Grammatical Error Analysis of EFL Students’ Personal Letter Writing: A Case Study of Year XI Students of SMKN 4 Mataram Year of 2017/2018

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GRAMMATICAL ERROR ANALYSIS OF EFL STUDENTS’ PERSONAL LETTER WRITING: A CASE STUDY OF YEAR XI STUDENTS OF SMKN 4 MATARAM YEAR OF 2017/2018

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is (1) to find the type of grammatical errors made by students when writing personal letter, (2) to find the type of error dominantly made by the students, and (3) to find the possible cause of the errors. The analysis is based on Corder’s (1981) theory of errors classification. The population of this research is the second year students of SMKN 4 Mataram in academic year of 2017/2018 with the total population of 344 students. 43 students were taken as samples from different majors using random sampling technique. The data were collected using written test and interview and was analysed with qualitative method. From the analysis it was found that there were five types of errors that were made by the students, namely errors of omission, errors of addition, errors of misordering, errors of misformation, errors of misordering and errors of diction. The dominant error was errors of omission with 31.5%, followed with misformation, diction, addition and misordering with the percentage, respectively, 27.1%, 17.8%, 12.9%, and 9.6%. The causes of the errors made by the students was due to the interference of their first language, mistranslation and lack of knowledge in vocabulary and grammar.

Keywords: Corder, error analysis, personal letter
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is one of the four language skills that has to be mastered in learning a language along with speaking, listening and reading. To write well, one has to master some components of language such as vocabulary, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Writing is divided into some genres such as narrative, descriptive, short functional text, et cetera. Of all these genres of writing, the one that is used in daily lives is short functional text which is a text that is used to deliver information towards other people. One short functional text that is often used by people is Personal Letter.

When writing in English, students cannot avoid making mistakes in their writing. This error that can be found in the letters can cause a misunderstanding that will lead to wrong responses to the letter. According to Corder (1967), the study of Error Analysis is a proof that learning is taking place and, if studied carefully, it can provide insights on how foreign language is learnt. Therefore, this study is important to be carried out.

1.2 Research Question

1. What types of grammatical errors are made by the second year student of SMKN 4 Mataram in writing Personal Letter?
2. Which type of errors is dominantly made in writing Personal Letter by second year students of SMKN 4 Mataram?
3. What are the possible causes of the errors made in Personal Letter Writing by second year students of SMKN 4 Mataram?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the research questions, the objectives of this study are:

1. To find what type of grammatical errors are made by the second year students of SMKN 4 Mataram.
2. To find which type of errors is dominantly made in writing Personal Letter by the second year students of SMKN 4 Mataram.
3. To find what is the possible cause of the errors made in Personal Letter Writing by second year students of SMKN 4 Mataram.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study for this thesis is the second year of vocational school of SMKN 4 Mataram. The errors analysed in this study are the errors in writing personal letter which consist of: errors of omission, errors of addition, errors of misformation, errors of misordering and error of diction.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is expected to reveal information for students, teachers and the next researcher as follows:

1. Students

This research is expected to help students to be aware of the errors they produce. By knowing the errors that they produce, they are expected to be
able to learn more of the correct form so that they can write in better English in the future.

2. Teachers
By reading this research, the teachers are expected to recognise the mistakes that the students commit in their writing. In the future, the teachers are expected to find a way of ESL teaching to minimise the error that the students make.

3. Next Researcher
It is hoped that the next researcher can use this research as a guideline for the next research in order to find the best way to recognise errors in writing in Personal Letter.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms
To avoid misunderstanding of the terms that appear in this research, here are some definitions of the key terms used in this research:

1. Personal Letter
In this research, personal letter is a letter written to share information of personal matters to friends to inform about past activities.

2. Grammar
According to Thornbury (2002 in Abdu'rahman 2014:1), Grammar is a description of the rules that govern how sentences in a language are formed.

3. Error
Error is the wrong form or rules that the learners think is correct but actually is incorrect.

4. Grammatical Error
Burt and Kiparsky (1972) state that Grammatical errors relate to the errors in linguistic form, such as morphology, syntax (form), semantic (meaning), and orthography.

5. Error Analysis
Error Analysis is a way to identify, classify, and describe the errors by which to obtain information on common difficulties in learning language and to range the level of language proficiency of learner achievement (Hasyim, 2002).

6. Diction
According to Merriam-Webster dictionary Diction is the choice of words especially with regards to correctness, clearness or effectiveness. The wrong choice of diction can create an ambiguity in a sentence for each word has a different specific meaning.
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Writing in English

According to Tarigan (2002) in Sanjaya (2017), writing is the process to produce the graphic symbols that represent the language that is understood by people, so that the other people can comprehend those graphic symbols if they understand the language and the graphic. Meanwhile, Hyland (2003: 27) mentions that writing is interactional and social, it expresses a culturally recognised purpose, reflecting particular kind of relationship and acknowledging an engagement in a given community. When one acquires these competences, their writing skill will improve to those of academic level.

2.2 Grammar in English Writing

Everyone who speaks a language has an unconscious ability to form a string of words that can be understood by those who shares the same language. It is said that the language follows a certain rules which we share with other people. The sharing of the same rules creates the common sense of understanding which makes us able to communicate with other person using the same set of rules. These rules are what we call grammar. To use grammar is to follow rules that we share with the people we share the language with. To learn a new language mean to learn a new set of rules that apply in the target language in order to be understood when we are speaking that language.

2.3 Mistakes, Errors and Error Analysis

Writing in target language gives students a chance to show what they have learnt about the target language itself. Mistakes are bound to happen when students are writing in the target language. The extent to the students’ knowledge of the target language can be shown in the mistakes and errors that they make.

2.3.1 Mistakes

Mistakes according to Corder (1981) are the error of performances. Meaning that it is something that the learners make and will be able to recognise. The recognition of the mistake will lead to the mistake to be fixed. Speeches uttered by native speakers contain mistakes as well. These mistakes can be caused by memory lapses, physical states such as tiredness and psychological states such as having strong emotion.

2.3.2 Error

Error cannot be avoided in learning. Especially in learning second language, errors are bound to happen. The word ‘error’, in terminology, comes from the latin word ‘errorem’or ‘errare’ which means ‘to wander or stray’ (Sanjaya, 2018). Error, then, according to Richards (1971:173), is “the sort of mistakes which persist from week to week and which recur from one year to the next with any group of learner”. Corder (1981) mentioned that errors provide evidence to the system of language that a learner has learnt at a particular point.
2.3.2.1 Sources of Error
The source of error according to Richards (1974) might be derived from the interference of the learners’ knowledge. This interference can be caused by the learner’s mother tongue and the general characteristics of the rule learning. Therefore, Richards (1974) distinguished the sources of errors as follows:
1. Interference errors: this error is the result of using one element from L1 while writing in L2.
2. Intralingual errors: this error reflects the characteristics of rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply
3. Developmental errors: this error occurs when the students attempt to build hypothesis about L2 on the basis of the limited experience that the students have.

2.3.2.2 Types of Error
In this research, Corder’s theory of error classification is used to determine the type of error that the students made. The classified errors are: omission, addition, misformation and misordering. To avoid ambiguity of error of misformation and error of diction, Error of diction is also included into the types above.

a. Error of Omission
Error of Omission happened when learners omits the items that should appear in a sentence.
b. Error of Addition
Error of Addition is the opposite of error of omission. It is a presence of an item that must not be appear in well-formed utterances (Ellis, 2008).
c. Error of Misformation
Error of Misformation is an error which occurs when the learners’ made an acceptably grammatical sentence but they put the wrong form of the sentence.
d. Error of Misordering
Error of Misordering is an error where the learners arrange the words in the wrong order in the sentence.
e. Error of Diction
Error of Diction is the wrong choice of word that the students commit due to their lack of knowledge of the word or mistranslation of the word itself.

2.3.3 Error Analysis
Error Analysis is done to find out the problem that is arising when learners study L2. Knowing the problems can lead to problem solving which was the main object of EA. However EA has limitation for it only provides a partial picture of learner’s language and it has substantive nature that it takes no account of avoidance strategy in SLA, since EA only investigates what learners do.

2.4 Grammatical Error Analysis in Writing
Grammar is a shared understanding of the same rules that is used to communicate between one language users (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2003). In writing, a correct grammar is thoroughly needed in order for the
writing to be understood by the readers. The incorrect grammar use in writing can lead to misunderstanding of the context of the writing. However, the correct use in grammar is not the only points that is important in learning L2, the ability to express ideas, emotions and feelings is also important. In teaching English, the teaching of writing is integrated into the teaching of the other skills.

2.5 Personal Letter

Personal letter writing is written in the Curriculum of K-13 that is applied in high school curriculum by the government of Republic of Indonesia. Personal letter writing is a part of short functional text which is used to encourage the students to apply their knowledge on how to inform others on what they have learned using correct English.

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Method

This study used Qualitative Descriptive method. Qualitative Descriptive method is chosen to analyse and describe the grammatical errors that are committed by the second grade students of SMKN 4 Mataram.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population in this research is all the second grade students of SMKN 4 Mataram in academic year 2017-2018 which consisted of 344 students from all departments. The population is divided into six majors namely Beauty department, Office Administration department, Hotel department, Tailoring department and Food and Beverages department in which each department consisted of two classes, while Travel department has one class. Each class has 28-37 students.

The random sampling technique was used. Every class had been taught on how to write a personal letter and a few students from each class had been taken randomly as sample.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

In order to collect the data 43 students were taken as samples. The subjects wrote a personal letter with the length of two paragraphs. The data collected were processed to find out the types of the errors made by the students. Then an interview was conducted with students who wrote letters with unclear meaning. The results were analysed based on Corder’s theory of errors classification, which are: Errors of Ommision, Addition, Misformation, Misordering and Diction.

3.4 Research Instrument

1. Written Test

Writing test was used as the research instrument. From the test 43 letters were collected from 43 students. The topic of the written test was to write a personal letter to the students’ family or friends about what had happened to them and/or what they are planning in the future. Each letter was of minimum two paragraphs long.
2. Interview

Interview was used as research instrument to avoid any misunderstanding in the message that the students are trying to deliver. The interview was also conducted to find out the possible sources of the students’ errors.

3.5 Data Analysis

In the analysis, beside descriptive qualitative approach is also used. This research focused on five types of errors, namely errors of omission, errors of addition, errors of misformation, errors of misordering and errors of diction. The data gained from the interview is also used to describe the causes of the errors that the students made.

The analysis is implemented in four steps:
1. Identification of students’ errors
   In this step, the data which had been gained will be identified to find out the grammatical errors by checking each personal letter carefully. The data were analysed as objectively as possible.
2. Describing students’ errors
   This step is meant to describe the errors that the students made after identifying them. The data was classified into the categories of error according to Corder’s definition which are: Omission, Addition, Misformation, Misordering and Diction.
3. Calculation of Students Errors
   The next step is to calculate the errors that the students have made after classification. The frequency and percentage of the students’ errors are then calculated. In calculating the errors the formula that was used is:
   \[ P = \frac{n_1}{\sum N} \times 100\% \]

   Notes:
   - \( P \) : percentage of errors
   - \( n_1 \) : total of the given errors
   - \( \sum N \) : total of the whole errors
4. Explanation of the Errors
   This last step was to describe the grammatical errors in writing personal letter produced by the students based on the writing test’s result by providing the example of the errors.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings
4.1.1 Identification of Errors
   After the obtained data were processed, three hundred and sixty (360) grammatical errors were found in the students’ writing of their personal letters.
The errors, then, were divided into types of errors as Corders’ classification as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Types of Error</th>
<th>Number of times errors made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Errors of Omission</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Errors of Addition</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Errors of Misordering</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Errors of Misformation</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Errors of Diction</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Numbers of Errors

4.1.2 Types of Error

In this sub-chapter, five types of error are discussed. The wrong form of the sentence will be corrected in the table next to it. To be taken into notice, most sentences contained more than one type of errors; however, for the examples provided below, the most noticeable error is taken into account as the example. Below is the discussion of the error forms:

1) Error of Omission

Klassen (1991 in Sanjaya 2018:16) mentioned, “Errors of omission is the absence of items that must appear in the well-formed utterance”. In writing their personal letter, the students of second year of SMKN 4 Mataram made 115 errors of omission or around 31.5% of the total errors. The examples of errors made by the students are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Incorrect Sentences</th>
<th>Correct Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I’m so looking forward the day.</td>
<td>I’m so looking forward to the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(NL)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I want make parents happy.</td>
<td>I want to make my parents happy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(NKS)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I will wait your concert in Lombok.</td>
<td>I will wait for your concert in Lombok.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(MDLT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>You will be holiday in Seoul with your sister?</td>
<td>You will be having holiday in Seoul with your sister?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(NFJ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I want tell you about something.</td>
<td>I want to tell you about something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(BTPF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Errors of Omission

2) Error of Addition

“Error of Addition is the appearance of an item that must not appear in a well-formed utterance,” (Ellis, 2008). The subjects of research made 47 of addition error or around 12.8% of the total error.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Incorrect Sentences</th>
<th>Correct Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In the scenery was so beautiful.</td>
<td>The scenery was so beautiful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(RFN)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>We to meet people different.</td>
<td>We meet different people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(RFN)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I can’t to visit your party.</td>
<td>I can’t visit your party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I am will send your gift via JNE.

I’m very miss you in here. (DS)

Table 3. Error of Addition

3) Error of Misordering

In Sanjaya (2018) quoting Dulay and Krashen (1982) “Error of misordering is incorrect placement of morpheme or a group of morpheme in an utterance.” There are 36 errors of misordering made by the students which are around 9.6% of total errors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Incorrect Sentences</th>
<th>Correct Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am will send your gift via JNE. (DS)</td>
<td>I will send your gift via JNE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I’m very miss you in here. (DS)</td>
<td>I miss you here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Error of Misordering

4. Errors of Misformation

According to Dulay & Krashen (1982) in Sanjaya (2018) “Errors of misformation is the use of wrong form or structure of a sentence”. The students made 101 misformation error or about 27.1% of total error made. The examples of error of misformation are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Incorrect Sentences</th>
<th>Correct Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>We to meet people different. (RFN)</td>
<td>We meet different people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>So nothing people poor. (NKS)</td>
<td>So there are no poor people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I am taking classes cooking. (TA)</td>
<td>I am taking cooking classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>When you will come back to Tokyo? (KGR)</td>
<td>When will you come back to Tokyo?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Error of Misformation

5) Error of Diction

Error of diction is the error of choosing the wrong diction to fill the sentence making the sentence seems ambiguous to the reader. In this research students make 66 errors of diction which covering out 17.8% of total errors made by the students. Below are the examples of the error of diction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Incorrect Sentences</th>
<th>Correct Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>That’s all I can told you for now. (N)</td>
<td>That’s all I can tell you for now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There is a lot of things I have to do. (IPRYY)</td>
<td>There are a lot of things I have to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I can’t playing with you again. (AH)</td>
<td>I can’t play with you again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Are you miss me as well? (MMA)</td>
<td>Do you miss me as well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I’m something to be done outside the city. (GEWP)</td>
<td>I have something to be done outside the city.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Error of Misordering

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<td>So nothing people poor. (NKS)</td>
<td>So there are no poor people.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>I am taking classes cooking. (TA)</td>
<td>I am taking cooking classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>When you will come back to Tokyo? (KGR)</td>
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</tr>
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Table 5. Error of Misformation

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>That’s all I can told you for now. (N)</td>
<td>That’s all I can tell you for now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There is a lot of things I have to do. (IPRYY)</td>
<td>There are a lot of things I have to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I can’t playing with you again. (AH)</td>
<td>I can’t play with you again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Are you miss me as well? (MMA)</td>
<td>Do you miss me as well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I’m something to be done outside the city. (GEWP)</td>
<td>I have something to be done outside the city.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. I learned so well here that I will continue my education to Korea. (SALD) I studied so well here that I will continue my education in Korea.

3. You have handsome face, lighting skin… (NKDPS) You have a handsome face, clear skin…

4. Lombok is very beautiful and you must look this. (NNR) Lombok is very beautiful and you must see this.

5. After I finish all of my job. – (DS) I have more work now and I should finish it now.

Table 7. Error of Diction

4.1.3 The Dominant Error

Based on the number error made by the students for each type, the calculations of the percentage of the errors are done with the formula:

\[ P = \frac{n_1}{\sum N} \times 100\% \]

Notes:
- \( P \) : percentage of errors
- \( n_1 \) : total of the given errors
- \( \sum N \) : total of the whole errors

Based on the calculations of percentage of errors using the formulae above, it can be concluded that the error that has the highest percentage is the error of omission (31.94%), followed by error of misformation (27.5%), error of diction (18.05%), error of addition (12.77%). The lowest percentage of errors produced by the students is the errors of misordering (9.27%).

4.1.4 Reasons of Students’ Errors

1. Interference of First Language

Interference error is the result of using an element from L1 while writing L2. In this case, the native language that is used by the students to study is Bahasa Indonesia. Bahasa Indonesia interfere the production of the target language. For example:

a. Let’s we gather to loose our missing. (Mari kita berkumpul untuk melepas kangen kita) - MMA

b. I following my parents working in here. (Saya mengikuti orang tua saya yang bekerja disini) – AH

c. I was really headache. (Saya sangat pusing) – TJ

2. Lack of Grammar and Vocabulary Knowledge

Intralingual errors reflect the characteristics of rule learning such as generalisation, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn under which condition apply. Based on the interview conducted, most students confessed that they have lack of knowledge in grammar and vocabulary which caused them to make errors. For examples:

“Sometimes when I choose my diction I hesitated whether to use this one, or another one. I’m lacking in my vocabulary.” – NL

“I’m lacking in vocabulary but my grammar is not bad.” – NKDP
“Honestly, I don’t understand the grammar perfectly because I lack in knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.” – MDLT

“It is hard to memorise all the changing of the irregular verbs.” - TW

3. Mistranslation
Developmental errors occur when the students attempt to build hypothesis about L2 on the basis of the limited knowledge that the students have. Most students have limited vocabulary; therefore many of them use vocabularies with similar meaning in the target language instead.

4.2 Discussion
Based on the two previous studies, it can be concluded that the findings were different with this study. The most dominant error of this study was the omission error which was the second most dominant error in the previous two studies. Although Fahar’s study (2013) showed that the least dominant error was the error of addition, both this study and Sanjaya’s (2018) showed that error of misordering has the least percentage of occurrences.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion
Based on the discussion and the data analysis in the previous chapter, three major conclusions can be drawn based on the research questions that were enquired in the first chapter. The conclusions drawn are as follows:
1. All the types of errors in Corder’s theories of error analysis are evident in the personal letter written by second year students of SMKN 4 Mataram.
2. The most dominant error is error of omission and the least dominant error is error of misordering.
3. The sources of error was the interference of L1, lack of grammar and vocabulary knowledge and mistranslation.

5.2 Suggestion
The next researchers are expected to do more research on the personal letter issues, not only in terms of written letters but also its more modern counterparts such as email, text messages, or internet journals (blogs). The study on these letters will make their writers more aware of their writing and therefore will result in much better writings in the future.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


