

Original Paper

Portraying Students' Grammatical Errors in Essay Writing: A Study at English Education Study Program Pattimura University

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Abstract

This research was conducted to find out types of grammatical errors made by students when writing expository essay. Data were collected from expository essay samples from 39 students of English Education Study Program Pattimura University. Document study method was used in this study by identifying, classifying and analyzing students' grammatical errors based on Dulay, Burt, and Krashen theory that consist of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The analysis was focused on the part of speech such as noun, verb, pronoun, adjective, adverb, and preposition. It was found that the highest error done by the students was misformation which is 42,27%, the second was omission which is 42,11%, the third was addition which is 15,32%, and the last was misordering which is 0,30%. Based on this result, It is obvious that students should focus more on grammar mastery in order to minimize grammatical errors in their essay writing.

Keywords

Grammatical Errors, Essay Writing

1. Introduction

Grammar is useful in the writing process. It can be prescriptive and also descriptive (Hodgson & Harris, 2021). It is believed that grammar is an important aspect of language (Incecay & Dollar, 2011) which can enhance the teaching and learning a second language (Marsden & Slabakova, 2018) that will always be at the center of second language teaching and learning (Hua & Li, 2015). Grammar is seen as central to supporting students' accuracy as language users and in the eradication of errors from their

speech and writing (Myhill & Watson, 2013). As Saaristo (2015) states, “Grammar is sentence structures and the basic of writing”. While, writing is one of the basic skills used and fostered in educating students (Cer, 2019) and pervasive in the context of higher education (Hynninen, 2018) that can be improved with the knowledge of grammar (Debata, 2013). The empirical evidence indicating positive effects of contextualized grammar teaching on writing development (van Rijt, de Swart, Wijnands, & Coppen, 2019). Without grammar, writers can not construct the sentences well, or the ideas cannot be well-understand by the readers. So writing cannot be separated from grammar because it plays an important role in making a set of words mean. However, the problem is that many students still make some errors in writing and arranging some sentences to be a paragraph. It is because English grammar is a different linguistic system (Sukasame, Kantho, & Narrot, 2014) and to use the grammar correctly students need to get reminded of appropriate forms of expression (Segal & Torres, 2013).

Errors that students produced in their writing are commonly caused by their target language (Limengka and Kuntjara (2012). For example, writing an essay as Solihah (2017) found errors in students’ argumentative essay writing. Miko (2018) also found that students produce errors because they still have difficulties in applying or using the correct grammar in their writing. It is indeed complicated in acquiring academic writing skills for students in higher education (Charless, 2006) that they need support to write well (Wingate, 2006). Thus, it is important to give feedback to them (Schillings, Roebertsen, Savelberg, & Dolmans, 2018) by teaching the correct grammar. The errors they produce can be happened because they are not using the rules of the components and elements of the second language (Muhsin, 2016) including grammar (Praninskas, 1980) that has many rules of tense, sentence pattern, etc. (Cook & Richard, 1980).

Recently, there had been previous studies from the English Department, FKIP Pattimura University (Unpatti) that examined Error Analysis (EA) study such as Pattiradjawane (2018) found that the senior high school students still produced errors of the use of preposition in their writing, and the source of error were target language or intralingual transfer. Nanulaitta (2018) found that they still produced errors of using irregular and regular verbs in their free paragraph writing, and the source of error was target language or intralingual transfer. Husnawan (2021) found that junior high school students produced errors in the use of English articles in their descriptive text. Marthen (2021) also found errors in speaking skills that is the oral self-introduction of first-year students at the English Education Study Program. Last, Wayong (2021) found errors of the use of simple past tense in recount text. It shows that the students have lacked knowledge of grammatical rules before, and the cause of errors was target language or intralingual transfer. Meanwhile, sentence construction is a foundational writing skill that forms the building blocks of advanced writing (Panos & Datchuk, 2019). It shows that writing in English is complex (Sukandi, 2017).

Through this kind of error and problems, the researcher conducted this study to analyze errors in students’ essay writing, especially on expository text as their mid-term project, by using a mix-method research design for the fourth-semester students. The focus of the study was analyzing the types of

grammatical errors and the dominant errors made by the fourth-semester students on expository essay writing at the English Education Study Program by using Dulay, Burt, and Krashen theory.

This research will help lecturers to measure and understand their students' writing ability especially grammatical errors. It will be good feedback to the lecturers to give more attention to the teaching of writing and grammar. Hence, there is research that has led to a major emphasis on the need for learners to experience the target language (Crawford, 2004). However, students have teacher as a cultural mediator in language learning (Mikhaleva & Regnier, 2014). Teacher ought to know as much as possible about the language and that knowledge should include, as a major component, knowledge about grammar (Feng, 2013). Effective English teachers are those who focus on comprehension including command of the language (Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi, & Al-Maamari, 2015) as they are playing fundamental role in their students' learning and academic achievement (Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011); (Al-Issa, 2017). It is impossible to teach effectively if their English ability is poor. They will teach writing effectively if they master writing and other language skills. As it is believed that effective teaching can be defined as the ability to improve students' achievement (Good, Wiley, & Florez, 2009), enhance students learning (Burroughs, et al., 2019), and facilitators of an individual's learning experience (Kim, Raza, & Seidman, 2019). Thus, the criteria of effective teaching in higher education are understood to comprise particular skills and practices applied within particular contexts (Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010) emphasising knowledge and presentation (Saroyan, Amundsen, McAlpine, Weston, Winer, & Gandell, 2004). It is crucial to make the students realize their errors and mistakes after the writing made by them. In consequence, the students will get better at writing. This research will give the information in leading other research. The other researcher tries to find the best solution about it. Moreover, they will establish more profound research in the same type of research, but they create the best new research.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Participants

This study was conducted at the English Education Study Program, Pattimura University, with Fourth Semester (IV) students as the subject of the study. The study was held from March 2021 until July 2021 including the process of designing, implementing, and analyzing. The population observed in this research was 84 students. Based on the population, this study was conducted using 39 of 75 students. It was based on purposive sampling.

2.2 Instrument od Data Collection

To collect data, students' essay writing products were used. The primary instrument for data collection was students' writing document. As Bowen (2008) stated that "document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, whether it is printed and electronic materials.

2.3 Data Analysis

After gathering data, the data were analyzed following quantitative and qualitative data analysis

procedure.

a. Quantitative Data Analysis

The calculation of error's percentage to analyze quantitative data of this research used the formula below:

$$\% \text{ of errors} = \frac{\sum \text{students' error on each category}}{\sum \text{students errors}} \times 100\%$$

b. Qualitative Data Analysis

There are several phases required in qualitative data analysis. The phases are reducing and organizing the data, synthesizing, searching for significant patterns, and discovering what is important. In this study, the data were analyzed following these phases; 1) Familiarizing and Organizing; 2) Coding and Reducing; 3) Interpreting and Presenting; 4) Drawing Conclusion

3. Results

3.1 The Description of Errors

In analyzing the errors made by the students, the writer took their expository essay writing products. According to the rubric of this essay, grammar is one of the crucial points, so in this study, the errors analyzed were focused on the use of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions, prepositions, and articles. The data were analyzed based on Dulay's theory which divided the errors into Omission, Addition, Mis-formation, and Mis-ordering. The results of the errors made by students in writing their expository essay writings can be seen in the following chart:

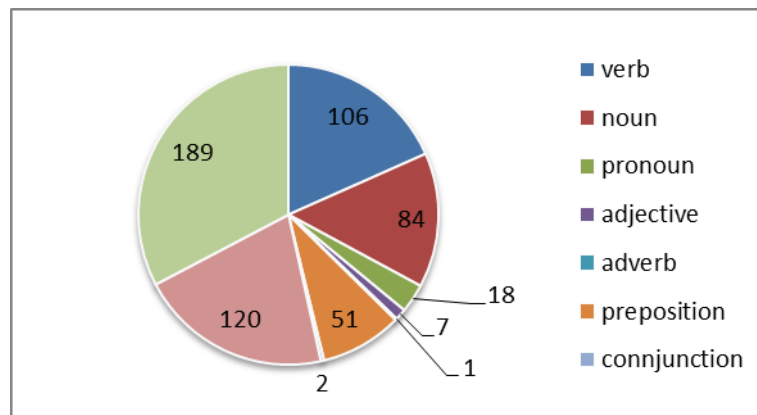


Figure 1. Frequency of Errors in Parts of Speech

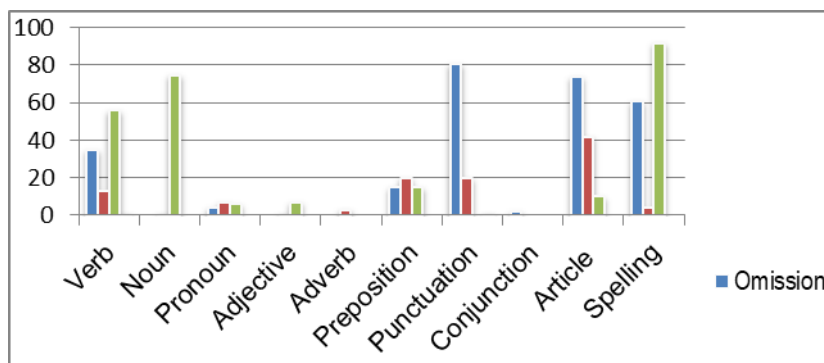


Figure 2. Frequency of Errors in Each Category

Table 1. Recapitulation of Number of Students Who Made Errors

Types of Errors	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Omission	38	98
Addition	35	90
Misformation	32	82
Misordering	2	0.5

The Table presents the percentage of students in the Essay writing class who made grammatical errors. 38 of 39 students (98%) produced the error of omission in their essay writing. 35 of 39 students (90%) produced the error of addition. 32 of 39 students (82%) produced the error of misformation and 3 of 39 students (0.8%) produced the error of misordering in their essay writing.

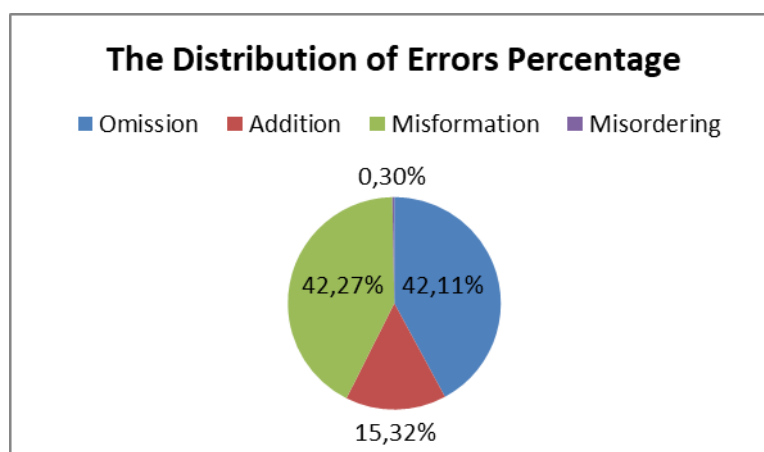


Figure 3. Recapitulation of Error Types

The chart presents the percentages of each type of grammatical errors. The highest is misformation which is 273 or 42,27%, the second is omission which is 272 or 42,11%, the third is addition which is 99 or 15,32%, and the least is misordering which is two students with the amount of error is 2 or 0,30%.

The study found 272 errors types produced by students in their essay writing. The highest error happened in punctuation, which consisted of 81 errors. Next, article (a/an/the) which consisted of 74 errors. Then, a spelling consisted of 61 errors. Next, errors happened in auxiliary (am/is/are), which consisted of 20 errors. Omission error happened in one-word preposition which consisted of 11 errors. Moreover, the non-finite verb consisted of 8 errors, the main verb consisted of 7 errors, complex preposition consisted of 4 errors. In addition, omission error happened in objective pronoun and correlative conjunction which consisted of 2 errors for each type also subjective pronoun and possessive adjective pronoun which consisted of 1 error for each type.

There were 99 errors types produced by students in their essay writing. The highest error happened in article (a/an/the) which consisted of 42 errors. Next, punctuation which consisted of 20 errors. Then, error happened in one-word preposition, auxiliary verb, non-finite verb, and subjective pronoun which consisted of 6 errors for each type. Moreover, complex preposition and spelling consisted of 4 errors for each type. In addition, omission error happened in objective pronoun, adjective, and finite verb consisted of 1 error for each type.

The study also found 273 errors types produced by students in their essay writing. The highest error happened in spelling which consisted of 92 errors. Next, punctuation which consisted of 81 errors. Then, incorrect noun number which consisted of 76 errors. Next, errors happened in non-finite verb and a one-word preposition which consisted of 22 errors for each type. Omission error happened in auxiliary (am/is/are) which consisted of 18 errors. Then, error in article (a/an/the) consisted of 10 errors. Moreover, main verb and finite verb consisted of 8 errors for each type. Followed by quantifier and adjective which consisted of 7 errors for each type. In addition, objective pronoun consisted of 4 errors, adverb consisted of 3 errors, complex preposition consisted of 2 errors, and subjective pronoun consisted of 2 errors.

Also, there were 2 errors types produced by students in their essay writing. Misordering auxiliary verb and punctuation.

4. Discussion

Based on the result of the analysis, it shows that the highest percentage of errors made by the student is misformation by the highest error was produced in incorrect noun numbers. The second is the omission by the highest error was produced in the auxiliary verb. The third is the addition by the highest error was produced in the article (a/an/the). The lowest is misordering.

Misformation is the highest percentage of errors made by the student. The highest error was produced in incorrect noun numbers. Most students were confused and produced these errors in the body of their

essays. For example, “There are also lecturer who only convey learning material in the form of documents (pdf, docs, ppt) without any in-depth explanation.” (students 6 in paragraph 4).

Omission is the second-highest percentage of errors made by the student. The error was produced in auxiliary verbs and punctuation. Students were confused and produced these errors in the body of their essays. For example, “It (is still) still okay if want to use motor vehicles, but make sure that the use of it is maximum.” (students 25 in paragraph 3).

Addition is the third-highest percentage of errors made by the students. The error was produced in the article (a/an/the). Students were confused and produced these errors in the body of their essays. For example, “In Practice you have to talk to yourself using the English while train your voice” (student 20 in paragraph 5).

Misordering is the lowest percentage of errors made by the students. As shown in the findings. The error of misordering was produced in the verb “Do you know what is green building (is)?” (students 22).

It could be stated that the students get the problem in applying the word choice which should be added in an appropriate form and they did not set punctuation also still produce error in noun number. Besides, the students have failed to apply grammar rules in essay writing because they have a lack of grammar knowledge, in generating an essay, they just translated using the dictionary. It could be proven that they committed the error in writing. They did not apply the correct noun number such as –s and punctuation that appropriate. Almost all students made errors in spelling the word.

The results of this study are different from the previous study conducted by Banjar, Aimah, and Muhimatul (2018) under the title ‘An Analysis of Grammatical Errors on Students’ Writing that found 810 errors on students writing with omission as the highest error, followed by addition, misformation and misordering. They concluded that teachers must recognize the weakness and help students to improve their grammar comprehension. Actually, in this study, the range error of omission and misformation is 1 error. So it can be said that the students not only made errors in the formation of the sentences but also omit some words or parts in the sentences.

Uniquely, the results of this study are similar to what Solihah (2017) found with her research entitled Grammatical Errors Analysis in the Fourth Semester Students’ Essay Writing at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. She examined the grammatical errors made by fourth-semester students in the essay writing and found that Misformation is the highest error in students’ writing in category auxiliary: to be. Moreover, Limengka and Kuntjara (2012) in their study under the title Types of Grammatical Errors in the Essay-Written by fourth-semester of English Department, Petra Christian University. They also examined the grammatical errors made by fourth-semester students in essay writing class. It showed that Misformation is the highest errors made by students. They found that students produced misformation on the part of speech which are nouns, verbs, and prepositions. It indicated that generally, students are quite weak in tenses and word-formation processes. Besides, this study found that students produced misformation 273 times, and it was not only on the verbs, nouns,

and prepositions but also on spelling words.

This study also confirmed the previous studies that English Department students at Pattimura University still produced errors in their productive skill, as Marthen (2021) examined Error Analysis in speaking skill and Wayong (2021) in writing recount text by using the simple past tense.

From this study, the researcher found that the students made errors because they faced problems in grammar. In generating the sentences on essay writing, they must be learned about the grammar rules. The students also must re-edit the essay writing draft for the error in spelling and omit some words. The students had not understood how to construct the sort of structure. The researcher hopes that this research gives more understanding about grammatical errors, especially to the readers.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of the research, it can be concluded that the students still produced grammatical errors in their essay writing because they were lack of grammar knowledge. Generally, they are weak in tenses and word-formation processes. The students' errors were dominantly in misformation. It is followed by omission as the second type of error, the third is addition, and the last type of error is misordering.

Misformation is the highest error in students' essay writing. It was found that students could not construct the sentences with the right form. Despite the fact that they were fourth-semester students, they passed Paragraph Writing, Grammar in Written, and Grammar in Spoken they still produced errors in basic grammar and structures. In this study, the researcher focused on the mid-term product, which is an expository essay. They produced errors in the final draft of expository essay writing.

In summary, students have problems in acquiring grammatical rules, especially in academic writing such as essay writing. They need to read, learn, and more practice in English writing. They need to acquire grammar and structure in writing an essay. It is hoped this study can help students to write using better grammar and reduce errors.

The researcher would like to present some suggestions that will hopefully provide more insight into the learning of writing and give a new idea for better teaching and learning process at the university level.

First, the students should read great reading sources to change their sentence development examples and practice more on English grammar. Second, the students should get peer feedback on their writing. Third, it was useful for the lecturers to focus on students' weaknesses, and needed to strengthen their knowledge, especially on grammar and structure. Last, the further researcher can use this study as the source to research with the large sample and more focused on some parts of speech and apply others theory of error analysis in writing.

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