

THE ANALYSIS OF COMMON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING NARRATIVE ESSAY OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM STUDENTS AT JAMBI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract.

The purpose of this quantitative research is to reveal common grammatical errors in writing narrative essay of English Study Program students at Jambi University. The data were collected through writing test. The data were analyzed by using format error identification. This research reveals twelve errors. They were verb-tense, punctuation, capital letters, word choice, spelling, preposition, pronoun, pluralism, redundancy, word order, article, and possessive case. There were 599 errors happened in students' papers, and the highest amount of error occurred in verb-tense category. There were 303 verb-tense errors (50.58%). Meanwhile, the smallest number of error occurred in article and possessive case category. Both have the same frequency and percentage, which are 6 errors (1.00%) in article and 6 errors (1.00%) in possessive case. The researcher concluded that students made errors because of the lack of grammatical knowledge. Their native language also still influenced the students, which is Bahasa that lead them to made errors.

Keywords: grammatical errors, narrative essay

Introduction

Writing is one of the language skills, which produces ideas through written form. According to Meyers (2005), writing is a way to produce language, just as humans do naturally when they speak. Writing is communication with other in a verbal way. In addition, Byrne (1979) states that writing is one of the language skills that tells writer's ideas into written form. It is also an action of a process of discovering and organizing the writer's idea, putting them on paper and then reshaping and revising them.

Writing skill could be defined as the ability of someone, in this case a writer skill to produce a piece of discourse, which composes correctness of form accuracy of style and unity of theme and topic. Writing is one of the most important skills which must be taught in teaching-learning English because it is a skill that based on the cognitive domain. According to Bello (1997), writing is a productive language skill that plays an essential role in promoting language acquisition as learners experiment with words, sentences, and large chunks of writing to communicate their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they learn in class. Therefore, writing is important in educational environment because it supports learners to fulfill their necessity in learning.

Not everyone can be a good author or writer, even in his or her own native language. Everyone needs to learn about writing in depth to master it. Blanchard & Root (2003) assert that writing in new language can be more difficult because of the first language writing and the target language writing have such differences in using appropriate grammar and conventions, and lexical variety. In writing, sometimes people make mistakes in developing their writing. Lack of grammatical knowledge and vocabulary can be a factor the idea of writing become ambiguous. Braganza (1998) says that by breaking the fundamental rules and grammar, the ideas become wrong, the sentences become erroneous and the author and the readers stand self-condemned. Therefore, grammar is important to make each component in writing become connected or related one and another.

In writing, grammar has become something that cannot be separated from it. Grammar is a set of rules that decide how the words are arranged into formation of a meaningful unit. According to Harmer as cited in Cook (1999), learners who learn a language should learn some aspects of grammatical structure to obtain a competency in using a language that consist of verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and noun and pronoun. With a good grammatical understanding, the writer can make a content of the writing can be easily understood and the message, idea, or information will be delivered properly and more meaningful. Without good or correct structure, there will be misunderstanding as a result.

Based on preliminary observation, which conducted in Jambi University, the researcher found several difficulties in writing essay faced by English Study Program students. The students said that sometimes they were confused about tenses. To measure themselves about an appropriate tense to each type of essay, they need to look at their note or browse on internet. They have to be careful in writing an essay because if they make a mistake in one word or tenses, the concept and meaning of their essay will be different. After that, some of them also have a problem paragraph development. They stuck in mind because they have no idea to develop each paragraph. An understanding of ideas also becomes a matter to write a good essay.

As English students, they also have struggle for grammar in writing because they know that the rules and structures between English and Bahasa are different. Based on the fact above, grammar still becomes the common problem in writing. So that, learners' problems in writing may leads the learners to make errors.

In this study, the researcher focused on analyzing common grammatical errors in narrative essay. Narrative essay explains something based on writer's experience of knowledge about a story or events. This rather essay that carrying an aspect of telling a story. Although this essay is kind of storytelling, the students must use an appropriate tense for narrative essay to support their own essay. As a result, there were some writing errors because they have lack of knowledge on how to write the essay. To find out the errors in writing narrative essay which made by the students, there was an error analysis regarding the problem that measures how frequent the students made errors in writing. Based on the explanation above, the researcher analyzed the students' writing errors by using error analysis form that shows what kind of common grammatical errors they did in order to avoid them and the readers to not repeat the same mistake in writing essay.

Based on the background of the research, the researcher has a purpose to analyze each type of common grammatical errors made by students in writing narrative essay in order to reveal common grammatical errors that occurred in students' essay. Based on the background presents above, the question of this research can be formulated as follow: 1) What types of common grammatical errors do the third semester students of English study program make in writing narrative essay at Jambi University?

Methodology

This research used descriptive quantitative method, and Fraenkel & Wallen (2003) state that quantitative research can be classified either descriptive or experimental research. The purpose of descriptive research is to become more familiar with phenomena, to gain new insight, and to formulate a more specific research problem. Therefore, the main purpose of this research is to gain information about phenomena in order to describe existed condition in the field. Specifically, this research found out the types of common grammatical error made by students in narrative essay.

Furthermore, Gay (2005) states that “descriptive quantitative research involves collecting numerical data to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning current status conducted either through self-reports collected through test, questionnaires, and interviews, or through observation”. In other words, the data was analyzed and the data analysis results have the form of phenomenon descriptive by nominal form. The researcher used quantitative descriptive method to count and describe the grammatical error in narrative essay made by the third semester students of the English Department of Jambi University.

The research site for this study was in English Department of Jambi University. This research was focused on English study program’s students’ in faculty of teacher training and education. The participants were the third semester of English education study program’s students in Jambi University. The reason of choosing English study program was considered as study program that demands the students to master English and this program study has a writing class. To get an access in this study program the researcher was asked for permission to the lecturers that teach essay writing to allow the researcher conducts this research. Moreover, the researcher has known about the condition in the field. Researcher chose the participants who fulfill the criteria that researcher want to analyze. The other reason was because the researcher had studied in writing class for four semesters, and the researcher made mistakes and got to struggle in writing class. So, the researcher knows exactly how participants feel.

The population and sample of this research were the third semester students at English Study Program of Jambi University in essay writing class. In this research, the researcher knew and found the common grammatical errors of narrative essay made by students.

According to Creswell (2008) population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristic. Population is complete elements such as person or object that possess some common characteristics define by the sampling criteria established by the researcher. The population of this research was the third semester students of English study program in Jambi University. The populations of this research were four classes, which are regular class (A & B) and Mandiri class (H & I).

Table 1. Classes of population

No	Classes	Number of students
1	A	36
2	B	35
3	H	15
4	I	16
	Total	102

Sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for generalizing about the target population (Creswell, 2008). According to Sekaran (2000), sample is a subset of the population. From four classes of population, the researcher will choose two classes as a sample. To get two classes for the sample the researcher will use clustering sample,

because it is impossible to select randomly third semester students and assign them into particular. Scheafer, et al. (1996) state that cluster sampling will divide the population into group or cluster. Some cluster will be chosen randomly as the representative of population, and then every element in chosen cluster will be the sample of the research. So, the researcher was divided the population into separate groups, called clusters with cluster sampling. Then, a simple random sample of clusters was selected from the population by using slot technique. The researcher conducted his analysis on data from the sampled clusters.

Table 2. Classes of sample

No	Classes	Number of students
1	A	23
2	H	12
	Total	35

Classes choose based on their same semester degree and same essay-writing subject. After that, the researcher chose two classes based on slot technique. The chosen classes are class A and class H such a displayed table above. After researcher found the two classes to be his sample, the researcher was taking the data of the students by giving them a writing test. Because this research was used cluster sampling, the researcher included criteria to select a sample as in the table below.

Table 3. Criteria of selecting sample

No	Criteria
1	The participants are in faculty of teacher training and education in English department in Jambi University
2	The students are in the third semester.
3	The participants are the students in essay writing class.
4	They are willing to be the participant for this research.

The researcher used a test as research instrument. According to Kizlik (2012) test is a method to determine a student's ability to complete certain tasks or demonstrate mastery of a skill or knowledge of content. It means that test is really fit as an instrument for this research. The test was in written form, and it was given to know and to identify the errors made by students in writing narrative essay. In this research, the researcher asked permission to writing essay lecturers and told the students to write a narrative essay about their unforgettable moments in life as the topic of the essay.

Validity refers to the extent to which a test is actually supposed to measure in intended context area. A test is valid if its content constitutes a representative sample of the language skill, structure, etc. in this research the researcher wanted to know the common grammatical errors of students' narrative essay. So, this research used written test in order to know the common grammatical errors that students made in writing narrative essay.

In this research, the researcher used inter-rater reliability analysis. Inter-rater reliability refers to the consistency of agreement between two or three raters. The principal purpose researcher used inter-rater reliability was to examine relationships between the two scores of two raters.

According to Punch (1998), reliability is a central concept in measurement, and it basically means consistency. Also, Clarke (2003) state that reliability refers to "the extent of an investigation which produces consistent result". In this research, reliability gave the consistent

results that boosted the researcher's confidence because the result shows consistency of agreement of two raters. In this research, reliability was done by using Cronbach's Alpha. The researcher used SPSS to calculate Alpha. Moreover, the researcher had criteria for interpreting Alpha statistics are present in the table 3.4 below.

In analyzing the data, the researcher uses several error analysis methods suggested by Gass and Selinker (2008), there are collect data, Identify error, Classify error, and Quantify error (Riswanto, 2012). After the raters correct the students' essay, they gave score for each paper. Then, students' ability in writing can be concluded for average score by using standard taken from Reid (1993). The following table is students' writing category to describe the students' score from their narrative essay.

Table 3. Writing score interval

Score Interval	Category
91-100	Excellent
81-90	Very Good
71-80	Good
61-70	Average
Below 60	Poor

The identified errors in each paper were classified into several common types of grammatical error. In deciding each type of errors, the researcher adapted the table from Schampfer (1989). The result of errors table is shown in the table below.

Next, calculating the frequency and percentage of error which made by students. The researcher put the common errors that occurred in students' narrative essay into the table of The Frequency and Percentage of Students Errors. After the collecting data get identified, classified, and analyzed. To find out the percentage categories of students errors in writing narrative essay, the writer used following Gay's Theory (1992):

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Notes:

P = the percentage of students error

F = frequency of errors based

N = Total errors of students' narrative essay

According to this technique, the writer was seen the percentage of how many grammatical errors in narrative essay made by the third semester students of English department in Jambi University.

Findings and Discussion

This research was conducted in order to reveal the common grammatical errors that English Study Program made in writing narrative essay. In this research, a writing test was conducted in the writing essay classes. The English Study Program students of Jambi University in B class and H class were the samples for this research.

There were twelve error categories that this research revealed, and it happened 599 times in students' essays. First error is verb-tense error. This is the highest one, there were 303 errors of verb tense happened in this research, and the percentage of this one is 50.58%. The example of verb tense error in the essay is the incorrect to be, and this happened a lot in the essays. For example "*the ceremony is almost started*". In this sentence, the use of "is" was incorrect because this is a narrative essay, and it must show a past form. Another example for verb tense error is in using verb. For example, "*we go back to the room and prepared ourselves*". That should be "*we went back to our room and prepared ourselves*".

Those verb tense errors could be happened because the structure of English and students' first language, which is Bahasa, are different. It can be seen because verb tense errors occupied the highest number of errors in this research. The researcher concluded it was because an interlingua transfer, students perhaps still influenced by their native language linguistic system which leads them to make errors in this type.

Second is punctuation error. This type also happened in large amount. There were 76 errors occurred and the percentage is 12.68%. Largely, it occurred in comma and full stop using. For instance, the student separated sentence with full stop, while that sentence should use comma in order to make it not ambiguous. For example, "*I never held an instrument before. and it was new for me.*". The suggestion for this one is "*I never held an instrument before, and it was new for me.*". The student should use comma instead of full stop in order to avoid ambiguity.

The carefulness of the detail in writing is necessary. In this study, punctuation took place of the highest number of errors. The utilization of proper punctuation is really necessary in writing. Students that made errors in this type mostly were them with handwriting essay. The form of comma and full stop are similar, so they need to paid attention in it. Thus, it can be assumed the ignorance of students lead them to made these errors.

Third, capital letters error came with 50 errors or 8.34%. There were several incorrect uses of capital letters. First, the students did not begin the title with capital letter. Second, the students almost always forget to using capital letter for subject "I". For example, "*i visited my friend's house*". The students should have known that there is a rule to use capital letters for "I". After that, some students did not use capital letter after full stop. For example, "*I forgot to put my hat in my bag. finally with confidence, I walked toward school*". The word "*finally*" must begin with capital letter because it written after full stop.

For capital letter errors, the researcher also assumed that it perhaps caused by the ignorance of students. In addition, it happened a lot in students' paper in handwriting. The carelessness of students lead them made this error, they did not paid attention with such little thing for instance the name of person must begin with capital letter or the subject "I" also must be a capital letter.

Next, word choice is the fourth writing error, which has large amount. It has about 43 errors or 7.17% for the percentage. Word choice could be happened when the writer choose an irrelevant word on his/her sentence. It occurred on students' paper. For example, "*I saw their faces were not sad again*". That sentence is not wrong, but the word "*again*" gives the reader awkwardness. It can be more appropriate if the student use "*anymore*" instead of "*again*". So, the suggestion for that sentence is "*I saw their faces were not sad anymore*".

Word choice error could be caused by the lack of vocabulary. The researcher concluded that the limit of students' vocabulary knowledge caused them made this error. They probably thought that the word with same meaning as they want could fit in every sentence. However, when they applied it to their paper the meaning of that context seemed weird.

Spelling error is the next writing error that occurred in the students' essay. It happened about 38 times in the whole papers, and it has 6.34% for the percentage. The students made this error by putting wrong letter in the word, or they are very careless and write the word not with its spelling but its sound. For instance, the student wrote, "*the ticker left the class*". The word "*ticher*"

must be “*teacher*”. The student literally did not pay attention to the detail of his/her work, so it causes the error occurred in his/her essay. Another example of spelling error is “*I had to go to college in the morning*”. The word “*collage*” must be “*college*”, so in that sentence the student put the wrong letter in the word.

From the example above, it can be assumed that their first language influenced students. Some of them made this error by wrote the words by its sound. The other students made error of spelling by added an inappropriate letter or omitted the appropriate letter. It can be concluded that the students made errors by mistype or lack of concentration.

After that, preposition error also occurred in students’ essay. There are many prepositions in English, and sometimes it has similar meaning. In this case, students put incorrect preposition on their sentence or they omitted the preposition. For example, “*I visited them to eat fast food restaurant*”. That sentence literally told the readers that the writer “*eat fast food restaurant*”. The student should put preposition “*in*” between the word “*eat*” and “*fast*”. Therefore, the correct sentence must be “*I visited them to eat in fast food restaurant*”. In addition, preposition errors happened 21 times or 3.50% in students’ narrative writing.

In preposition error, the researcher considered two probabilities. First, the students made this error because of translating. There would be a lot of misunderstanding if students translate their first language to English. It is because the structure of their first language and English are different. If they wanted to translate it, they have to consider and measure the meaning of context is right. Second it could happened because the context of learning. The students probably have wrong hypothesis of lecturer’s explanation or their textbook that lead them to made errors.

Pronoun errors occurred 18 times or 3.00% in students’ writing narrative essay. It happened perhaps because the students got confused in using pronoun. For instance, one of the students wrote “*BK teachers were tired of calling us, but we did not listen to it*”. The word “*it*” refers to “*BK teachers*”, but pronoun for “*BK teachers*” must be “*them*”. So, the correct sentence should be “*BK teachers were tired of calling us, but we did not listen to them*”.

Pronoun errors could be happened because of the induced errors. It refers to students’ wrong comprehension of context element. They probably have incomplete competence of English structure or interference of their native language. They could be misunderstood about what lecturer explained which made them produced errors of this point.

Next, pluralism errors also happens students’ paper. It has about 16 errors from whole papers, and the percentage is 2.67%. The example for this case is “*I have many unforgettable moment in my life*”. It should be “*I have many unforgettable moments in my life*”. Because the student means “*many unforgettable moments*”, so it must be more than one. It could be happened because in their native language there are no suffix *s/es*.

Pluralism errors did not happen a lot in this research. However, several students did it. It could be happened because of the interference of their first language. In Bahasa, there is no suffix “*s/es*” to explain the number of noun. It probably influenced them to made errors in this point.

After that, redundancy occurred 14 times with 2.33% as a percentage. Redundancy happened with unnecessary words use or the repetition of some unnecessary same word. It can make the sentence become ambiguous and hard to be understood. For instance, the students wrote “*and finally she wanted to forgive me and gave me one more chance, and I promise to her, I won’t repeat my mistake again*”. She did not need word “*and*” that much. She could write “*finally she wanted to forgive me and gave me one more chance. I promise to her, I won’t repeat my mistake again*” and it still make sense.

Redundancy error could be happened because of students’ communication strategy and it related to their learning style. The students disposed made this error because they wanted to express their story or experience in their paper. The way they expressed their story seemed over exaggerated. In fact, they added unnecessary element in their sentence and made it too much.

Word order error means the incorrect placement of word groups in sentence. In this case, word order errors happened 8 times or 1.33%. This error type did not happened a lot in students’

paper. It shows that students already know about the structure of their native language and English are different. However, there were several students made this error. One of them wrote, “*I have friends crazy*”, while it must be “*I have crazy friends*”. The incorrect placement of those words will make the reader confuse and need to read it again to understand what the writer means.

The interference of students’ native language could lead them made errors in word order. The differences of Bahasa and English rule are wide. There are many differences in it, and one of them is word order. This error did not occur a lot in this research although there were several students who did it. It could be happened by students lack of knowledge or because of translation. When they translated Bahasa to English, they probably translate it word by word. The interference of their native language and translation lead made them to produced word order errors. In result, the meaning of context is hard to be understood by the reader.

After that, there was an error of article. In this case, the error of article has low frequency and percentage. It has 6 errors from whole essays or 1.00% as the percentage. The example of this type is “*my mother said they are friends*”. Because word “*friends*” is a plural form, it does not need an article. The article “*a*” usually explains a singular form. So, the correction for that sentence is “*my mother said they are friends*”.

The occurrence of article errors could be caused by students’ difficulties in determining whether word or phrase uses article. This error took place as the lowest number of errors, which occurred in this research. Interlingua transfer and intralingua transfer could influence this error. Interlingua transfer source of error happened when student did not use article in the word that should use article because in Bahasa there is no rule of using article. Intralingua transfer occurred when the students used article for all of the words, which do not need to use article.

Last, there was possessive case error. This type also occurred in the students’ papers. However, it has low amount, and the same frequency and percentage with the previous error, which is article error. It only occurred about six times or 1.00%. This type of errors example is when one of the students tried to explain his feeling during report card division. He wrote “*my feeling was very nervous at that time, for fear of the result of his report card*”. The word “*his*” should be “*my*” because that sentence explained “*the writer’s report card*”, not others report card. So the correct one must be “*my feeling was very nervous at that time, for fear of the result of my report card*”.

Possessive case error also took place as the lowest number of error. Even though there were only low amount of this error, but there were several students did this error. First language interference have a big role in lead students did this error. The difference form of possessive case in Bahasa and English make the students did errors in possessive case.

In conclusion, there were twelve errors that occurred in the students’ narrative essays, and mostly it happened because of the influenced of students’ first language which is Bahasa. This finding provides the reader that although English Study Program Students made narrative essays data in this research; they also did some errors in their papers. These things might be commonly found in many kind of situation in the process of learning that need to be controlled seriously.

Conclusion

Writing essay subject is a necessary subject for students in English Department. This subject teaches the students to write an essay properly. It introduces students to the basic of essay, structure, kinds of essay itself. In this research, the researcher conducted his research in writing essay class and the several students in this class were chosen as samples for his research. The researcher conducted this research in order to know what kinds of common errors that students of English Study Program made in writing narrative essay.

Based on the result that already explained in chapter IV, English Department students of Jambi University also made errors in writing narrative essay. First as the result that has been shown in chapter IV, the students made 303 (50.58%) errors in verb-tense. It was the highest

number of error in this research. Second, punctuation took place as the second highest number after verb-tense. There were 76 errors in punctuation or 12.68%. Third is capital letters error, there were 50 errors (8.34%) that happened in this research. Next, word choice came with 43 errors or 7.17%. Spelling error also occurred in this research and it has 38 error or 6.34%. After that preposition error occurred with 21 errors or 3.50%. Pronoun error happened in this research with 18 errors (3.00%). Next, pluralism error came with 16 errors or 2.34%. Redundancy error occurred with 14 errors or 2.33%. Next, in this research word order error happened with 8 errors or 1.33%. Last, there were possessive case and article errors that happened in this research. Each of them has the same number in frequency and percentage. Possessive case error has 6 errors (1.00%) and article error also has 6 errors or 1.00%, and these two points became the smallest number of error in this research.

Based on conclusion described above, the researcher proposes some suggestion for those who are involved in teaching-learning English especially in writing aspect. For lecturers, the researcher just suggests them to make an approach to the students to communicate their problems in learning, because the researcher believes that the lecturers are the expert ones that have their own way to teach English. Lecturers just need to emphasize the students to learn more and tell them to realize that the structure of English and the students' native language is different. For the students, the researcher suggests them to learn about English structure more deeply. The students cannot only rely on courses or lessons that lecturers give. They must deepen their knowledge in learning English because they already in university level.

Last for the next researchers, the researcher suggests them to make the next research with different approach or method in order to analyze or find out the errors in more specific aspect. Also, the next researchers can conduct the same research with different genre of writing such as descriptive text, argumentative or others. So, the knowledge about the writing errors in university level would be complete.

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