

COMMON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING MADE BY THE FIRST
SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF IAIN

TULUNGAGUNG

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Abstract: Writing is one of the language skills which is important in humans' life. Writing involves more than just producing words and sentences. To be able to produce a piece of writing, the writers should be able to write a connected series of words and sentences which are grammatically and logically linked, so that the purpose they have in their mind will suit the intended readers. Writing in different language is difficult. So, the writer tends to make errors. Analyzing students' errors is important to improve students' writing ability. Error analysis is the study of the learners' error which can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learner. So, it is significant to study on what types of error and the sources of the errors in writing made by the first students of English department of IAIN Tulungagung. The design of this research was qualitative research with descriptive approach. The data source was the first semester students' writing of English department of IAIN Tulungagung. The data were any errors found in the students' writing which were identified based on

surface strategy taxonomy. The technique of data collection was document analysis. The technique of data verification was triangulation. Then, the data were analyzed by error analysis. The result of this research showed that: 1) the most type of errors which appeared in the students' writing was error of misinformation. The error of misinformation was found 40.7 %, 2) the sources of errors in the students' writing were overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rules and false concept hypothesis. The most of the sources of error was ignorance of rule restriction. Based on the result of the research, the researcher suggests the students to pay attention on the errors and if necessary look for more information or explanation from lecturer or reviewing related books. The English lecturer can give the students more exercise. For future researcher, it would be better for them to analyze error of speaking since it is still rarely conducted.

Keywords: error analysis, grammatical errors, sources of error

Language is one of the wonderful gifts that are given by God to humanity. Humans use language to express their mind and emotions, to learn, to communicate with others, and to get their wants and needs.

There are many languages in the world. One of them is English which has become an international language. However, it is not easy to learn English but all of people are possible to learn more than one language.

In language learning, language skills are very basic things developed. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are language skills that language learner

often work with. Developing all those skills is very important since language's function is a mean of communication and communication means the application of those skills. Listening and reading are called as receptive skills then speaking and writing are called as receptive skills.

Recently, skill in writing becomes more and more important since it has an important role in global communication, especially after the booming of the digital technology. The competency in writing will help much if one wants to contact people around the world through social media like facebook, twitter or yahoo messenger. Through writing, one can communicate to and share information with others. For those who want to become members of international business, administrative or academic communities, they have to become proficient writers.

Hedge (2005:51) states that effective writing requires several things: a high degree of organization regarding the development and structuring of ideas information and arguments. Furthermore, Hedge mentions features such as: a high degree of accuracy, complex grammar devices, a careful choice of vocabulary and sentence structures in order to create style, tone and information appropriate for the readers of one's written text. Grammar is one important aspect that should be mastered in order to make a well structured writing. However, writing in different language is not always as easy as writing in their own language since there are some different rules in the writing systems and it is possible for them to make errors by those differences.

Making errors in speaking and writing is a part of the process of learning English. Many kinds of errors arise when the learners speak or write something because they do not master the English grammar well. According to Spillner (1991:1), errors produced in the process of foreign language acquisition are thought to be caused by more or less unconscious transfer of mother tongue structures to the system of the target language. It is natural that errors have found in students writing.

Analyzing error is necessary in language learning since some students will not be able to fully express their problem because they do not know how to start expressing what they have not understood yet. By analyzing the errors, the teacher can have some input related to the students' language learning process, including students' difficulties and any information about the students' grammar achievement. Besides that, the teacher can determine the appropriate method in teaching.

Here, the researcher was interested to conduct a research about analyzing error in writing made by the first semester students of English Department of IAIN Tulungagung since those students recently graduated from different senior high schools with different writing ability in English. It is important to know the first semester students' errors to improve their writing ability in the next semester.

From the discussion above, the researcher intended to conduct a research entitled "Common Grammatical Errors in Writing Made by the First Semester Students of English Department of IAIN Tulungagung". The purpose of this

research is to describe the most common grammatical errors made by the first semester students of English Department of IAIN Tulungagung.

METHODOLOGY

Before going further to any explanation about the methodology, it is necessary to know that this research was conducted to uncover the research problem proposed in which the data studied were in the form of students' writing (in more general term those were classified into document). Such kind of data is classified into qualitative ones (Ary, 2006:490). In this research, the researcher used a qualitative research design. This type of the research does not apply the detail arithmetic calculation or statistic. It contains sentences or description of the objects. It refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. More specifically, the approach used in conducting this research was descriptive research. As Best stated (in Cohen 2007: 205), descriptive research is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of views, or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing. At times, descriptive research is concerned with how what is or what exists is related to some preceding event that has influenced or affected a present condition or event. By reviewing those references, it gave belief that descriptive research perfectly fits this research.

This research was conducted in English Department of IAIN Tulungagung. That was the place where the researcher looked for most of the data. The researcher took the students' writing on Wednesday, 13 May 2015 in the

paragraph writing class. The subject of this research was the A class of the first semester students of English department of IAIN Tulungagung academic year 2013/2014. The students of A class was convinced as selected students. Their competence was better than the other class. So, the errors they made were truly errors, not mistakes. The data source was the writing product of the first semester students of English department of IAIN Tulungagung or so called documents. There are 37 students; 27 girls and 10 boys. So, there was 37 students' writing. The data in this research were any errors found in the students' writing.

Since the data source was students' writing or document, the researcher used document analysis as the technique of data collection. The analysis in this research concerns on grammatical errors find in the students' writing. The analysis is based on surface strategy taxonomy. To guide analyzing obtained documents (read: students' writing), the researcher made guidance as follows: read the students' writing two to three times to find grammatical errors in their writing, write down the grammatical errors in a table which represents one analyzed students' writings and each grammatical error which occurs will be noted in the table according to its classification.

The researcher decided to use *triangulation* to strengthen the validity. The principle of *triangulation* comes from navigation, where the intersection of three different reference points is used to calculate the precise location of an object. In research, the principle pertains to the goal of seeking at least three ways of verifying or corroborating a particular event, description, or fact being reported by a study. Such corroboration serves as another way of strengthening the validity of

a study. The type of triangulation chosen is *Theoretical triangulation*. This type draws upon alternative or competing theories in preference to utilizing one viewpoint only. The first theory comes from Brown (2007:259) who stated that learners do make errors and these errors can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of the system operation within the learner. At the same idea as Gass (2008:102) who stated that error analysis is a type of language analysis that focuses on the errors learners make. It is supported by Dulay (1982:139) that making errors is an inevitable part of learning. People cannot learn language without first systematically committing errors. From those theories, it is appropriate for the researcher to analyze the students' errors.

In analyzing the data, the researcher used error analysis method. The error analysis was used since it fits the characteristic of the data and the nature of this research. It was strengthened by Gass and Selinker (2008:102) that error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make. Referring to the steps of error analysis above, the researcher analyzed the data by identifying the errors, classifying of errors, tabulating the errors, analyzing the errors and drawing conclusion.

FINDINGS

By looking the errors in the first semester students' writing, the researcher identified and classified the errors based on the Dulay's errors classification namely surface strategy taxonomy. Those are omission, addition, misformation and misordering. All of the errors found and its frequency of occurrences are embraced in the table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1
Types of grammatical errors and its frequency of occurrences

No.	Types of Grammatical Errors	Grammar Aspects	Frequency	Error Total
1.	Omission	a. Preposition	13	106
		b. Possessive pronoun	1	
		c. Object	6	
		d. Noun	3	
		e. 3 rd person singular verb	20	
		f. Conjunction	2	
		g. Plural marker	28	
		h. To be in nominal sentence	18	
		i. Article	5	
		j. To be as Auxiliary verb	2	
		k. Subject	6	
		l. subordinator	1	
		m. determiner	1	
2.	Addition	a. Preposition	5	45
		b. To be	19	
		c. Article	4	
		d. Subordinator	2	
		e. Plural marker	3	
		f. Pronoun	2	
		g. Adverb	4	
		h. Noun	3	
		i. Modal	3	
3.	Misformation	a. To be	8	110
		b. Pronoun	10	
		c. Noun	9	
		d. Tense	8	
		e. Preposition	9	
		f. To infinitive	16	
		g. Conjunction	18	
		h. Gerund	8	
		i. Verb	6	
		j. Adjective	5	
		k. Ordinal number	1	
		l. Possessive pronoun	7	
		m. Verb after modal	5	
4.	Misordering	a. Verb	3	9
		b. To be	2	
		c. Noun clause	1	
		d. Subject	1	
		e. Noun phrase	2	

5.	Total	270	270
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Table 4.1 shows that the researcher found 270 errors made by the students that were classified into their types of grammatical errors. It shows that the students made 106 errors of omission in their writing. The omission errors consisted of various grammar aspects. The students made error of omission of *plural maker (s/es)* 28 times. They also made error of omission of *3rd person singular verb* 20 times. The students also made error of omission of *to be in nominal sentence* 18 times. Then, they made error of omission of *preposition* 13 times. The next, found that the students did not put *object* and *subject* in their sentences 6 times for each. They also made error of omission of *article* 5 times. The students also did not put any *noun* that should have been placed in sentence 3 times. Then they did not put *conjunction* and “*to be*” as an *auxiliary verb* in their sentences 2 times. The last, they made error of omission of *possessive pronoun*, *determiner* and *subordinator* that each occurred once.

Then, it shows that the students made 45 errors of addition in their writing. The addition errors were contributed most by addition of *to be* which was made by students 19 times. They also made error of addition of *preposition* 5 times. The students also made error of addition of *adverb* and *article* 4 times for each. The next, it was found that the students put addition of *noun*, *modal* and *plural marker* 3 times for each. The last, the students made error of addition of *subordinator* and *pronoun* 3 times for each.

The table also shows that the students made 110 errors of misformation in their writing. Error of misformation became the most error type made by the

students. The students made error of misformation of *conjunction* 18 times. Then, they made error of misformation of *to-infinitive* 16 times. They also made error of misformation of *pronoun* 10 times. The students also made error of misformation of *noun* and *preposition* 9 times for each. The next, they made error of misformation of *gerund*, *tense*, *noun* and *to be* 8 times for each. They also made error of misformation of *possessive pronoun* 7 times and *verb* 6 times. Then, they made error of misformation of *verb after modal* and *adjective* 5 times for each. The last types of errors of misformation found in students' writing was misformation of *ordinal number* occurred once.

The students faced difficulty in constructing well-ordered sentence structure. It was proved by the fact that the students made 9 errors of misordering. the students made error of misordering of *verb* 3 times. In addition, students also made error of misordering of *to be* and *noun phrase* 2 times for each. The last type of error found in students' writing was misordering of *subject* and *noun clause* one time for each.

Then, to make the differentiation of the result of each type of grammatical errors seems to be clearer, the researcher also presented the types of grammatical errors in the form of percentage. In this stage the researcher used the pattern as follow:

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

Note:

Σ = symbol of percentage

F = frequency of the occurrences of each request strategy

N = Total number of request strategy

Table 4.2
Frequency and percentage of types of grammatical errors

No.	Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Omission	106	39.3 %
2.	Addition	45	16.7 %
3.	Misformation	110	40.7 %
4.	Misordering	9	3.3 %
	Total	270	100 %

Table 4.2 was presented to show the distribution of errors found in the writing of the first semester students of English department of IAIN Tulungagung. The researcher found the various types of errors which total were 270 errors. From the table as the result of tabulation, it can be seen that the first semester students of IAIN Tulungagung made most error of misformation that was 110 times or 40.7 %. It happened because the students used wrong form of the morphemes or structure in their writing. The next most error made by the students was in error of omission with 106 times which means 39.3 % of errors total. The students made 45 times of error of addition or 16.7 %. They also made 9 times of error of misordering or 3.3 %.

After presenting the classification and tabulation of the types of errors, here, the researcher classified the errors based on their sources based on the Richard's statement as in table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3
Sources of errors and its frequency of occurrences

No.	Sources of errors	Types of errors	Frequency	Error total
1.	Overgeneralization	a. Omission of 3 rd person singular verb	20	40
		b. Addition of to be	19	
		c. Misformation of ordinal number	1	
2.	Ignorance the rule restriction	a. Misformation of pronoun	10	119
		b. Misformation of noun	9	
		c. Misformation of preposition	9	
		d. Misformation of possessive marker	7	
		e. Misformation of to-infinitive	16	
		f. Misformation of gerund	8	
		g. Misformation of verb	6	
		h. Misformation of adjective	5	
		i. Misformation of conjunction	18	
		j. Misformation of verb after modal	5	
		k. Addition of preposition	5	
		l. Addition of article	4	
		m. Addition of subordinator	2	
		n. Addition of plural marker	3	
		o. Addition of pronoun	2	
		p. Addition of adverb	4	
		q. Addition of noun	3	
		r. Addition of modal	3	
3.	Incomplete application of rules	a. Omission of preposition	13	95
		b. Omission of object	6	
		c. Omission of noun	3	
		d. Omission of conjunction	2	
		e. Omission of plural marker	28	
		f. Omission of “to be” as ordinary verb in nominal sentence	18	
		g. Omission of article	5	
		h. Omission of “to be” as	2	

			auxiliary verb		
		i.	Omission of subject	6	
		j.	Omission of possessive marker	1	
		k.	Misordering of verb	3	
		l.	Misordering of to be	2	
		m.	Misordering of noun clause	1	
		n.	Misordering of subject	1	
		o.	Misordering of noun phrase	2	
		p.	Omission of subordinator	1	
		q.	Omission of determiner	1	
4.	False concept hypothesis	a.	Misformation of tense	8	16
		b.	Misformation of to be	8	
5.	Total			270	270

The next, the classified and tabulated sources of errors were presented in the form of percentage as in the following table.

Table 4.5
Frequency and percentage of sources of intralingual errors

No.	Grammar aspects	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Overgeneralization	40	14.8 %
2.	Ignorance the rule restriction	119	44.1 %
3.	Incomplete application of rules	95	35.2 %
4.	False concept hypothesis	16	5.9 %
	Total	270	100 %

Table 4.5 shows various sources of errors which are found in students' writing seen from intralingual perspective. The sources include overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, false concept hypothesis, and incomplete application of rules. Ignorance of rule restriction becomes the most error sources by occurring 119 times or 44.1 % of errors total. Followed by

Incomplete application of rules with 35.2 % or 95 times, overgeneralization occurs 40 times or 14.8 %, and with False concept hypothesis 5.9 % or 16 times.

DISCUSSION

Dulay et al. (1982:146) present the most useful and commonly used bases for the descriptive classification of errors into four taxonomies, namely linguistic category taxonomy, surface strategy taxonomy, comparative taxonomy, and communicative effect taxonomy. Based on one of Dulay's classification of errors namely surface strategy taxonomy, there are four types of errors. They are error of omission, error of addition, error of misinformation and error of misordering.

Based on the data that was got by researcher in the table 4.1 and 4.2, the researcher found that the most type of grammatical errors made by the first semester students of English department of IAIN Tulungagung was misinformation. From the 270 data that was found by researcher, 110 of them were misinformation or 40.7 % of the error total. It means that misinformation was the most type of grammatical error often appears in the first semester students' writing. Almost a half of data gathered by the researcher was misinformation. This research also tried to find out the sources of the errors made by the first semester students of IAIN Tulungagung in their writing from the perspective of intralingual error. The intralingual errors were defined by Richards (1974) as the errors that do not reflect the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. That was the basic idea for the researcher in identifying and classifying any possible sources of errors. The researcher had uncovered the various kinds errors and as the second objectives of the research. The errors are

overgeneralization, ignorance of rules restriction, incomplete application of rules and false concept hypothesis. Based on the table 4.3 and 4.4, the most source of error was ignorance rules restriction.

Arifin (2012) in his research entitled *Common Grammatical Errors Made by XI Grade Students of MAN Kunir in Writing Academic Year 2011/2012* found that the most type of grammatical errors made by the students was omission with 49.3 %. Then, the most errors source found was incomplete application of rules with 39.7 %. From those, it can be concluded that the XI grade students of MAN Kunir (the students that would have graduated from senior high school) did not complete in applying the rules to produce acceptable sentence.

Habibullah (2010) who studied about *An Error Analysis on Grammatical Structures of the Students Thesis of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta Academic Year 2010* presented that the most error type found in the students' thesis was omission and the source of error was learning strategy toward target language. As the conclusion, the students who would have been graduated from university still made errors of omission in their thesis.

Referring to the previous studies above, the researcher concluded that each education level has different types of errors. This research showed that the most type of grammatical error made by the first semester students was misformation. It seemed like the students know the rules but they put incorrect morpheme or structure. The researcher also believed that analyzing students' error through error analysis is important to know students' learning progress, students' difficulties and their grammar achievement.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The research showed that the first semester students of English department of IAIN Tulungagung academic year 2014/2015 made various kinds of errors. The errors were categorized into error of omission, addition, misinformation and misordering. The students made the total of 270 errors.

The most type of errors which appeared in the students' writing was error of misinformation. Error of misinformation was the most occurred with 110 occurrences.

The sources of the errors were uncovered and it was found that ignorance of rule restriction was the most sources of errors. There were 119 errors which came from that source. Incomplete application of rules was the next source of the errors with 95 occurrences, which was followed by overgeneralization with 40 occurrences and false concept hypothesis with 16 occurrences.

Based on the above conclusion, it is suggested that students, especially first semester students of IAIN Tulungagung, now have known grammar errors they made. They should learn from their errors and not to do the same again. The students should pay attention on the errors and if necessary look for more information or explanation from teachers/lecturer or reviewing related books. Besides, English lecturer can give more exercise to the students toward their errors. The treatment or exercise can be made as a focus of developing students' grammar proficiency weakness which can be seen by reviewing the tabulation of the grammatical errors. The weakest aspect of their grammar proficiency can be indicated by the aspects of grammar error which occur the most. Table 4.1 may be

helpful to indicate the point. Finally, since the thesis of error analysis of writing in IAIN Tulungagung was many enough, it would be better for them to analyze error of speaking since it was rarely conducted.

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