
Grammatical errors analysis in the descriptive writing of the semester 3 students of English Education Department of STAIN Gajah Putih

Sungkawati Kardi Wahyuningsih

STAIN Gajah Putih, Takengon

e-mail: kardisungkawati@gmail.com

Abstract: *This study was aimed at describing: (1) the types of grammatical errors in the descriptive writing of the semester 3 students of English education department of STAIN Gajah Putih, and (2) the causes of the grammatical errors in the descriptive writing of the semester 3 students of English education department of STAIN Gajah Putih. The participants were 60 students of the Semester 3 of English education department of STAIN Gajah Putih in the academic year 2013/2014 chosen randomly. The study consisted of five steps, namely: data collection, error identification, error quantification, error description, and error explanation. The research instrument was in the form of a writing assignment. The data were obtained from the students' writing products. The results of the study are as follows. The total errors found in the students' writing test are 688 that divided into fourteen types of errors, namely: errors in production of verb (57%), miscellaneous errors (21%), errors in the use of preposition (15%), errors in the use of articles (4%), and errors in the distribution of verb group (3%). Then, the causes of errors are as follows: interference (32%), ignorance of rule restriction (21%), incomplete application of rules (19%), false concepts hypothesized (16%), and overgeneralization (12%).*

Keywords: *errors, causes of errors, error analysis*

1. Introduction

Grammar is a fundamental aspect in writing. It reflects the meaning, genre, and the discourse of the writing product. Besides, it reflects the content and meaning of the writing product. Sometimes, it seems very hard for the second language learner. The rules of grammar and writing are developed so that readers understand the information.

Writing is not simple as the other language skills. Writing is a combination

between process and product. The process of writing includes getting and combining ideas. Brown (2004: 335) states that writing is simply the graphic representation of the spoken language and its written performance, is much like oral performance, the only difference lying in graphic instead of auditory signals. Writing is a complicated job, more so, writing in a foreign language. In other words, writing is a complex activity involving some stages of composition task completion. The writing process includes

cognitive processes. Thus, mastering writing skill needs longer time than the other language skills.

Unfortunately, there are students who fail in transferring their idea into a good English written text. They do not pay attention on the English grammar. Seeing the result of the descriptive writing text, the students still face difficulties in expressing their ideas. Moreover, the students fail in grammar use. It was seen from the errors of their writing products.

Concerning the analysis, this study applied the classification of errors suggested by Richards (1980), namely: errors in production of verb groups, errors in the distribution of verb group, miscellaneous errors, errors in the use of preposition, and errors in the use of articles. In line, to explain the cause of errors, the researcher used Richards's terms (1970). There are two major causes of errors. They are interference errors and intralingual errors. In the interference errors, the errors were explained according to the cause by negative transfers of the mother tongue. Meanwhile, in the intralingual errors, the researcher explained the errors which were caused by ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, false concepts hypothesized, and overgeneralization.

The objectives of this study are to describe (1) the types of grammatical errors in the descriptive writing of semester 3 students of STAIN Gajah Putih, Takengon, and (2) the cause of the grammatical errors in their descriptive writing.

2. Method

This study was categorized into a case study by using a descriptive qualitative approach. The aim of this study was to describe the types and causes of errors. The

research was conducted in STAIN Gajah Putih, Takengon.

The subjects of the study were semester 3 students of English education department of STAIN Gajah Putih. There are three units that consisted of 76 students. Sugiyono (2011: 126) states that the larger amount of the sample will minimize the generalization mistakes. To minimize the mistakes, this researcher took 60 samples randomly. The data were collected on Monday, October 5, 2015.

The instruments for collecting the data in this study were a writing test and a format of error identification. The essay test was used to gather data about writing performance. The writing test included the instructions of the writing, the topic of the writing, and the length of the writing. In this study, the students were asked to write a descriptive text that consists of 150-200 words.

To collect the data, the students were asked to complete the writing test. The students wrote 150-200 words about descriptive text based on the topic. The students were permitted to use the dictionary when they completed the test. In conducting the test, the students did spontaneously to get the authentic data. It means that they were not given treatment before the test.

The second instrument was a format of error identification. It was used to analyze all the data in the students' writing to find the types and causes of errors. The format of the error identification was used as the guide in classifying, categorizing, and identifying the grammatical errors. This instrument consisted of five items: error in production of verbs, errors in the distribution of verb' groups, miscellaneous errors, errors in the use of preposition, and errors in the use of articles (Richards, 1980).

Content validity was used for the test instruments. The instruments were consulted

to the experts. To ensure the data reliability, inter-rater was used to crosscheck the results of the data collection.

The data analysis technique used in this research was descriptive qualitative consisting of five steps, namely: data collection, error identification, error quantification, error description, and error explanation (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005: 51). For this purpose, the researcher collected the data from the students and identified the students' writing to find the grammatical errors. Then, the grammatical errors were categorized into each category, quantified each item of errors to obtain the percentage of each error. The next step was describing and explaining grammatical errors to identify the causes of the errors.

3. Findings and Discussion

The collected writing forms were identified. Next, the identified data were classified according to the error category. After that, the frequency of each error category was counted. The next step was explaining the errors. The calculation of the grammatical errors can be seen in Table 1.

The total number of the errors found in the students' writing tests is 688 errors

divided into five groups of errors, namely: errors in production of verbs, errors in the distribution of verb groups, miscellaneous errors, errors in the use of preposition, and errors in the use of articles.

There are four errors in the verb production errors, namely: in the production of tense forms in (1), the production of verb forms (2), the uses of verb forms after modals(3), and the production of agreement of verb with its subject (4).

- (1) *I going to the campus every day.* The sentence should be: *I go to the campus every day.*
- (2) *I am study hard for the examination.* The sentence should be: *I study hard for the examination.*
- (3) *I can reading Al-Qur'an better.* The sentence should be: *I can read Al-Qur'an better.*
- (4) *She go to the market with her sister.* The sentence should be: *She goes to the market with her sister.*

There are three errors in the distribution of verb groups, namely: in the intervention of verb and subject and direct or reported statement in (5), in the misuse of present or past participle in (6), and in the misuse of subjects or objects in (7).

Table 1
Result of the Errors

No	Type of Errors	Frequency	Percentage of Errors
1	Errors in production of verbs	393	57%
2	Errors in the distribution of verb groups	21	3%
3	Miscellaneous errors	143	21%
4	Errors in the use of preposition	103	15%
5	Errors in the use of articles	28	4%
Total Number		688	100%

- (5) *The teacher asks me whether am I finish the tasks.* The sentence should be: *The teacher asks me whether I finish the tasks.*
- (6) *I interesting in sport.* The sentence should be: *I am interested in sport*
- (7) *Lia is my friend. He is a smart student.* The sentence should be: *Lia is my friend. She is a smart student.*

There are seven types of miscellaneous errors in the students' writing, namely: in the use of pronouns in (8), in the use of adverbs in (9), in the use of adjectives in (10), in the use of *too* or *so* in (11), the error in the position of words in (12), in the use of plural in (13), and in the use of conjunctions in (14).

- (8) *She goes to the market with her sister. We go by Becak.* The sentence should be: *She goes to the market with her sister. They go by Becak.*
- (9) *I read Al-Qur'an correct.* The sentence should be: *I read Al-Qur'an correctly.*
- (10) *He is a smarter boy.* The sentence should be: *He is a smart boy.*
- (11) *She so late to come in the lesson.* The sentence should be: *She is so late to come in the lesson.*
- (12) *We should keep clean the class.* The sentence should be: *We should keep the class clean.*
- (13) *Every students must come in the meeting.* The sentence should be: *Every student must come in the meeting.*
- (14) *Although he is smart, but he cannot solves the problem.* The sentence should be: *Although he is smart, he cannot solve the problem.*

There are four types of errors in the use of prepositions, namely: in the use of *in* in (15), in the use of *on* in (16), in the use of *at* in (17), and in the use of *to* in (18).

- (15) *She comes in my room.* The sentence should be: *She comes to my room.*
- (16) *I put my bag on the class.* The sentence should be: *I put my bag in the class.*
- (17) *I go at Jalan Yos Sudarso.* The sentence should be: *I go to Jalan Yos Sudarso.*
- (18) *I give my cake too her.* The sentence should be: *I give my cake to her.*

The errors in the use of articles are classified into errors in the use of *a/an* in (19), and errors in the use of *the* in (20).

- (19) *She has a hour to finish her duty.* The sentence should be: *She has an hour to finish her duty.*
- (20) *We have the some information.* The sentence should be: *We have the information.*

To obtain the numerical data of the causes of the errors, the causes of the errors are classified into each category. The percentage of the causes of the errors is counted from the number of the causes of the errors in each category divided by the total errors. Table 2 shows the result of the causes of errors.

The total number of the errors found in the students' writing tests is divided into five groups of causes of errors: interference, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rules, false concepts hypothesized, and overgeneralization.

The interference cause deals with the incorrectness of the translation from the first language to the target language. There are some types of the causes of errors, namely: absent of the finite verb (1), incorrect placement of a group words (2), and incorrect omitting of an article (3).

- (1) *My mother [] angry.* The sentence misses the finite verb.

Table 2
Result of the Causes of Errors

No	Type of Error	Frequency	Percentage of Errors
1	Interference	216	32%
2	Ignorance of rule restriction	143	21%
3	Incomplete application of rules	133	19%
4	False concepts hypothesized	113	16%
5	Overgeneralization	83	12%
Total Number		688	100%

(2) *I have a garden big.* The sentence is wrong in placing the modifying and modified word.

(3) *She has a hour to finish her duty.* The sentence is erroneous in the use of the article.

The ignorance of rule restrictions deals with the generalization of the unusual structure. In this cause of error, the types of error are incorrect use of the subjective pronoun (4), use of the negative form (5), and use of the singular forms in place of the plural form (6).

(4) *I take care of she.* The subjective pronoun is incorrectly used in the sentence.

(5) *She tell don't forget to finish the homework.* The sentence is incorrect in the use of negative form of sentence.

(6) *Every students must come in the meeting.* In the sentence, the error occurs in the use of the singular form in place of the plural form.

The incomplete applications of rules are the causes of error that relate to the incomplete application of grammatical rules. The types of this cause of error are the incorrectness of the present continuous form (7), and the absence of the subject in sentence (8).

(7) *I am study when my father comes home.* The underlined words are the error of the use of to be + verb-ing.

(8) *I cannot finish my homework because [] tired playing football.* The error is found in the absence of the subject in the sentence.

The false concepts hypothesized deal with the faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language in which word choices are incorrectly made. In these causes of errors, the types of error are the false concept of the use of the part of speech (9), the false concept of the use of the verb choice (10), and the error of the use of preposition (11).

(9) *He learn me every day.* The sentence is wrong in the word choice of the verb *learn*. It should be *teach*.

(10) *I will can read Al Qur'an better.* The error found in the sentence is the use of will + can. It should be will + be able to.

(11) *I learn since five year.* The sentence is wrong in the use of the preposition.

The cause of overgeneralization occurs when certain sets of grammatical rules are applied with generalization. The types of this cause of errors are the error in the use of suffix 's' as a marker of the plural noun (12),

generalizing the use of 'un' to mention lack (13), and the use of reflexive pronouns (14).

(12) *The bird feed her childs*. The error found in the sentence is the use of the singular form +s to mark the plural.

(13) *I unagree with her ideas*. The sentence is wrong in the use of the negative form of *agree*.

(14) *They plan the holiday by themselves*. The error found in the sentence is the use of the reflexive pronoun.

4. Conclusion

The total errors found in the students' writing test are 688 divided into five types of errors. The result of the error analysis data shows that the most prominent error is error in the production of verbs. There are 393 or 57% from the total number of errors. It is followed with the miscellaneous errors. The total number of this error is 143 or 21%. The error in the use of preposition is in the third rank with the total number of 103 or 15%. The next position is the error in the use of articles with a total number of 28 or 4%. The last is error in the distribution of verb groups with a total number of 21 or 3%.

The total numbers of the errors found in the students' writing tests are divided into five groups of causes of errors. According to the data, interference is the most prominent

cause of errors with the total number of 216 or 32%. The next is ignorance of rule restriction (143) or 21%. The third position of the cause of errors is incomplete application of rules (133) or 19%. Incomplete application of rules is followed with the false concept hypothesis with the total number of 133 or 16%. The last is overgeneralization with the total number of 83 or 12%.

References

- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. New York: Long Man.
- Ellis, R. & Barkhuizen, G. (2005). *Analyzing learner language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Richards, J.C. (1970). *A non-contrastive approach to error analysis*. Paper presented at the TESOL convention, San Francisco.
- Richards, J.C. (1980). *Error analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition*. London: Longman Group.
- Sugiyono. (2011). *Metode penelitian pendidikan: pendekatan kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.