

An Analysis of the Grammatical Errors in Narrative Writing Made by Eleventh-grade Students of One Private Islamic Senior High School Palembang, South Sumatera, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study was aimed at finding out: (1) the types of grammatical errors in narrative writing made by eleventh-grade students of one private Islamic senior high school Palembang, South Sumatera, Indonesia and (2) the most frequent type of grammatical errors in narrative writing made by eleventh-grade students of private Islamic senior high school Palembang, South Sumatera, Indonesia. This study was a descriptive qualitative research. The data were collected from narrative writing written by the 32 eleventh grade students. In this study, grammatical items analyzed were covering noun, pronoun, verb, conjunction, adjective, adverb and preposition. In analyzing students' errors, some procedures of error analysis were applied. They were identification, description, and explanation. The frequencies of errors were calculated in percentages. Based on the result of the analysis, there were 621 grammatical errors found in students' narrative writing. Errors in using verb became the most frequent type of errors with 308 errors (49.59%), followed by errors in pronoun with 136 errors (21.90%), in adjective with 87 errors (14.00%), in preposition with 61 errors (9.82%), in noun with 13 errors (2.09%), in conjunction with 10 errors (1.61%) and the last errors in adverb with 6 errors (0.96%).

Keywords: error analysis, grammatical errors, narrative text

Introduction

English is a global language. English is the world's most frequently used language. It is widely used in many fields and in different countries. Almost everywhere, it can be understood by scholars and educated people (Ariesca & Marzulina, 2016). This is in line with Mauranen and Ranta (2009) who state that English has been known as an efficient vehicle for business and science, for example, or as a new means of communication for emerging global communities in a variety of non-mainstream subcultures. This fact shows that English has become an important language to face globalization in Indonesia. Abrar, Mukminin, Habibi, Asyraf, Makmur, and Marzulina (2018) added that in Indonesia, an incredibly diverse and multicultural country, English is regarded as one of the most popular foreign languages. The 1989 Law on the Indonesian educational system gives English a place as the first foreign language among other foreign languages used in Indonesia such as German, Arabic, or Japanese. Its policy implication is that the language becomes one of the compulsory modules to be taught in secondary schools and tertiary education.

Moreover, the teaching of English has become increasingly important as a foreign language. It is taught in schools, from junior high school to senior high school. English is widely acknowledged to be important in Indonesia and the most common reason for this is that English

is a global international language (Saputra & Marzulina, 2015). Thus, English is taught as a foreign language, it becomes part of the school curriculum and has been taught both at junior high school and senior high school. The main problem in learning English is that students have less mastery of English grammar, especially about how to compose sentences, how to use appropriate words and verbs according to time changes. Students may be able to remember all the English grammar rules if they were asked to mention the rules of grammar they will be able to answer them well. However, most students will find it difficult to express their thoughts in the form of speech and written language well (Astrid, 2011).

Talking about the rules of English, it cannot be separated with the use of grammar. Grammar is one of the most important components of language which has to be learned by students. According to Bozkurt and Ataizi (2015), grammar is a comprehensive area of rules and relationships among those rules. Learners learn a set of rules and apply them effectively to use language. Grammar is very important rule that must be applied. Then, Baleghizadeh and Gordani (2012) explain that no matter how well a person has brilliant writing ideas, it will be useless if the author, in this case, the students, have lack of clarity and avoid grammar ambiguity. Therefore, knowing the importance of grammar gives authors many advantages.

Since there are many rules in grammar that should be applied, learning grammar is difficult for the students. Common errors which are often found in writing written by students are in terms of error of grammatical sentence. This statement is supported by Alfiyani (2013) who says that students are still confused in learning grammatical structures in writing process. Then, Emmaryana (2010) argues that many students do not understand well about English grammar. They commonly produce grammar errors in their learning especially in writing. Writing is more complex and difficult than other language skills (Muslim, 2014; Javed, Juan, & Nazli, 2013; Harmer, 2004). As mentioned by Mbau, Marhum, and Muhsin (2014),

“The four English skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing is the most difficult skill for students. They declare that the reason for this difficulty is because writing requires the process in which students learn words, sentences, clauses, and grammatically correct sentences“(p. 2).

Based on the definitions above, it is well known that compared with other skills like reading, speaking and listening, writing is a very complex and difficult task. Writing is an activity that has been widely described in Qur'an. Allah says in Qur'an surah Al-Alaq: 4.

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ

Meaning: "Who teacheth by the pen (QS. Al-Alaq: 4)

Based on the verse above, Allah teaches human with an instrumentality writing and reading. According to Herizal and Afriani (2014), writing is important lesson for students both to fulfill their obligation as students and their status as creatures of God to execute his orders. In writing, the students can express their mind and feeling and think about everything in written form to communicate with other people as the readers.

Writing comes at the end of one's mastery over the other three skills. It is not an inborn skill. As Hourani (2008) said that writing skills must be experienced and practiced. Academic writing requires conscious efforts and practice in the development, composition, and analysis of ideas. In fact, English has its own system or rules. Mastering English writing skill is a very

difficult task for the students of English as a foreign language (EFL). Therefore, it is not surprising that many Indonesian students find a lot of difficulties and tend to make errors in learning writing. As mentioned by Sarfraz (2011), "Students are weak in English, especially in writing, because they are inadequately exposed to learning English" (p. 30).

In teaching and learning process of English writing in senior high school, students are taught narrative text. Based on the KTSP syllabus in junior and senior high schools, narrative text is always learned by students in junior and senior high schools, as well as entertaining and teaching readers (as cited in Riyani, 2016, p. 3). Narrative is easier to be analyzed. It is supported by Hendriwanto and Sugeng (2013) who declared that grammatical errors in narrative text is easy to examine. Then, Putri and Dewanti (2014) assert that sometimes students make mistakes in the use of grammar when they produce English writing, especially in writing narrative texts. Therefore, in this study, narrative is chosen as the instrument to investigate the errors, especially for EFL students.

Based on an informal interview to the teacher of English at that school, the teacher said that the students had problems in writing skill. They had difficulties on the use of grammar. Since there were many rules of grammar that should be applied, learning grammar was difficult for them. Moreover, they had some difficulties in writing past event paragraph. When the students were asked to write narrative text, they got confused in choosing the types of verb. Furthermore, it was difficult for them to understand how to use the tenses based on the rule when writing paragraph in past tense. They used the tenses inconsistently. Then, they did not have good idea in describing sentences into a good paragraph based on the topic. Essentially, the students got difficulty in understanding many rules in grammar that should be applied in writing.

From the descriptions above, it was important to analyze the grammatical error in students' narrative writing, students of the 11th grade in particular because they have learned narrative text. Therefore, I was interested in conducting a study entitled *An Analysis of the Grammatical Errors in Narrative Writing Made by Eleventh-Grade Students of Private Islamic Senior High School Palembang, South Sumatera, Indonesia*.

Literature Review

Concept of error, an error is different from mistake, but without a deep understanding, students tend to see the errors and mistakes similarly. So the researchers have to be careful to differentiate. According to Janah (2015),

"An error is a noticeable deviation from a native speaker's adult grammar, which reflects the learner's interlanguage competence. While a mistake is an error of performance, which is either a random guess or a 'slip', i.e. a failure to properly use of established system" (p. 63).

Therefore, it can be concluded that a mistake is just a slip from the right form for the learner. While an error is a deviation that the learner produces because he/she does not know the rule and he/she repeats doing it.

Sources of error, Brown (2000) points out the sources which influence second language learner in making error:

- 1) Interlingual transfer

Interlingual transfer is a significant error source for all students. The second language system is familiar, and the only previous linguistic system upon which the learner can draw is the native language. The error is the result of the transmission from the native language. The second language students attempt to combine is the use of their mother tongue with the second language they learn.

2) Intralingual transfer

Intralingual transfer is a major factor in the learning of the second language. The second language pupils have learned the target language in this phase. They overgeneralized the rules of the target language information in every language structure they produce.

3) Context of learning

It refers to the situation in the case of untutored second language learning. The students find different information from what they have learnt in the classroom and outside the classroom. These could be happened because of teacher's incorrect information.

4) Communication strategies

Strategies of communication were defined and related to learning style. Learners certainly used production strategies to improve their error. (p. 200)

From the above explanation, it can be seen that the sources of errors which influence errors produced by second language learners are in the form of interlingual swap, intralingual transfer, learning context and communication strategies.

The classifications of error types, Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) classified the errors into four types:

1. Omission

This error is characterized by an absence in a well-formed utterance of an item. Language students omit grammatical morphemes far more often than content words eg: *why did you * to hospital yesterday?* → (The verb is omitted in this sentence, while it is needed to make the correct sentence and meaning. It should be *why did you go to hospital yesterday?*)

2. Addition

It is the opposite of Omission. The errors are characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance.

There are three types of addition of error:

- a) Double Markings: where two items are used as the marker of the same feature. eg: *she didn't went to market* for *she didn't go to market*
- b) Regularization: Regularization is a rule, which typically applies to a class of linguistic features, eg: *spended* for *spent*, *eated* for *ate*, the noun *sheep* is also *sheep* in the plural, *not sheeps*.

We put all the equipments on the beach → “Equipment” is uncountable noun and does not require the plural marker –s.

c) Simple Addition: an addition error which is classified as neither double marking nor regularization. eg: the fishes doesn't live in the water.

3. Misformation

Misformation is characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morphemes or structure. The types of errors are:

- a) Regularization errors: that fall under the misformation category are those which a regular marker is used instead of an irregular one, eg: *runned* for *ran*, *gooses* for *geese*.
- b) Alternating forms: *I go to hospital yesterday.* (went)

4. Misordering error

Misordering is the incorrect use of morpheme or a group of morphemes in a pronunciation. Example:

I yesterday went to hospital. ("yesterday" is not in exact position, the position should be in the last as adverb of time)

He is all the time late.

Concept of error analysis, Khanom (2014) states "error analysis is important in the pedagogy of language teaching, as it helps teachers to identify error sources and to take pedagogical precautions" (p. 39). Meanwhile, according to Sawalmeh (2013), error analysis is a type of linguistic study focusing on errors made by learners. It is a comparison of the errors made in the target language (TL) and within the target language itself.

Procedures of error analysis, in analyzing the errors of students, some steps need to be taken. Ellis (1997) suggested that four steps in analyzing students' errors are: identifying errors, describing errors, explaining errors and evaluating errors.

1. Identifying errors; in this step, the sentences that contributed subject verb agreement errors are selected.
2. Describing errors; in this step, the errors are categorized into the types of errors which consist of omission, addition, misformation and misordering.
3. Explaining errors; in this step, why errors occur are explained. This explanation relates to the error sources.
4. Evaluating errors; the researcher must determine the error criteria that will be evaluated because certain errors can be considered more serious than others. (p. 32)

Concept of grammar, Grammar exists in every language including English. According to Subasini and Kokilavani (2013):

All languages have grammar, and every language has its own grammar, but English grammar is more complex and difficult to teach. Therefore, by learning English, grammar is such an important aspect to apply. It is a part of language which has to be learned by the learners of a language. Learners must produce the sentences grammatically so that the sentences can be delivered well and the readers can easily understand those sentences (p. 56). Grammar is such a crucial thing to learn in particular to write well.

According to Putri and Dewanti (2014):

The rules of grammar are crucial that have to be applied by the students when they produced the sentence. Implicitly, students who are good at grammar could probably produce good writing. It is then emphasized that as a productive skill, writing requires the writers to have the grammar knowledge and ability to produce a coherent paragraph writing (p. 26)

Concept of grammatical errors, according to Burt and Kiparsky, grammatical error is an error which happens when there are inappropriate grammatical rules applied that can make writing unsuitable (as cited in Putri & Dewanti, 2014, p. 2). Meanwhile, according to Ellis (1997):

Grammar traditionally deals with the principles that shape and interpret words, phrases and sentences. English students must be able to understand the grammatical rules of English and how to apply them well, in particular in writing. The grammar errors found in the writing text produced by the students sometimes affect the meaning of the text (p. 155).

Therefore, the learning of the grammatical errors allows students to write well.

Concept of narrative writing, narrative writing relates to terms; writing skill and narrative text. According to Cooper (2000) writing is a process in which someone else can describe something in sequences of coherent sentences. While, the term narrative text according to Cooper, is related to retelling stories and is the type that usually found in short stories and novels. The narrative text is often used to describe and/or explain human behavior (as cited in Septiani, 2016, p. 15).

Moreover, the narrative text is type of text which tells the story in the form of details can that can be fictional or factual, and each event in the story which leads to another tries to reach a goal or solve a problem. He also states that the primary purpose of narrative is to entertain” (Pratiwi, 2016). Narrative is therefore a kind of essay that tells a story or series of events. Its purpose is to tell a story about an event or series of events. Furthermore, Flippo states “Narrative text usually includes most story type of materials. The purpose of narrative text is to entertain, create, stimulate emotions, motivate, guide and teach” (as cited in Kareni, 2016, p. 176). It is supported by Jannah (2016) “Narrative text is to amuse, entertain and to deal with an actual or vicarious experience in different ways. Its role in society is to tell stories or past events and entertain readers”. It can be concluded that narrative writing is a process in describing an event or series of events by telling story which aimed to entertain the readers (p.36).

Methods

This study was a qualitative research design. According to C. Lambert and V. Lambert (2012), “there were a number of researchers who believe and support the fact that ‘descriptive quantitative’ was a viable and acceptable label for a descriptive research” (p. 255). The study therefore described the phenomena observed in the form of words. In general, the objective of this study was to describe profoundly and descriptively the reality behind the phenomenon.

The participants of the study were the eleventh grade students. By means of purposeful sampling, the eleventh grade of science class (class A) was chosen as the participants among three classes of the eleventh grade of the school.

In collecting the data, I used writing test to elicit the grammatical errors of the students. The reason why I used writing test as the instrument is that through writing the students could create their sentences and really put their knowledge of structures in writing. Therefore, it was easier for me to analyze and classify the data.

In addition, the students were then asked to write a narrative text about 120 - 150 words within sixty minutes. Then, they chose one of the topics given. The topics were *Sangkuriang*, *Bawang Merah* and *Bawang Putih*, The Legend of Malin Kundang, The Legend of Toba Lake, and Timun Mas. In addition, before the writing sheet was distributed to the students, I asked the validators to validate whether the instrument test was valid or not. In analyzing the data gained from this study, in order to find out what types of grammatical errors in students' narrative writing, the procedures of error analysis proposed by Ellis (1997) were followed. Then, the classification by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) was used. Finally, the most frequent type of errors was described.

Findings

After conducting the test, I collected the data, identified, and analyzed the students' sentences by marking and underlining every sentence that contained grammatical errors. I analyzed students' grammatical errors in narrative writing which covers: noun, pronoun, verb, conjunction, adjective, adverb, and preposition. The classification by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) was used to explain the types of grammatical errors. The result of the identification showed that there were 621 grammatical errors found in students' narrative writing.

In the description, I rewrote the results of the analysis into the table which listed the sentences containing grammatical errors and then compared the error sentences with the correct ones. In doing this step, I decided what types of grammatical errors they were and completed with the classification of errors. After identifying and describing the data, I counted the total number of all types of grammatical errors, and made percentage for each type of grammatical errors in students' narrative writing. The frequency and percentage of each type of grammatical error are listed in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. The frequency and percentage of grammatical errors

No.	Types of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Noun	13	(2.09%)
2.	Pronoun	136	(21.90%)
3.	Verb	308	(49.59%)
4.	Conjunction	10	(1.61%)
5.	Adjective	87	(14.00%)
6.	Adverb	6	(0.96%)
7.	Preposition	61	(9.82%)

1. Errors in Noun : $13 \times 100 / 621 = 2.09\%$
2. Errors in Pronoun : $136 \times 100 / 621 = 21.90\%$
3. Errors in Verb : $308 \times 100 / 621 = 49.59\%$
4. Errors in Conjunction : $10 \times 100 / 621 = 1.61\%$
5. Errors in Adjective : $87 \times 100 / 621 = 14.00\%$

6. Errors in Adverb : $6 \times 100 / 621 = 0.96\%$
7. Errors in Preposition : $61 \times 100 / 621 = 9.82\%$

Based on the findings above, this research revealed that the most frequent type of grammatical errors committed by the students in their narrative writing test was the use of “verb”. Omission became the most frequent type of error, for example, “*Malin was shy to * his mother (admit)*” and “*His mother look at Malin (looked)*”. Omission was characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) states “Language students omit grammatical morphemes far more often than content words” (p. 154).

Discussion

The omission error in this study was marked by the omitted items that must appear in a sentence. It could be caused by the interlingual transfer. Brown (2000) states “the omission error occurred because of the influence of the mother tongue of the students” (p. 224). For example in the sentence “*his mother * very angry*”, the students omitted the auxiliary verb because in students’ mother tongue, the sentence “*ibunya sangat marah*” did not need an auxiliary verb. It was supported by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982). They defined “interference could be in the form of automatic transfer due to the preference of using the first- language surface structure to the target language one.” (p. 97).

Moreover, this study showed that error in pronoun was in the second rank. Students also had a confusion about the usage of the pronoun. For example, the sentences “*his mother cursed his*” instead of “*his mother cursed him*”, and “*Malin forgot him mother*” instead of “*Malin forgot his mother*”. It could be caused by the interference of their mother tongue. It happened because, in Bahasa Indonesia, there is no difference between the usage of subject pronoun, object pronoun, possessive pronoun and possessive adjective.

Next, the result of the findings also showed that there were many errors in adjective. Some examples in this study were in the form of “*He came to * village*” instead of “*He came to the village*”, and “*He had * wife*” instead “*He had a wife*”. In this study, the students had confusion in the use of article that is indefinite and definite article. It happened because in bahasa Indonesia, there is no difference between the use of article to talk about any single person or thing and a certain person or thing.

Next, the errors which the students made were in the use of preposition. It was in the fourth rank. For example in using the preposition; *to, on, in* etc. The example of sentences were as follows: “*She wanted * curse Malin*” instead of “*She wanted to curse Malin*”, “*Malin didn’t to admit her*” instead of “*Malin didn’t admit her*”, and “*On a little village*” instead of “*In a little village*”. Therefore, the students were confused in choosing the right preposition. It is called interference, which becomes one of the sources of the errors in the second language. This kind of errors happened were known as inter lingual errors.

Moreover, errors in noun were also found in this study, for example, “*they asked the peoples to join work*” instead “*they asked the people to join work*”. Students were still confused in using nouns. The students tended to add “s” in every plural noun. They did not know whether it was a regular or irregular noun. This might happen because in *bahasa Indonesia*, there is no difference between the usage of singular or plural noun and regular or irregular noun.

Next, students were confused in using conjunction, for example, “*he went to the city * he was successful*” instead “*he went to the city and he was successful*”. Students rarely used conjunction because they did not understand the importance of it. The last, adverb was found as the most rarely type of grammatical errors. Similar to the other types of grammatical errors, students got trouble in the use of adverb. For example, “*someday, Malin wanted to leave the home*” instead of “*one day, Malin wanted to leave the home*”. It proved that students did not use appropriate form in using adverb. It was probably due to lack of competence in using English.

From all discussions above, it could be concluded that the eleventh grade students who learned English as a foreign language tended to make grammatical errors, especially error in using verb. Students got difficulties because Indonesian grammatical system does not have rule in the form of tenses. Besides, students tended to make grammatical errors in their writing, especially in narrative writing because they probably had lack of competence in producing English sentences. Therefore, the students were unable to determine correct sentence construction because they believed that their utterances were what they intended to say. They were usually not able to make any corrections of their errors by themselves. The teachers therefore needed to correct their grammatical errors by evaluating their writing during the process of learning.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions of this study were presented as follows: firstly, the students contributed seven types of grammatical errors which comprised of errors in using noun, pronoun, verb, conjunction, adjective, adverb and preposition. Secondly, the findings showed that errors in using verb were the most frequent type of errors followed by errors in using pronoun, adjective, preposition, noun, conjunction, and adverb.

This research would like to enact some suggestions for a better process of teaching and learning, especially in writing process at one private Islamic senior high school Palembang, South Sumatera, Indonesia and for other researchers. 1) For the teacher of English, I suggested to the teachers of English to frequently make corrections and give more comprehension and further explanations toward students’ grammatical errors during learning process; 2) For the students, it is expected for them to practice more in English writing especially in narrative writing by trying to practice using past form. The students need to learn more about grammar rules by reading more; and 3) For the other researchers, it is expected that this research could give a reference to the other researchers who want to conduct similar research.

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