
An Error Analysis in English Department Students' Narrative Essay

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Abstract

This study reveals a common error in English department students writing in Indonesia, particularly in one of the private universities in Padang by extracting 25 narrative essays written by the students. The respondents are English department students of STBA Prayoga who are in the fourth semester. This research is conducted to identify the most common grammatical errors within 25 essays that were submitted as writing assignments. They were 16 women and 9 men of students in the fourth semester in essay writing subject. The data were collected and identified the errors. The errors are classified into several categories and presented in frequency and percentage. The research results show that one of the most errors in students' writing is errors in word usage and followed by errors in tense, 38%, and 28% respectively. Meanwhile, article, preposition, and conjunction errors are the same percentage, 8%. This research result has good potential for the students and lecturers in the future to identify and use another method in learning and teaching English.

Keywords: *Error Analysis, word usage, preposition, conjunction*

1. INTRODUCTION

English is a lingua franca because almost all countries over the world learn and communicate the language for several purposes. It is also one of the most widely dominant languages of the intellectuals that is used for international communication almost throughout the world (Al-Issa et al., 2017). Writing is one of the most difficult subjects that supposed by the students because plenty of materials should be considered while writing, particularly grammar. It is also attested in assessed in Writing IELTS that it is one of the most challenging skills (Nushi & Razdar, 2021). Quvanch & Kew (2022) mention the students are lazy to write because it is difficult to put their ideas in good ways (appropriate/academic writing) and complex grammar rules when expressing their ideas into writing. It is different from another skill.

particularly speaking in which among speakers had supporting explanation such as gesture and facial expression. For instance, the statement “stop” which pointing out people who write means that “please stop writing”. However, in writing context, the writers need to write in more words to avoid misunderstanding.

The first language (mother tongue) has a big impact on the way people learn second or foreign language. Take an example, in English the word “different, similar, the same” with collocation “from, to, and as”. The learners sometimes write or speak in wrong collocation “different with, similar to, and the same as”. The errors sometimes occur in performing the second or foreign language or called developmental error which is caused because of overgeneralization (Guzmán-Muñoz, 2020).

Cultural and form of sentences in source language affect on target language. One of categories classified by Nord (1997) is cultural error in which it occurs because there is mismatch between cultural issues in the first language and target text (Soltani et al., 2020). It is noted from an interview with Monica (Mora & Mora, 2017, p.7).

“I think cultural aspects play an important role in English language learning. I remember one day when our teacher invited speakers from different cultures to class. These speakers were from Germany, Belgium, India, France and Japan. Even though Mexico is not a multicultural country, it happened that for some reasons those people were around. The most interesting part for me was that we [the students] had the opportunity to interact with people from different countries for the first time in our lives. Most of us had never seen people from different countries in the same place at once, and by that time no one in the class had been in a different country, but the south border of the USA, which is three hours away from here [this city in México] and many people there speak Spanish. I learned that every culture has a different way to perceive the world. (Monica)

Students’ writing are expected to meet three categories namely meet English style, write with accurate grammar and well-organized (coherence and cohesion) (Setyono, 2014). However, sometimes, there are some grammatical errors identified in students’ writing. Soltani et al. (2020, p.5) note that “translation major errors: inappropriate rendering which affect expression in the target language; these are divided into five categories namely spelling, grammar, lexical items, texts and style”. Still, the errors also play positive impact in learning because it can be promoted by encouraging the learners to explore and analyze the system (Guzmán-Muñoz, 2020). This research is expected to be lesson learnt for other students and lecturers to check the students’ errors in writing.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted to identify the grammatical errors in students’ essays of English department. The participants were English department students in STBA Prayoga who are in the fourth

semester. The students had written the writing assignments assigned by the lecturer. They were 16 women and 9 men of students in the fourth semester in essay writing subject. This research is mixed method because the essay's contents were analysed initially and followed by counting the numbers errors in the essays based on the categories.

This study used eight common errors that are extracted. There are eight common error identified in Iranian writings namely word choices, articles, preposition, subject-verb agreement, tense, active-passive structure, conjunctions and errors in word order (Salehi & Bahrami, 2018). However, in this study were collected 7 categories. Then, collecting the essays and identifying the grammatical errors in sentences. Afterwards, classifying the errors based on seven categories. The errors in each category were investigated and illustrated.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on 25 narrative essays, there are various findings in the writings based on the categories. The research results can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Types common errors in students' essays

Types of common errors	Frequency	Percentage
Errors in word usage	87	38%
Articles	18	8%
Prepositions	19	8%
Conjunctions	18	8%
Active and passive structure	3	3%
Tense	64	28%
Subject-and Verb agreement	16	7%
Total	225	100%

Table 1 shows that one of the most errors in students' writing is errors in words usage and followed by error in tense, 38% and 28% respectively. Meanwhile, error in using article, preposition, and conjunction are the same percentage, 8%.

Here some data of student's errors in their writing including error in word usage, error in articles, error in preposition, error in conjunction, error in active and passive, error in tense, and error in subject and verb agreement. The errors in words usage can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Error in Word Usage

No	Error in word Usage
1	“ In my heart , I will prove that I can be a gamer who can make my parents proud, even if it is not from my achievements in school”.
2	“Right in the 2nd grade of high school, we re-entered the tournament which was held at the Grand Inna Muara Hotel”.
3	And from there I had a dream to become a famous game player in the game world
4	but I’m still glad they did not drop my dream.
5	because considering I was born from a simple family I felt that my parents could not afford it.
6	for me college is not only about science lessons but also about socializing with people around them is much more important,

There are some errors in the sentences with bolding the words’ error. The words of “in my heart” should be replaced by “I promise” and the word “achievement” should be replaced by “grades”. It is the same as “re-entered” should be replaced by “re-join” and “science lesson” with “learning in class” as well.

In terms of error in articles, it is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Error in Articles

No	Error in Articles
1	I always played games at the internet cafe with my friends after school.
2	I enjoyed the many years despite my fatigue
3	I was born in an ambitious family and have a determination that makes me have the passion to have dreams as simple as possible.
4	there were many students registered to join whereas the extracurricular just accepted few students.
5	I know a past memories can make me stuck.

Table 3 shows the students are errors in using article ‘the, at, few, and a’. For instance, the sentence “I know **a** past memories can make me stuck” are wrong because there is an article “a” and followed by plural “memories” and actually the article “a” should not be placed before the word “past” and it is the same as the sentence” I enjoyed **the** many years despite my fatigue”.

Table 4. Error in Preposition

No	Error in Preposition
1	I still wondered whether my dream of junior high would come true.
2	The island was one of the small islands in the city of the city.
3	I was very interested in their idea of that activity.
4	because considering I was born from a simple family I felt that my parents could not afford it.
5	I talked to my father that I got mocked at school because of my voice is bad

Based on Table 4 illustrates that the students are error in using the preposition “of” in the sentence “I still wondered whether my dream **of** junior high would come true.” It should be “...in Junior High...”. The sentence “I talked to my father that I got mocked at school because **of** my voice is bad” is error in using the preposition “of”. It should be omitted become “...because I talked to my father that I got mocked at school because **of** my voice is bad”; except after because of are added by Noun phrase not complete sentence. Related to error in conjunction, it can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5: Error in Conjunction

No	Error in Conjunction
1	As a result of playing games continuously, my grades dropped and my parents were called to school because my grades were very bad.
2	And from there I had a dream to become a famous game player in the game world,
3	because considering I was born from a simple family I felt that my parents could not afford it.
4	However, he is very idealistic impractical idealistic and impractical
5	For that from today I always work hard.

Table 5 depicts that the students are error in using conjunction. The sentence “**As a result** of playing games continuously, my grades dropped and my parents were called to school because my grades were very bad”. The conjunction “as a result” should be replaced by “it is because of playing games...”.

Table 6: Error in Active and Passive

No	Error in Active and Passive
1	I am determined to make it come true.
2	How happy I am after be accepted and joined the extracurricular.
5	because it is really affect to myself as a person.

Table 6 reveals that the students misusing the active and passive sentences. The sentence “**I am determined** to make it come true”, it should be active sentence. The sentence “How happy I am after **be** accepted and **joined** the extracurricular” is error because the sentence should be “...after accepting and joining ...”. In terms of Error in tense, it is revealed in Table 7.

Table 7: Error in Tense

No	Error in Tense
1	My friend name is Yudi. My friend's name is or His name is
2	That is why I really want to vacation there. to spend a vacation
3	Some of our dreams was happened and maybe not yet.
4	I am really was happy at the time and my dreams to join was came true
5	Fortunately my people around me such as friends and boyfriend suggest me to starting to open up with myself however I know it is not easy as they say.

Table 7 shows that the students were error in tense, for instance “**I am really was happy** at the time and my dreams to join **was** came true”. it is double verb be “am and was” that actually needs one be verb “was” because discussing about past situation. Table 8 illustrates of error in subject and verb agreement.

Table 8: Subject and Verb Agreement

No	Error in Subject and Verb Agreement
1	Sometimes we come home late and are often scolded by parents .
2	it turned out that the tire had a leak, immediately replaced it with a new tire.
3	After everything inside the machine is clean, proceed to installing the engine cover.
4	But, after checking all the rooms, my teacher did not find the robber. Maybe they escaped easily.
5	...but who knows the other side of their ?

Table 8 depicts that there are some errors in subject verb agreement, for example “After everything inside the machine is clean, **proceed** to installing the engine cover”. The sentence lacks of subject before “proceed”. It is the same as “it turned out that the tire had a leak, **immediately** replaced it with a new tire.”

Writing is one of the most challenging skills in learning English because grammatical errors in English writing frequently occur when writing paragraphs and/or essays. As a result, sometimes misunderstanding appears between the writers and readers. Some students wrote without adding apostrophes in the sentences such as “My **friend** name is Yudi”. It should be added apostrophe to be “My friend's name is or His name is”. Based on the research results of (Erlangga et al., 2019) note that there was 36.60% of error in students' writing including error in apostrophes, omission of articles, and subject verb agreement.

Subject in word usage and tense are two of the most errors written by the students, 38% and 28% respectively. Irnawati et al. (2020) state that the most dominant errors made by the students are verb-verb group about 18.19%, for instance using verb1 in verb 2 contexts. Grammar is important in learning language (English) because it inference the meaning of the sentences in which Kamiasi & Nokas (2017) state that “grammar is important because it makes meaning for language”.

4. CONCLUSION

Grammatical errors are frequently made by students in writing particularly in writing second or foreign language. Based on the research results reveal that one of the most errors written by the students is errors in words usage and followed by error in tense, 38% and 28% respectively. Meanwhile, error in

using article, preposition, and conjunction are the same percentage, 8%. This is crucial to research because those errors implied to the meaning of the sentences. It leads to the teachers or lecturers in implementing other new methods in learning writing.

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