An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Writing Narrative Texts Done By the Second Semester Students at the Diploma Program English Department in Airlangga University Surabaya

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Abstract

The students sometimes make errors on the use of grammar when they produce an English writing, also in writing narrative texts. It is because Indonesian and English have their own grammatical system. This study aims to identify the types of grammatical errors based on (Ho, 2005) theory of grammatical errors taxonomy and which type of errors is the most dominant one done by the second semester students at the diploma program English department in Airlangga University. In order to obtain valid findings, qualitative method is used in this study. Twenty six (26) narrative texts were collected from 26 students in the second semester. Based on the error analysis conducted, the study found that errors regarding verb-verb groups are the most dominant errors (39.07 %), with the biggest number of errors are in omission of suffix –s/-es/-ed/-ing (18.19 %). Then it is followed by the miscellaneous errors which cannot be analyzed using (Ho, 2005) theory (32.11 %). The third rank is the errors regarding noun-noun groups (13.02 %). Then, it is followed by errors regarding preposition which amount 9.08 %. Last, the errors regarding sentence structure occurred in percentage 6.72 %. The findings indicate that the students have difficulties in using correct verb-verb groups, especially in omission of suffix –s/-es/-ed/-ing. This problem may occur due to their lack of knowledge of English grammatical rules.

Keywords: grammatical errors, narrative texts, writing II, second semester students

Introduction

Learning English is a necessity for some people. Learning English cannot be separated from learning grammar. Students sometimes make errors on the use of grammar when they produce an English writing. The students cannot avoid the grammatical errors in their writing. Sometimes, they do not pay attention to the errors they make and they do not know how to correct the errors. In this study, the writer tried to focus on analyzing the grammatical errors in writing narrative texts done by the second semester students at the Diploma Program English Department in Airlangga University Surabaya. The students could probably do grammatical errors in produce narrative texts because as we know Indonesian as their first language does not have any past form.

The Error Analysis

Error is different from mistake. Yet, making errors and mistakes are commonly done by the second language learners and foreign language learners. Without deep understanding, the learners usually tend to see the errors and mistakes similarly. Brown (2007) gave the explanation about mistake that all native speakers make mistakes, or have a "performance lapse". He also stated that a mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a "slip", in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. Brown added that all people make mistakes in both natives and second language situation. Therefore, whether they are native speakers or second language learners, they probably could make mistakes in producing the language. Mistakes occur because the learners know the system but they fail to use it. Meanwhile, errors according to Brown (2007) are the result of one’s systematic
competence. An error reveals a portion of learner’s competence in the target language. The English learners are usually not able to make any corrections of their errors by themselves. Therefore they need teachers to correct. Corder (1967) states that errors are things made by beginner of second or other language learners who do not yet have a full command of language system. Thus, the English learners could probably make errors because they do not know the English grammar well. The learners think that they make the right English even though they do not because their language system says so.

Grammar

Grammar is such an important thing to apply in learning language. Different author will have different term in defining what grammar is. Patterson (1999) states that speakers and writers intend to apply the grammar to their tasks. While according to Greenbaum and Nelson (2002), grammar refers to the set of rules that allow us to combine words in our language into larger units. Some combinations of words are possible and others are not. He added that grammar is the central component of a language. It mediates between the system of sounds or of written symbols, on the other hand, and the system of meaning on the other. In the study of language, grammar occupies a central position. It is easy to learn and to use dictionaries by the learners to find the pronunciation, spelling, or meaning of words, but it is still difficult to consult grammar books without considerable knowledge of grammar.

In fact, every language has its own grammar rules. Grammar is a part of language which has to be learned by the learners of a language. Learners have to produce the sentences grammatically so that the sentences or utterances can be delivered well, as well as the writing can be easily understood by the readers. The learners have to apply the rules of grammar on the sentences they produced. Implicitly, the learners who are good at grammar could probably produce a good writing. It is supported that writing as a productive skill requires the writers have the grammar knowledge when they would like to produce writing. Supported by the explanation above, grammar is such a crucial thing to be learned especially to produce a good writing.

Grammatical Error

According to Burt and Kiparsky (1974), grammatical error is an error which is not suitable to the grammatical rules that may make writing become not good. Meanwhile, according to Ellis (1997) stated that grammar is traditionally concerned with the principles which determined the formation and interpretation of words, phrases and sentences. Therefore, the grammatical errors is kind of important to be considered by the learners because it does not match with the grammatical system of a language. The English learners have to be able to understand what the grammatical rules of English and how to apply them well, especially in writing. The grammatical errors found in students’ text writing sometimes will influence the meaning of the text. Therefore, learning the grammatical errors enables the students to produce a good writing.

Taxonomy of Grammatical Errors

According to Ho (2005), there are four taxonomies of errors that contain parts of speech. They are errors regarding nouns and noun groups, errors regarding verbs and verb groups, error regarding preposition, and error regarding sentence structure. The errors regarding noun-noun groups consist of four categories. They are unnecessary insertion /overgeneralization of plural marker –s, omission of plural marker –s (under-marking of plural), inappropriate selection/usage of quantifier/article/determiner, and the last is inappropriate combination of subject and verb. The errors in verb-verb groups consist of nine categories; they are omission of suffix –s/ -es/ -ed/ -ing, omission of –ed participle after a form of the verb be, inappropriate form after modal verb (unnecessary insertion/ overgeneralization of suffix –s, -ed, -ing, inappropriate form after modal verb (omission of suffix –ed, passive form), omission of direct object, omission of infinitives to, omission of –ing participle, omission of auxiliary verb, and inversion of verb-subject in indirect question format. The errors consist of three categories. They are omission of preposition, unnecessary insertion of preposition, and inappropriate selection or usage of preposition. Besides that, the errors regarding
sentence structure consists of eight categories. They are dangling modifier, squinting modifier, jumbled-up or illogical sentences, incomplete or fragmented sentences, run-on sentence, inappropriate coordinating conjunction, inappropriate subordinating conjunction, and inappropriate combination of conjunction.

Related studies
There are some researchers who have conducted research similar to this study. Wijaya (2007) did a research about grammatical errors made by the fifth year pupils of Santa Theresia II on making interrogative sentences. By using classification of errors suggested by Richard (1974), she found that most pupils made errors in wrong form of auxiliary.

Besides, Victoria (2009) who used the theory of taxonomy of errors by Ho (2005) in her study about error analysis found that the most mistakes occurred in the noun group, second is in the verb group, third is in the sentence structure, and the last is in the preposition.

Kirkgoz (2010) analyzed some written errors done by Turkish adult learner of English. He used the theory of taxonomy of errors proposed by Brown (1980). As the conclusion, he stated that there were 220 cases of interlingual errors. The error was also the highest number of all.

Sa’diyah (2010) did a research about grammatical errors of students’ movie review of bilingual magazine competition. The theory of error analysis by Burt and Kiparsky (1974) was used in her study. From six types, she found four types of grammatical errors. The most dominant type is in the skeleton of English clauses in type of simple predicate missing be.

Method
In order to gain the purpose of the study, this study used qualitative approach. In this study, the population consists of the second semester students at the Diploma program English Department in Airlangga University Surabaya in the academic year of 2012/2013. There were four classes for Writing II. However, from the population, one class from the four classes was taken as the sample of this study (class C). The total numbers of the samples were 26 students. The specific analysis of the data was selected from all the 26 written English tasks of narrative texts.

Findings and Discussion
There are many grammatical errors occurred in the students’ writing of narrative texts analyzed by theory of grammatical errors taxonomy by Ho (2005). They are errors regarding nouns and noun groups, errors regarding verbs and verb groups, error regarding preposition, and errors regarding sentence structure. However, the errors regarding noun and noun groups consist of unnecessary insertion /overgeneralization of plural marker –s, omission of plural marker –s (under-marking of plural), inappropriate selection/usage of quantifier/article/determiner, and the last is inappropriate combination of subject and verb. The errors regarding verb and verb groups consist of omission of suffix –s/ -es/ -ed/ -ing, inappropriate form after modal verb (unnecessary insertion/overgeneralization of suffix –s, -ed, -ing, omission of infinitives to, omission of –ing participle, omission of auxiliary verb, and inversion of verb-subject in indirect question format. The errors regarding preposition consist of omission of preposition, unnecessary insertion of preposition, and inappropriate selection or usage of preposition. On the other hand, the errors regarding sentence structure consist of squinting modifier, jumbled-up or illogical sentences, incomplete or fragmented sentences, run-on sentence, inappropriate coordinating conjunction, and inappropriate subordinating conjunction.

Types of Grammatical Errors
The writer found all taxonomies of errors proposed by Ho (2005) in the students’ writing about narrative texts. There are errors which include the errors regarding noun-noun groups, verb-verb groups, preposition, and sentence structure. Moreover, the writer also found the other errors which could not be analyzed and categorized using the theory of taxonomy of errors by Ho (2005). Then, the writer categorized them into miscellaneous. Below is the example of error regarding noun-noun groups especially in unnecessary insertion /overgeneralization of plural marker –s.
Incorrect: I must join “Fraternity Days” with the others students.
Correction: I must join “Fraternity Days” with the other students.

In the sentence, the participant inserted “s” for the word “others”. Based on Azar (1999), other which expresses the plural form of pronoun cannot be added with s if it is followed by noun, yet the noun is already written in plural form. However, in the sentence the participant should omit “s” in the word others. Therefore, in the sentence the correct form should be “I must join “Fraternity Days” with the other students”.

On the other hand, the errors regarding verb-verb group is the highest number of errors made by the second semester students at the Diploma Program English Department Airlangga University. One of the examples of errors regarding verb – verb groups occurred in omission of suffix –s/ -es/ -ed/ -ing. This kind of errors are also the highest number of errors. Here is the example:

Incorrect: I think my engine had a problem.
Correction: I thought my engine had a problem.

The sentence “I think my engine had a problem” is found as wrong sentence because the verb “think” was written in the present. It should be written in the past form using simple past tense. It is because the tasks that the students made are in the form of narrative texts. We have to use the simple past tense to express events or situations that existed before in the past. Therefore, the correction for sentence number one is supposed to be “I thought my engine had a problem”.

The writer also found errors regarding preposition. The example of errors is written below:

Incorrect: ... how we can come back to the camping site because no public transport at that time.
Correction: ... how we can come back to the camping site because of no public transport at that time.

Based on the example above, the writer found that participant 26 made an error in omission of preposition. Azar (1999) distinguish because and because of. The conjunction because is followed by sentence or clause. In contrast, conjunction because of is followed by noun or phrase. In this case, after because is followed by phrase. That is why the participant 26 made an error on omitting the preposition. Otherwise, the correct sentence should be “... how we can come back to the camping site because of no public transport at that time.”

The last errors based on the taxonomy of grammatical errors by Ho (2005) are the errors regarding sentence structure. Here is the example of errors regarding sentence structure especially in inappropriate subordinating conjunction. The inappropriate subordinating conjunction is also the highest number of error regarding the sentence structure. The example is described below:

Incorrect: It was the first and the last party who I ...
Correction: It was the first and the last party which/that I..

According to Azar (1999), the subordinating conjunction who is for modifying the person, not the thing or. On the other hand, the subordinating conjunction that/which is for modifying the thing. In this case, the first and the last party is categorized as the thing. Therefore, the sentence should use the subordinating conjunction that/which instead of who.

Besides, the writer also found the errors which could not be analyzed using the grammatical errors taxonomy by Ho (2005). The errors cannot be categorized into errors regarding noun-noun groups, verb-verb groups, preposition, or even sentence structure. Then, the writer categorized them into miscellaneous errors. There are sixty seven miscellaneous errors. In fact, the writer divided the miscellaneous errors into some categories. They are inappropriate tense and auxiliary verb, omission of determiner or article, unnecessary auxiliary verb, unnecessary subordinating conjunction, omission of subordinating conjunction, and inappropriate indirect speech. Hence, the writer gives some examples of all the categorizations in miscellaneous errors below:
Inappropriate tense and auxiliary verb
- Incorrect: ..., but it does not make me.
- Correction: ..., but it did not make me.

Omission of determiner, quantifier, or article
- Incorrect: ... as administrative staff...
- Correction: ... as (an)administrative staff...

Unnecessary auxiliary verb
- Incorrect: I was did internship a few months ago.
- Correction: I did internship a few months ago.

Unnecessary subordinating conjunction
- Incorrect: When I visited Mount Bromo last year.
- Correction: I visited Mount Bromo last year.

Omission of subordinating conjunction
- Incorrect: We were driving motorcycle was hit...
- Correction: We were driving motorcycle which was hit...

Inappropriate indirect speech
- Incorrect: All my friends said, “Qomar is not getting upset” ...
- Correction: All my friends said not to get upset to me...

The Most Dominant Type of Errors
Besides, the most dominant errors are errors regarding verb and verb groups which occured mostly in the omission of suffix –s/-es/-ed/-ing. The list of the percentage of the errors in the students’ writing of narrative text is shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Type of errors</th>
<th>The number of cases (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1).</td>
<td>Errors regarding Noun-Noun groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Unnecessary insertion /Overgeneralization of plural marker –s</td>
<td>2 (0.96%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Omission of plural marker –s (Under-marking of plural)</td>
<td>19 (9.19 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Inappropriate selection/usage of quantifier/article/determiner</td>
<td>4 (1.91 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Inappropriate combination of subject and verb</td>
<td>2 (0.96 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2).</td>
<td>Errors regarding Verb-Verb groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Omission of suffix –s/-es/-ed/-ing</td>
<td>38 (18.19 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Omission of –ed participle after a form of the verb be</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Inappropriate form after modal verb (unecessary insertion/overgeneralization of suffix –s, -ed, -ing, infinitive to</td>
<td>2 (0.96 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Inappropriate form after modal verb (Omission of suffix –ed, past perfect form)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>Omission of direct object</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Omission of infinitive to</td>
<td>2 (0.96 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>Omission of –ing participle</td>
<td>6 (2.69 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>Omission of auxiliary verb</td>
<td>33 (15.79 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Inversion of verb-subject in indirect question format</td>
<td>1 (0.48 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3).</td>
<td>Errors regarding preposition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Omission of preposition</td>
<td>5 (2.39 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. Unnecessary insertion of preposition  10 (4.78 %)
c. Inappropriate selection or usage of preposition  4 (1.91 %)

4). Errors regarding sentence structure

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Dangling modifier</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Squinting modifier</td>
<td>2 (0.96 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Jumbled-up or illogical sentence</td>
<td>1 (0.48 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Incomplete or fragmented sentences</td>
<td>3 (1.44 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Run-on sentences</td>
<td>3 (1.44 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Inappropriate coordinating conjunction</td>
<td>2 (0.96 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Inappropriate subordinating conjunction</td>
<td>3 (1.44 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Inappropriate combination of conjunction</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5). Miscellaneous errors  67 (32.11 %)

Total number of errors  209 cases

*Table 1. The most dominant type of grammatical errors*

The table above shows the number of grammatical errors done by students in writing narrative text. From 26 texts the writer used in this analysis, it can be seen that the total number of grammatical errors made by the students in writing narrative text were 209 cases of errors.

The first rank in the highest number of errors in writing narrative text done by the second semester students at the diploma program English department in Airlangga University is the errors regarding verb-verb groups. Then, the second rank is followed by other grammatical errors which cannot be analyzed using Ho (2005) theory of errors taxonomy. Next, the third rank is errors regarding noun-noun groups. After that, the fourth rank is the errors regarding the preposition. Last, the errors regarding sentence structure is the least type of errors made by the participants.

In the category of errors regarding verb-verb groups (82 cases or 39.07 %), the highest number of errors which occurred is in omission of suffix –s/ -es/ -ed/ -ing (38 cases or 18.19 %). On the other hand, the second rank which is placed by the miscellaneous errors occurred with the sixty seven errors (67 cases or 32.11 %). Meanwhile, the students produced 27 cases (13.02 %) in the errors regarding noun-noun groups in writing narrative texts. The next errors after errors regarding noun-noun groups are the errors regarding preposition. The participants made 19 cases (9.08 %) of errors on it. Thus, as the last rank is the errors regarding sentence structure with the 14 cases (6.72 %). All in all, based on the frequency of grammatical error which can be seen from the table above, it can be indicated that the errors regarding verb-verb groups is the most dominant errors of all comparing to other types of grammatical errors. It could be seen significantly that the highest percentage of errors in writing narrative text is errors regarding verb-verb groups (82 cases or 39.07 %) with the highest number of errors occurred in omission of suffix –s/ -es/ -ed/ -ing (38 cases or 18.19 %).

**Conclusion**

In fact, the highest number of error regarding verb-verb groups is in the omission of suffix –s/ -es/ -ed/ -ing with the 38 cases or 18.19 %. It can be indicated that the students got difficulties because Indonesian as their mother tongue or first language does not have any rule in the inflection –s or –es to the verb. Furthermore, the Indonesian grammatical system does not also have rule in tenses. The students will use similar form of sentence eventhough they would like to describe their events in present, past, and future. On the other hand, the errors regarding sentence structure is the least dominant type of grammatical error done by the students. The two types of errors regarding sentence structure which do not occur in the students’ writing are dangling modifier and the inappropriate combination of conjunction. It is probably because the students avoid to use complex sentences. They had also already learned about dangling modifier because dangling modifier is one of the materials in Writing II subject. Finally, the second semester students at the Diploma Program English Department in Airlangga University Surabaya who learn English as a foreign language tend to make grammatical errors in their writing, especially in writing narrative texts because they are probably
lack of competence in producing English. Therefore, they are unable to determine what the constructions are because they think that their utterances are what they intend to do. They are usually not able to make any corrections of their errors by themselves. Therefore, they need teachers to correct their grammatical errors.

References