AN ANALYSIS OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN ESSAY WRITING PRODUCTS

Salsabila Luki Sucia[1*,] Muhammad Amin[2], Amrullah[3]
[123]English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,
University of Mataram, Indonesia
*Corresponding Author: salsabilalukisucia@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to (1) identify the grammatical errors made by fourth-semester students when writing essays and (2) determine the possible causes. The population of this study is 4th-semester students majoring in English at University of Matatam in the academic year 2020/2021. Furthermore, a simple random sampling technique is used in selecting the samples. Twenty-eight students participated in this study. The data analysis results indicate that students make four types of errors: omission, addition, misformation and misordering. The type of grammatical error with the highest percentage is the misformation error at 51.1%, followed by the omission error at 25.2%, the addition error at 22.8%, and the misordering error at 0.7%. The factors that lead to errors made by the students are a little knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, and misinterpretation.

Keywords: error analysis, essay writing products, grammatical error

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is a compulsory subject in the Indonesian curriculum. It is taught from high school to university. English is now a global language that must be learned. It is a global phenomenon that mass media such as newspapers, magazines, journals, academic books or other sources of information are printed in English. In English subject, the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing must be mastered.

As one of the language skills, writing has occupied the most places in English language skills. Several aspects of language are involved in writing, for instance, text models, grammar, checking a word, spelling, punctuation and prepositions. Harmer states that writing has some conventions which separate it from speaking. Apart from grammar and vocabulary differences, there are letter, word and text formation issues manifested by handwriting, spelling, layout and punctuation (Hammer, 2002). The competence to write well is not obtained naturally. Writing ability must be acquired through practice and experience. Composing likewise includes creating, which suggests the capacity to tell or retell pieces of statement in the form of narrative, descriptive, argumentative, expository, explanatory, recount texts, etc. However, the learners often make errors in composition, especially in grammar form.

The errors are strongly influenced by the Indonesian sentence structure when forming English sentences. It is a problem that foreign language learners, including university students,

often face. Making mistakes in the process of learning a foreign language is quite common. Richards and Schmidt (2002, in Prathia, 2018) claim that in language learning a language, students' errors are caused by several processes, including expanding patterns from the target language, borrowing patterns from their mother tongue, and expressing meaning using already known grammar. These errors are reflected in students' productive language skills, such as speaking and writing. In this circumstance, the researcher focused more on the students' writing.

According to Brown (2001), writing is merely a graphical representation of spoken language and its written performance, similar to vocal performance. The only difference lies in the graphics rather than the auditory signals. In other words, writing is a complex activity that involves several phases of completing writing assignments. In addition, Bello (1997 in Khazaal 2015) states that writing is an essential productive language skill for enhancing language acquisition, as students experiment with words, sentences, and lengthy works of writing to effectively communicate their ideas and reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they learn in the classroom. Therefore, writing is crucial in education because it helps students meet their learning requirements.

In writing English, grammar is a vital language component and an important aspect to know due to we can make the correct and meaningful sentences. According to Klammer (2000 in Afandi, 2013), grammar is a system of a language or a bunch of rules which ideally related to correct sentences while using the language. On the other hand, Brown (2001) also said that grammatical competence is an essential component of communicative competence.

Grammar in written communication has become inseparable. It is one of the sub-skills supporting writing and essential to apply in language learning. It examines the principles for word formation and sentence construction. It is the fundamental element of correct language knowledge or ability. It must be learned by students who want to learn about language because it is needed when the students make a writing paper.

In writing assessment criteria, grammar becomes a significant part of writing. Grammar range and accuracy in assessing this criterion are sentence structure, use of correct tenses, place correct punctuation, use of simple or complex statements with clear ideas and control of grammar. Making each writing component connect or relate to one another is essential. If the students' writing does not have the correct grammar, the readers cannot understand the meaning inside.

Referring to English grammar, most students still make mistakes. The previous studies discussed grammatical errors made in the native language, using Indonesian grammar, misspellings and lack of grammatical understanding (Khrisnasamy, 2015 in Arnillah, 2008). It proves that grammatical rules constantly become a complex issue student's face in learning English. Many students still have problems with English grammar because of the interference of Indonesian grammar. In practice, the structure of the Indonesian language can influence Indonesian students in making sentences. For example: *Dia sangat mencintai adiknya*. With such a grammatical pattern, Indonesian students who learned English could express the idea as in the Indonesian language pattern: *She very loves her brother*. Of course, this statement cannot be

accepted grammatically in English. The correct grammar rules are that the word *very* cannot describe the adverb *very loved*. The word *very* in English is used to modify adjectives. Therefore, the morpheme *very* is linked before the adjective, for instance: *very* good, *very* beautiful, *very* handsome, *very* hungry, *very* important, etc. So, the statement should be. *She loves her brother very much*. (Pudiono, 2012).

Students in the English Education Study Program are trained to teach English. Therefore, to be good English teachers, they must be proficient in all language abilities. They should become good listeners, speakers, readers, and writers. If they master grammatical knowledge, they will be able to teach writing effectively. In an aim to master writing ability aspects, it is required to analyze errors in written essays to find out how much their acquisition is achieved in the teaching and learning process.

Writing skills are taught to fourth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at Mataram University, who are at the end of their second year and have passed the first, second, and third writing courses. In other words, they have been taught about writing from semester one to semester four. Thus it can be assumed that these students should not have difficulties in writing. In the fourth semester, students learn writing as a process and product. In learning writing as a process, learners must follow a series of steps and learn many aspects of languages in class. While learning writing as a product, learners are supposed to become independent learners.

On the other hand, the students also learn grammar in different subjects and writing for four consecutive semesters. However, when acquiring writing skills, the students make errors, especially in grammatical form. Hence, error analysis is significant in revealing what types of errors students make the most. Based on the explanation above, the researcher is conducting this research entitled "An Analysis of Grammatical Error in Essay Writing Products."

RESEARCH METHODE

The researcher used a qualitative descriptive method in this study to analyse and explain the grammatical errors. The participants in this study are the 4th semester students of English department at University of Mataram academic year 2020/2021.

In order to collect the data, 28 students from the 4th semester were randomly taken as participants. The researcher collected the students' essay writing tasks. The data collection was intended to determine the types of grammatical errors made by the students. After that, the researcher analysed the students' essay writing products to focus on their grammatical errors. The results were analysed using the theory expressed by Corder (1981) on the classification of errors: omission, addition, misordering, and misformation. Interviews used as data collection instrument to determine the possible causes of students' errors. The researcher interviewed 12 students to get their answers about what factors caused them to make grammatical errors in their essay writing.

After gaining and collecting the data, the researcher was taken the next step that is analysing the data. In analysing the data, the researcher used some procedures as follows:

1. Identifying students' errors

   In this step, the data obtained were identified to determine the students' errors in grammar use by carefully examining each student's essay writing products. The errors found were then rechecked with the students during the interview to check whether the errors were of a systematic or unsystematic type.

2. Classifying errors

   After identifying all the data, the researcher described the errors made by the students. The data was classified into error categories expressed by Corder (1981), including omission, addition, misordering, and misformation errors.

3. Calculating the errors

   In calculating the errors, the percentage of the errors was calculated using the following formula:

   $$P = \frac{n}{N} \times 100\%$$

   > **Notes:**
   >
   > P: percentage of errors
   > n: frequency of error's occurrence
   > N: total number of the whole errors

4. Explanation of the Errors and the Possible Causes of the Errors

   The last step was to describe students' grammatical errors in their essay writing by providing examples. Furthermore, from the interview results, the researcher presented the factors that caused students to make errors.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

After obtaining data on student writing products, it was found that students at Mataram University made many grammatical errors. After the data gained was processed, four hundred and sixty (460) grammatical errors were found in the student's essay writing products. The errors are then categorized into several types of errors according to Corders' (1981) classification as follows: The calculating of the errors that are made by the students are:

Table 1: Number of Errors

No	Types of Errors	Number of Time Error Made
1	Errors of Omission	116
2	Errors of Addition	105
3	Errors of Misordering	4
4	Errors of Misformation	235
	TOTAL	**460**

Types of Error

Below is a discussion of these error forms:

1) Error of Omission

Klassen (1991 in Sanjaya, 2017) defines an omission error as the absence of an element that should be present in a well-formed utterance. In writing their essays, the students made 116 omission errors or 25.2%. Here are some examples of students' errors:

Table 2. Errors of Omission

No	Incorrect Sentences	Correct Sentences
1	Stress due to the journey also reduced. (FR)	Stress due to the journey **is** also reduced
2	Not only for young generation but also for workers as the internet user may connected with internet. (ML)	Not only for **the** young generation but also for workers as internet users may **be** connected to **the** internet
3	…computers not only use for work. (RA)	…computers **are** not only used for work.
4	But, on the other hand there's another meaning for senior levels who always wearing the uniform it's because organization activities… (FJ)	But, on the other hand, there's another meaning for senior levels that always wear the uniform it's because **of** organization activities…
5	…economic background may not able to support… (NS)	…economic background may not **be** able to support…

The sentences above show that the students made errors of omission in writing their essays. The first Sentence (1) shows that the students omitted to be (is). The following Sentence (2) shows that the auxiliary verb (be) was omitted from the verb phrase may be. Meanwhile, the third Sentence (3) to be (are) was omitted. Furthermore, Sentence (4) has the preposition (of) omitted. Then, Sentence (5), shows that the students omitted the auxiliary verb (be).
.

2) Errors of Addition

Ellis (2008) mentioned addition errors are the opposite of omission errors. The presence of elements that cannot appear in well-formed utterances is referred to as addition. The research participants made 105 addition errors, or around 22.8% of the total errors.

Table 3. Error of Addition

No	Incorrect Sentences	Correct Sentences
1	…make your personality changes **be** better than before. (AOF)	…make your personality changes better than before.
2	…the American government still supporting **the** Israel… (AFM)	…the American government still supporting Israel…
3	…apart by the ocean yet we are **be** able to upgrade the information easily and quickly in every situation in the world. (ML)	…apart from the ocean yet we are able to upgrade information easily and quickly in every situation in the world.

4	The human body also needs to rest from **are** the activities it performs. (BIN)	The human body also needs to rest from the activities it performs.
5	…we can get in university that will help us to be **a** good people. (AOF)	…we can get in the university that will help us to be good people.

It can be seen in Sentence (1) to be (*be*) is added where it was not supposed to be. In Sentence (2), the definite article (*the*) is added because the definite article "the" is used with countries that are states, unions, and republics. In Sentence (3), there is a double marking to be (*be*), which should not be added because there is already a to be (*are*). Moreover, in Sentence (4), to be (*are*) is added. In Sentence (5), article (*a*) should not be added because the word after it shows a plural word. Most of the addition errors happened with adding article and preposition where it does not belong.

3) Error of Misordering

Dulay and Krashen (1982) stated that misordering error is the misplacement of a morpheme or a group of morphemes in an utterance. Students make four misordering errors, which is about 0.7% of the total errors.

Table 4. Error of Misordering

No	Incorrect Sentences	Correct Sentences
1	What **can we** do to live a healthy life is to maintain healthy lifestyle. (BIN)	What **we can** do to live a healthy life is to maintain a healthy lifestyle.
2	…so will the **media social** also grew rapidly. (DPNI)	…so will the **social media** also grew rapidly.
3	So**,** that **why is** the people still being an internet user. (ML)	So, that **is why** people still being internet users.

The examples above show that the students make mistakes in word order. The first Sentence (1), there is an error in using an indirect question which means that the auxiliary verb (*can*) has to appear before the pronoun (*we*). Then, in Sentence (2), there is an error in using an adjective modifier. The noun (*media*) should appear after the adjective (*social*). Furthermore, in Sentence (3), the adverb (*why*) appears before the auxiliary verb (*is*).

4) Errors of Misformation

A misformation error is the use of an incorrect form or sentence structure, as stated in Sanjaya (2018) by Dulay & Krashen (1982). The students committed 235 misformation errors or 51.1% of all errors. Here are some examples of the errors made by the students:

Table 5. Error of Misformation

No	Incorrect Sentences	Correct Sentences
1	…and straight from the both	…and straight from the both

	countries **who is** having a conflict. (AFM)	countries **that are** having a conflict.
2	When internet and mobile phone technology **is** getting more advanced,… (DPNI)	When internet and mobile phone technology **are** getting more advanced,…
3	The existence of the internet can make it easier **to** humans. (ML)	The existence of the internet can make it easier **for** humans.
4	Computer technology can't be ignored and not **use** it anymore. (RA)	Computer technology can't be ignored and not **used** anymore.
5	…the person **are** not accustomed to strenuous exercise. (BIN)	…the person **is** not accustomed to strenuous exercise.

The misformation error made by the students in Sentence (1) is the wrong form of a relative pronoun and to be. The student is supposed to use the relative pronoun *that* and to be (*are*), but he uses the pronoun *who* and to be *is* instead. In Sentences (2) and (5), the student made errors in "to be". In Sentence (2), he used *is* instead of *are*. While in a Sentence (5), the opposite of Sentence (2), instead of using *is*, he used *are* for a singular noun. In Sentence (3), the student was supposed to use the preposition *for*, but he used *to* instead. In Sentence (4), the student was supposed to use *used*, but he used *use* instead.

Reason for Students' Errors

Based on interviews conducted with 4th-semester students at the University of Mataram, some causes of students' essay writing errors are lack of grammar and vocabulary, and mistranslation.

1. Little Knowledge of Vocabulary and Grammar

Intralingual errors represent characteristics of rule learning such as generation, incomplete application of the rule, and failure to learn in which situations the rule applies. Students with little grammar and vocabulary knowledge are likely to make these errors. Based on the interviews, most students admitted that they needed to understand grammar and vocabulary, which caused them to make errors.

"Because of the difference in the grammatical structure between Bahasa Indonesian and English, I'm confused use tenses." –FR
"Grammar is difficult, I can't" –ML
"Cause lack of practice, lack of reading (in English), lack of knowledge about vocab and grammar." –NS

The students admitted they had problems using tenses because their first language did not have tenses. Other students were confused about determining the irregular form of the past verb.

They said that the different forms of irregular verbs sometimes confuse them. The rest were unsure of the article and prepositions. This type of grammatical error represents a failure to learn the conditions under which rules apply.

2. Misinterpretation

Richards (1974) stated that developmental errors occur when students attempt to build hypotheses about the target language based on their limited knowledge and vocabulary. Therefore, the students use vocabulary with the same meaning in English that they found in the dictionary. In English, several words can be translated into many words depending on the context. Moreover, in translating texts, students translate word by word using the structure of their first language.

> "The main grammatical error is because we tend to translate Indonesia to English word by word." -AFM
> "In our language, the words 'use and wear' are translated into menggunakan. I use whichever" –RAS
> "I looked in the dictionary then wrote as best I can" – RA

The dictionary cannot provide the exact definition for each word they seek. The dictionary provides words with a general meaning instead of more specific ones. However, many students needed to be made aware of the context where each word goes. Therefore they chose the word which was more familiar to them and had the closest meaning in their native language. Students professed that they possess a limited vocabulary in their writing and utterance. Their vocabulary knowledge was gained by memorizing the words in a dictionary. Their little of knowledge in these areas was the possible cause of the error that they had made.

Discussion

According to Corder's (1981) theory of error classification, errors can be classified into omission, addition, misordering, and misformation. An omission error is an error where some sections which ought to be presented are absent. On the other hand, an addition error is the opposite of the previous error, which is the presence of an item that should not appear in the sentence. A misformation error is an error where the form of the sentence is wrong, and misordering error is when learners place the wrong order of items in their sentences.

In the findings, four types of errors were found. The errors are the error of omission, error of addition, error of misformation, and error of misordering. From the finding in this research, errors of misformation occurred the most often compared to the other errors. The percentage of the occurrence of misformation error is 51.1%, followed by error omission at 25.2%, the error of addition is 22.8%, and the error of misordering at 0.7%.

To compare with the findings of the research conducted by Holidazia (2016) and Putra (2016) regarding grammatical errors in writing, these researchers found similar types of errors:

omission, addition, misformation and misordering. In the research study conducted by Holidazia (2016) and Putra (2016), different results of the outcome of which errors were more dominant were found. In Holidazia's study error of misformation was the most dominant at 33.2%, followed by the error of omission at 31.6%, then the error of misordering at 24.6% and the error of addition at 10.5%. Meanwhile, in Putra's study, the error of omission was more dominant at 37.6%, followed was the error of addition at 28.7%, followed by a misordering error at 18.8%, and last was the error of misformation at 14.8%.

Based on the two previous studies, the highly supreme error in this research was the error of misformation, which was the same as Holidazia's study and the lowest percentage in Putra's study. Although Holidazia's study shows that the minimum error was the error of addition, next in Putra's study shows the least dominant error was misformation. Meanwhile, in this study, misordering has a minor percentage of the occurrence.

Based on the interviews, the researcher found that some factors that cause the student's errors are little knowledge in grammar and vocabulary and misinterpretation. In the interview, the students confess that using English tenses confuses them because of the many rules they should memorize and understand. Some students said they have little time to practice and read in English. Others said they sometimes translated from Indonesian to English when writing their essays.

CONSLUSION

Based on the discussion and the data analysis in the previous chapter, the researcher comes to some conclusions as follows:

1. The types of errors are found in the essay writing of 4th semester students are omission, addition, misordering, and misformation. Misformation error is the highest among them, followed by omission, addition, and misordering.

2. The causes of errors made by students are a little knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, as well as translation errors. From the students' answers in the interview, the researcher concluded that there was a relationship between the causes of students' errors that influenced their mistakes in writing essays.

REFERENCES

Afandi, W. J and Don, N. 2013. The Ability of the Third Grade Students in Using Different kind of Preposition: A Descriptive study at SMAN 1 Sungai Paur. *Journal of English Teaching.* 1(2): 626.

Arnillah, N. 2008. *Error Analysis in Writing Recount Text: A Study of Second Year in SMKN 1 Kuripan. Mataram*: University of Mataram.

Brown, H. D. 2001. *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd Edition). New York: Addition Wasley Longman.

Corder, S. P. 1981. *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. 2008. The Study of *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. 1997. *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford University Press.

Dulay, H. Marina, B. and Stephen K. 1982, *Language Two*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Harmer, J. 2002. *The Practice of English Language Teaching (3rd Edition).* London: Longman.

Holidazia, R. 2016. *An Analysis Of Grammatical Error In Writing Procedural Text By VIIth Grade Junior High School Students.* Mataram: University of Mataram.

Khazaal, E. N. 2015. Effect of Free Writing on ESP Students' Achievement in Writing Political Essays. From https://www.iasj.net-iasjPDF. (Access on 16 May 2020).

Prathia, A. D. 2018. *Grammatical Error Analysis of EFL Students Personal Letter Writing: A Case Study of Year XI Students of SMKN 4 Mataram Year of 2017/2018.* Mataram: University of Mataram.

Putra, D. P. 2016. *An Analysis Of Students' Grammatical Errors In writing English Composition: A Case Study At Grade XI Man 2 Model Mataram Academic Year 2015/2016.* Mataram: University of Mataram.

Pudiyono. 2012. *Indonesian Grammatical Interference Toward the Students' Spoken and Written English. International Journal for Education Studies.* 4(2):229-244.Nordquist, Richard. 2020. What is a Grammatical Error. From https://www.thoughco.com/grammatical-error-usage-1690911.

Richards, J, C. 1997. *Error Analysis Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition*. New York. Routledge.

Sanjaya, A. 2017. *An Analysis of Students' Grammatical Error in Writing Descriptive Text on The Eleventh Grade Students at SMA Negeri 4 Praya in The Academic Year Of 2017/2018.* Mataram: University of Mataram.