. The generic structures of narrative writing consist of (1) orientation in which the narrator tells about who is in the story, when the story takes place, and where the actions happen; (2) a complication, that sets off a chain of events that influence what will happen in the story; (3) a sequence of events where the characters react to the complication; (4) a resolution in which the characters finally sort out the complication; and (5) a coda that provides comments or moral based on what has been learnt from the story. By writing narrative text, students can learn from others' life experiences; it also expose students to literature and build vocabularies, promote growth and trust between teacher and students, and bringing closeness with other students (Butcher, 2006).

Grammar

Grammar is defined as a systematic way accounting for a predicting an ideal speaker's or hearer's knowledge of the language. This is done by a set of rules or principles that can be used to generate all well-formed or grammatical utterances in the language (Purpura, 2004). It also be defines as the way words are put together to make correct sentences (Penny Ur, 1996)). A specific instance of grammar called structure, for example verb of tenses (simple past, simple future, noun plurals, etc), but not all languages have the same structure, such as

progressive verbs, for instance “He is walking down the street”, in Indonesian, there is no progressive verb. The meaning of a grammatical structure may be quite difficult to teach because grammar does not only affect how units of language are combined in order to look right; but also affects their meaning. It is simple to understand the use of plural –s for noun that consists of more than one item, a book – two books; but, it is difficult to understand the difference of using present perfect tense (I have been to Japan) and simple past tense (I went to Japan). There is a controversy of teaching and learning grammar for general students of English. Some said that grammar is important to be learnt for all language learners, but some others said When someone learns his/her mother tongue, he/she does not need learn the grammar. On the other hand teaching and learning grammar is not only necessary or sufficient for language learning, but also it helps or not to improving mastery of the language not as an end in itself (Penny Ur, 1996).

Error Analysis

Every language learner experiences a different pace of learning due to his ability in absorbing language input and producing language output, whether it is his mother tongue or second or foreign language. The study of error analysis relates to a linguistic study focusing on learners’ errors in producing the target language, having the comparison of the target language and the language produced by second language learners Khansir (2012). Second language learners usually get difficulty in producing language due to the meddling of their mother tongue competence. This can be positive as well as negative language transfers, where the positive language transfer is from the similarity of mother and target language, whereas negative language transfer is from the difference of language forms between mother and target language (Boss, 2005). These learners experience a state where they construct their language competence, by making errors and mistakes, due to the absence of connection within their brain, and that this can be overcome by practicing. This condition can influence language learners in understanding and using the language. The repetition that they can deliver may form fossilizing on language knowledge that could be produced onwards in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid making errors in language discourse, as Dulay et al. (1982) have emphasized that errors are the uttered language of an individual without the awareness of the language learner breaking the rules of the language itself and that this is a process that cannot be prevented at all.

It is important to investigate the grammatical errors produced by the students to avoid repetition of errors and giving correct language productions. Dulay et al. (1982) formulated the common errors that have been uttered by second language learners as follows.

1. Omitting grammatical morphemes: The language learner unsuccessfully produces a word that does not specifically change the meaning of the intended utterance.
2. Double marking: This refers to when an individual utters a grammar feature more than once.

3. Regularizing: This refers to the situation when a grammar rule is put into regular grammar rule. For example, “womens” when it should be “women”.
4. Using archiforms: This happens when a person cannot differentiate the use of “him” and “he” and therefore mixes them.
5. Alternating forms: Using two or more forms in random alternation
6. Misordering: This refers to when words are jumbled in spoken or written form.

Moreover, There are six elements typical errors, such as: verb agreement it is about matching in number and person of subject, capitalization is the first letter of a word, usage is about articles, plural-singular form, and preposition, sentence pattern is the basic sentence pattern of English is subject+verb+object/complement, pronoun is about a pronoun represents a person, place, thing, or idea without naming it and the last is spelling it is about relatively minor importance as far as reading is concerned (Sadiah dan Royani, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design and Sample

This study was a content analysis. It is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Within a content analysis, identification of items, such as themes and categories are presented (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 2002). This study is to investigate the grammar abilities of a group of students by finding out the percentage of the grammar errors in their narrative writing into five aspects: Sentence Pattern (subject and verb), Tenses, Pronoun, Preposition, Punctuation and Spelling made. It was conducted at Bina Sarana Informatika University, Jakarta, Indonesia.

Instrument and Procedure

The data consisted of 15 students' narrative writing products. The students were completing their Diploma of Accounting and their writing pieces were taken from the course called English One (*Bahasa Inggris 1*). In the course, the students were asked to write stories related to their daily lives and experiences that included in their learning topics.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data within research is the main essence and the body of the research itself (Flick, 2014). This step within the study has been designed to achieve the results. The data were the writing products of part of the course that had been assigned by the investigators and then the data were analyzed using Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's surface structure taxonomy of different types of errors. The four main categories, together with their subcategories, of second language discourse variety according to Dulay et al. (1982) are Omission, Addition (Double-Marking, Regularization, Simple Addition), Misinformation

(Regularization, Archiforms, Alternating Forms), and Misordering. Additional theory to strengthen the analysis is according Sadiyah and Royani, 2019 that stated the six elements of grammatical errors, which are verb agreement or sentence pattern, capitalization, usage, plural-singular form, and preposition.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis, the researchers identified the grammatical errors made by the participants in their narrative writing pieces which consisted of one page. The data were once again analyzed using the guidelines of error variables proposed by Dulay et al. (1982). The surface structure taxonomy (Dulay et al., 1982) was divided into four different types of errors, namely the omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. An omission is where language production has an absence of vocabulary although this may not change the meaning being conveyed by the speaker or writer; Addition is a language error where a word is added to a sentence making addition toward a well-functioning phrase, this includes double-marking, regularization, and simple addition; Misinformation is where morpheme and structure are incorrect, which also has the subcategories, namely regularization, archi-forms, and alternating forms; lastly, Misordering is the error that produces improper vocabulary placement of morpheme or morphemes in a sentence (Dulay et al., 1982). Added by Sadiyah and Royani (2019), verb of tenses identifies when an event happens or describes a state, punctuation is the use of special marks that you add to writing to separate phrases and sentences, to show that something is a question, etc.. and preposition indicates relationships, such as position, place, direction time, manner, agent, possession, and condition, between their objects and other parts of the sentence.

After examining the writing products of 15 students, the researchers totally identified 51 errors in all eight writing products. most of the errors made by the students were in the category of OTHERS, amounting up to 30 errors, mostly in verb tenses. It was followed by 8 errors of OMISSION, where the participants missed using the word “a” and “the” to complete a noun; 6 errors in MISINFORMATION and 4 errors of MISORDERING, and the last was 3 errors of ADDITION. Here are the examples of the students’ grammatical errors:

1. First, the examples of OTHERS were
 - a. *“I will share my experience about me going to the Blackpink concert last March” (verb of tense problem: “will share [future tense]” should be replaced by “would share” due to the adverb of time in the past “last march”);*
 - b. *“I also felt a little scared because I knew how dangerous is covid 19 at that time” (verb of tense problem “felt” and “knew” [past tense], verb “is” [present tense]), and*
 - c. *“I still can't believe I'm in this place...” (missing a comma [punctuation] after the word “believe”).*
2. Second, the examples of OMISSION were
 - a. *“There was a practical exam MYOB Accounting (missing ‘the’ before*

- 'MYOB Accounting'*);
- b. *"I got a call to work in the assembling production operator"* (missing *'as an'* before *'operator'*)
 - c. *"I only wash my clothes when I get day of"* (missing *"a"* before *"day off"*).
3. Third, the examples of ADDITION were
- a. *"...whether there are any symptoms of Covid on them, that person."* (the addition of unnecessary *"that person"*).
 - b. *"I put the stuffing into the skin that I made the filling for.."* (the addition of unnecessary information *"that I made the filling for"*)
4. Fourth, the examples of MISINFORMATION were
- a. *"On the night before Eid, I helped my family..."* (*"on"* should be replaced *"in"*);
 - b. *"My job as the Covid 19 task force is to sterilize rooms or rooms.."* (*"or"* should be replaced *"by"*) and
 - c. *"I recheck the stuffs on my bag..."* (*"on"* should be replaced *"in"*).
5. Fifth, the examples of MISORDERING were
- a. *"My job description besides inputting the goods to be sent, I also use the BCA EDC machine ..."* (*"my job description"* should appear after *"besides inputting the goods to be sent"*, the sentence should be *"Besides inputting the goods to be sent, my job description is using BCA EDC Machine..."*).
 - b. *"The lecturer usually explains the material and gives assignments after the material is finished and absent"* (the sentence is misordering, it should be *"The lecturer usually explains the learning material and gives assignment; after that, she takes attendance."*)

Those examples were the evidence that most students were still completely unaware of the grammatical errors they made during their writing sessions, although they had much time to reread their writing and then rewrite them after editing. The students were still being confused mostly in the category of others, that was considered as the common mistakes because it relates to the verb of tenses and punctuation (the use of comma, period, capital letters, etc). The students of Accounting Diploma III Program do not use English frequently, but they should continually practice to use English both in speaking and writing because it was important for them when they finally work in industrial fields.

CONCLUSSION

Based on the analysis results, there are totally 51 grammatical errors identified in the students' writing products, specifically, existed 30 errors of others, 8 omission errors, 6 misinformation errors, 4 misordering errors, and 3 addition errors, It shows that teachers need to do more work to highly improve the grammar competence of the students. Teachers need to innovatively develop the students' understanding of grammar by implementing the teaching and learning technique suitable for teaching grammar. Because the students mostly disregard of using the

right punctuation in their writing, teachers also need to give more attention in punctuation and make the students more understand that punctuation is important in writing. However, this study used a small of data and excluded internal and external factors that can affect the productions of the writing projects, therefore for further studies it is necessary to use bigger data and evaluate some aspects that influence the production of the students' writing to get more conclusive solutions in solving these grammatical errors in narrative writing products.

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