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# TYPES OF GRAMMATICAL ERROR ENCOUNTERED IN THE ENGLISH COMPOSITION OF THE THIRD GRADE STUDENTS OF INTERNATIONAL BOARDING SCHOOL AMANATUL UMMAH SURABAYA

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## ABSTRACT

*English has been the foreign language in Indonesia for many years. It is taught from elementary school to university as a second language besides the first language, Indonesia. In senior high school, English is taught as the main subject in which the government has changed the curriculum starting from Curriculum Based on Competence 2004 to KTSP (Educational Unit Level Competence).*

**Keywords:** English, curriculum, Education Unit Level Competence.

## ABSTRAK

Bahasa Inggris telah menjadi bahasa asing di Indonesia selama bertahun-tahun. Hal ini diajarkan dari sekolah dasar sampai perguruan tinggi sebagai bahasa kedua selain bahasa pertama, Indonesia. Di SMA, Bahasa Inggris diajarkan sebagai mata pelajaran utama yang mana pemerintah telah mengubah kurikulum mulai dari Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi 2004 menjadi KTSP (Kompetensi Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan).

**Kata kunci:** Bahasa Inggris, Kurikulum, Kompetensi Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study most important

English has been the foreign language in Indonesia for many years. It is taught from elementary school to university as a second language besides the first language, Indonesia. In senior high school, English is taught as main subject in which the government has changed the curriculum starting from Curriculum Based on Competence 2004 to KTSP (Kompetensi Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan). (cited from National Educational Department, 2003:36).

There are four standard competences in curriculum based on competences in Curriculum Based on Competence 2004 and KTSP namely writing, reading, speaking, and listening. In writing, students are hoped to be able to express many written meanings that have purposes in communicative, text structure etc. They can develop their writing in the forms of descriptive, recount, news items, etc. as a means of communication.

Among the four skills, writing is the most difficult one. Because it requires demonstrating the control of a number of variables simultaneously, they control the content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation spelling, etc. Nunan (1989: 35) points out, "It has been argued that that learning to write fluently and expressively is the most difficult of the macro skills for all language users regardless of whether the language in question is first, second, or foreign language."

Another opinion comes from Heaton (1989: 138). He proposes that the writing skills are complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgment elements. It means that ability to write needs a special skill and process in organizing language material by using learners' own words and ideas and to be a good composition.

In line with the two experts' opinion, many people make error in writing composition process. Making errors is an inevitable part of learning and it is usual for the people that cannot learn language without first systematically committing errors (Dulay, Burt and Krashen; 1982). There are some aspects that should be mastered by the learners to master the target language; one of them is the cognitive ability. In this term, it is usual for the learners making errors in his/her writing in English.

First errors of learning are usually gigantic. Then, and gradually, they diminish as one benefits of his/her errors. In a later stage of learning foreign or second language, learners are expected to reach a native speaker's competence or, at least, near that competence where errors are either eliminated or minimized to the extent that their impact on the learners' communication disappears, or they go unnoticed. But, unfortunately, the case with most of second language learners' errors is not so. Errors, mistakes, slips and attempts, as Edge (1989) has classified and termed them, insist on staining foreign or second language learners' written and verbal performance.

Do errors annoy EFL teachers? Sure they do. Teachers are eager to find their students' writing and verbal performance free of errors. However, second language acquisition (SLA) researchers (Corder, 1971; Richards, 1972 and 1984; Nemser, 1971; and Dulay and Burt, 1973) (as cited by Miles at <http://www.montana.edu/mtcfru/Zale%20front%20page/technical%20writing%20tips>) look at the picture from a different perspective. Errors, they suggest, should not annoy teachers; rather, they should be looked at as a sign of development of the students' second language. Errors, they add, reflect the students' linguistic, writing, and communication competences at a given stage of their long way to master a foreign language, the linguistic system students are trying to build up and the strategies they are employing to learn.

A substantial number of studies on error analysis have been carried out all over the world to ease the errors' problem and to make the EFL teacher's task in the classroom smoother and easier. But errors insist to accompany second language learners' verbal and written performance. In this thesis, the writer tries to find out errors made by the third grade students in writing exposition text.

Errors can be found in both spoken and written English, but the writer is interested in analyzing the students' writing/composition regarding their morphological and syntax types. The writer takes the third grade students' writing of senior high school because it is very essential to prepare them to have good writing before entering university. The second, the writer thinks that it is easier for him to analyze written English than spoken English because he has more time to think, analyze, and revise the students' writing.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Writing is one of the skills in English that should be mastered by the senior high school students based on the curriculum in Indonesia. The use of error analyses and appropriate correction are can aid effective learning and teaching of writing. In line with this fact, this section explains the specific problems to solve. The problem regards

1. What kinds of grammatical errors are found in the third grade students' writing of MA Amanatul Ummah Surabaya?
2. What are the possible causes of errors?

### 1.3 The Objective of the Study

Based on the problem above, the writer intends to find out and identify the grammatical errors made by the third grade students of senior high school regarding their composition in exposition text. The writer also tries to figure out the possible causes of errors made by students.

#### 1.4 The Significance of the Study

The writer expects that this research can give input to the English teachers to improve their technique and method in teaching writing to their students. Furthermore, the teachers can also figure out what they should focus on teaching writing regarding the grammatical construction. The second, it is also expected to the students to be more careful to the convention of their writing. By knowing the grammatical errors made, the students can be more aware and understand about a good writing should be. The last, the writer also hopes this research can be one of reference to other researchers for the next research.

#### 1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The writer focuses his research on the deviations in grammatical construction regarding its morphology and syntax in exposition text. Therefore, other deviations such as organization, logical development ideas, conclusion, etc.. are excluded. The last, the participants involved are the third grade students of MA Amanatul Ummah Surabaya.

#### 1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1. Error: any deviation from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics or causes of the deviation might be. (Dulay et al., 1986, p. 287).
2. Grammatical error: a language from which deviates from the norm grammatical rules. (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982).
3. Error analysis: a technique for identifying, classifying, and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistics. (Crystal, 1997, p. 139).
4. Exposition: a text that has communicative purpose to persuade the reader by proposing arguments. (Grace, 2002, p.70).

#### 1.7 Organization of the Thesis

The writer divides this thesis into five parts. The first is introduction consisting of background of the study, statement of the problem, the objective of the study, scope and limitation, significance of the study, definition of key terms, and organization of the study. The second is literature review. It consists of related theories regarding the thesis. The third is research methodology consisting of subjects of the study, kinds of data, instrument, technique of collecting data, and technique of data analysis. The fourth is finding and discussion. This chapter discusses finding and discussion of the errors found as well as the possible causes of the errors. Finally, the last chapter is conclusion.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature related to the study. The reviews include the definition of grammar that elaborates types of grammatical errors, error analysis, contrastive analysis, error and mistakes, errors in writing, and previous study of errors.

### 2.1 Grammar

Grammar is defined as the way words are put together to make correct sentences. So in English I am a teacher is grammatical, while I teacher and I are teacher are not (Celce & Larsen: 1983) (cited in handbook teaching English as a foreign language: Widya Mandala University). Grammar is applied to unit smaller than sentences. A brief phrase said or written on its own can be grammatically acceptable or unacceptable in its own right: a tall woman is acceptable, while a woman tall is not.

A specific instance of grammar is usually called structure. Examples of structures would be the past tense, noun plurals, the comparison of adjectives, and so on. Not all languages, of course, have the same structures: the English verb has aspects such as progressive she is going... which many other languages do not.

### 2.1.1 Types of Grammatical Errors

The thesis focuses on the grammatical errors in writing regarding morphology and syntax which is based on Linguistic category taxonomy (Pulitzer and Ramirez:1973). In morphology terms, the analyses are about the students' writing errors in article use, possessive use, tense use, comparison use. While in syntax term, it focuses on noun phrase and verb phrase. Noun phrase covers the use of infinitive and gerund, number, pronoun, preposition. While, verb phrase includes the use of to be, progressive tense, verb-and-verb construction, auxiliary system, word order, and passive sentence.

#### 2.1.1.1 Article use

Articles are noun markers that give a signal that a noun will follow. There are two kinds of article namely definite and indefinite article. The indefinite articles are a and an. Article a is used before a word that begins with a consonant sound such as a car, a table, a pencil, etc.. while article an is used before a word beginning with a vowel sound such as an egg, an office, an hour, etc.. the definite article is the. This article may immediately precede a noun: a smile, the reason. Or it may be separated from the noun by modifiers: a slight smile, the very big reason. To know which article is used, the understanding of countable nouns and uncountable noun must be mastered.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes about the method of the study which is divided into six sub chapters namely, subjects of the study, kind of data, instrument, technique of collecting data, and technique of data analysis. This method is chronologically applied by the writer to find out the problems to solve.

### 3.1 Subjects of the study

Twenty-three students of the third grade of Madrasah Bertaraf Internasional Amanatul Ummah Surabaya participated in the study. They were 18-19 years old. They stayed in a boarding school (pesantren) and use Indonesian, English, and Arabic on their daily communication. All the subjects of the study were the third year students of senior high school. All of them had attended an Error encountered in English writing class where they were taught how to identify, classify and describe written and verbal errors in English. In addition, it is also important to prepare the students regarding their writing before entering university.

### 3.2 Kind of Data

The writer applied qualitative and descriptive approach in this study. According to Corder (1974) there are three steps of errors analyses namely collecting sample of errors, identifying errors, and describing errors. The data were focused on students' deviation in grammatical errors in writing.

### 3.3 Instrument

The instrument of this study was the researcher himself, for he was the one who instructed, collected, identified, and described the students' composition. The writer got involved directly in administering data, collecting data and administering data. The writer asked students to make writing in exposition text in hand-written form. The topic was given as well as the arguments. The topic is

The Advantages of attending small school

- close relationship with the teachers
- convenient access
- friendly setting

From the above topic, students should develop the arguments provided in a good writing by considering grammar used.

### 3.4 Procedure of Collecting Data

There are three steps in this procedure namely collecting, identifying, and explaining errors gained. The study was conducted after school (4.00 a.m.) during December 2009. The students were given instruction about what they should write. The students were asked to write a composition for about 60 minutes with minimum 200-250 words. Then, the writer collected the students' work to analyze. Instead of scribbling all over the students' work, the writer was helped by an English teacher in that school by using series abbreviations in the margin to indicate the type of mistakes in students' composition. It is also supported by J.A. Bright and G.P. McGregor (1970) as follows:

Ar Agreement

Art Article

Ps Possessive

NP Noun Phrase

T Tense error

Com Comparison

? I don't know what you mean

√ good point

Pr Preposition

PV Passive Voice

WO Word Order

S/P mistakes in singular/plural

Having been identified, the data were counted and classified based on the kind of errors and frequency of errors made. Those data were then analyzed and described to give clear understanding to the errors made. The process of collecting data were: The first was collecting. Having finished writing, the writer then asked students to submit their papers. Those papers were then collected to be prepared for the next step. The second was identifying. During this process, the writer gave some marks to the errors made in students' writing. The last was classifying. In this term, the writer classified the errors based on the type of errors.

### 3.5 Technique of Data Analysis

The data which had been collected, identified, and classified were then analyzed regarding the types of errors made. The writer applied the Linguistic Category Taxonomy to classify the type of errors regarding errors in grammatical construction (morphology and syntax) as follows.

**Table I**  
**Linguistic category Taxonomy as Taken in Politzer and Ramirez:1973**

Linguistic category and error type	Example of learner error
<p>(1) Morphology</p> <p>a. indefinite article incorrect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ omission <i>a, an, the</i></li> <li>➤ incorrect use of article</li> </ul> <p>b. possessive case incorrect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ incorrect use of 's</li> <li>➤ omission of 's</li> <li>➤ incorrect of <i>your</i></li> </ul> <p>c. sample past tense incorrect</p> <p><u>Irregular past tense</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ incorrect use of irregular</li> </ul> <p>d. past participle incorrect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ omission of <i>-ed</i></li> </ul> <p>e. comparative and superlative adjective/adverb incorrect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ use of <i>er... than ...</i></li> <li>➤ use of <i>more + er ....</i></li> <li>➤ use of <i>the same as</i></li> <li>➤ omission of <i>er-</i></li> <li>➤ omission of <i>the</i></li> <li>➤ omission of <i>more</i></li> <li>➤ use of <i>est + than</i></li> </ul> <p>(2) syntax</p> <p>a. Noun Phrase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Infinitive and gerund <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of <i>to + infinitive (V1)</i></li> <li>• Use of preposition + Ving</li> <li>• Omission of <i>by + Ving</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Number <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of plural</li> <li>• Misuse of plural mark</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Use of pronouns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Omission of the subject pronoun</li> <li>• Omission of the “dummy” pronoun <i>it</i></li> <li>• Use <i>my</i> as an object</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Use of preposition</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misuse of preposition</li> <li>• Omission of prepositions</li> </ul> <p>b. verb phrase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ omission of verb <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• omission of <i>to be</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ use of progressive tense <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• replacement of <i>-ing</i> by the simple verb form</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ agreement of subject and verb <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disagreement of the subject and verb disagreement of subject and number</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>c. verb-and-verb construction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parallelism</li> </ul> <p>d. the auxiliary system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• modals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- modal + to</li> <li>- modal + V-ing</li> <li>- modal + V3</li> <li>- omission of <i>tobe</i></li> <li>- modal + Vs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do/does <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Omission of do</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>e. word order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adjectival modifiers placed after noun</li> <li>• modifier of noun</li> <li>• misuse of <i>more</i> as adverb</li> </ul> <p>➤ passive sentence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• misinformation of passive verb</li> <li>• modifier of Noun + V3</li> </ul>	
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## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the writer presents the results and analyses of the students' writing. It contains the findings of students' errors and discussion. In the findings, the writer explains the types of grammatical errors and examples of errors made for each type. In addition, the last is discussion explaining about the causes of students' errors for each type of grammar.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be said that almost all students are still lack of knowledge and understanding about the rule of grammar that is called as developmental error. In addition, only few students make errors because of the influence of their mother language. It shows that students' errors do not reflect their mother language but are much like young children make as they learn a first language. Most students' errors indicate that they gradually building an L2 rule system.

This study attempts to find out grammatical errors in writing made by the third grade students of Madrasah Aliyah (Boarding School) Amanatul Ummah Surabaya. It is very important since they must prepare themselves in writing skill before entering university. The focus of this research is on grammatical errors. The writer ignores some components in analyzing writing. The writer focuses on the grammatical errors in writing regarding morphology (errors in article use, possessive use, tense use, comparison use) as well as syntax (focuses on noun phrase and verb phrase). Noun phrase regards the use of infinitive and gerund, number, pronoun, preposition. Verb phrase includes the use of to be, progressive tense, verb-and-verb construction, auxiliary system, word order, and passive sentence. Some factors are indicated as causes of the students' lack understanding in grammar. Those factors possibly include curriculum factor and teachers factors. Hence, it is intended that by knowing the students' difficulties in writing caused by the lack of grammatical understanding, all educational holders can find the best solution for the improvement in educational sector.

### 5.2 The Limitation of Research

This research was conducted at the senior high school students by taking the sample of students' writing at once. The writer took only once of students' writing in order to get the real fact of composition of students' ability in writing without being given training before. The writer also focused his research on students' errors in grammar. The presence of other errors in writing is ignored.

### 5.3 Suggestions

Based on the results of the research, it can be seen that the students are still lacking of skills in writing regarding their ability in making sentences using good and correct grammar regarding morphology and syntax. Therefore, teacher should use technique and method in teaching writing by emphasizing to the grammar. The teachers should make a strategy when grammar should be taught as a requirement for students' knowledge in writing.

The second is students. Although writing is complicated and complex skill that requires the mastery of grammar especially in morphology and syntax, students should practice their writing by their own. The students should not wait for teachers' instruction to write a composition, but they should improve their writing by trying to write some composition in English.



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