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A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITTEN DISCOURSE: AN INVESTIGATION ON SOME EFL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki kesalahan tata bahasa dalam wacana tertulis siswa SMA dalam konteks EFL. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan mengklasifikasikan kesalahan tata bahasa ke dalam kategori spesifik dalam wacana tertulis yang dihasilkan oleh siswa SMA. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif studi kasus. Alat pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini adalah dokumen berupa teks naratif yang ditulis oleh siswa. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari siswa kelas 12 SMK Negeri 1 Ketapang, jurusan perbankan. Pengumpulan data difokuskan pada identifikasi dan pengkategorian kesalahan ke dalam beberapa jenis. Data dianalisis menggunakan Analisis Kesalahan (Error Analysis/EA), yang berfungsi sebagai kerangka utama untuk menganalisis kesalahan tata bahasa dalam teks naratif yang ditulis oleh siswa selama kegiatan belajar bahasa Inggris. Analisis mengungkapkan bahwa total 58 kesalahan tata bahasa tersebar di tujuh kategori: bentuk kata (17,24%), kosakata (12,07%), tanda baca (25,86%), bentuk dan tenses verba (32,76%), artikel (5,17%), kata penghubung (3,45%), dan kesesuaian subjek-predikat (3,45%). Temuan ini menyoroti area-area di mana siswa mengalami kesulitan, seperti membangun tenses dan bentuk kata kerja yang akurat serta menggunakan tanda baca yang tepat, yang secara signifikan memengaruhi koherensi narasi tertulis mereka.

Kata kunci: Kesalahan Tata Bahasa, Wacana Tertulis, Analisis Kesalahan

Abstract

This research investigated grammatical errors in the written discourse of EFL senior high school students. The research aimed to identify and classify the grammatical errors into specific categories in the written discourse produced by EFL senior high school students. This research uses a case study descriptive qualitative approach. The data collection tool in this research is a document in the form of narrative text written by students. The research subjects consisted of twelfth grade students from SMK Negeri 1 Ketapang, majoring in banking. The data collection focused on identifying and categorizing the errors into several types. The data were analyzed using Error Analysis (EA), which served as the main framework for analyzing grammatical errors in narrative texts written by students during English learning activities. The analysis revealed that total of 58 grammatical errors across seven categories: word form (17.24%), vocabulary (12.07%), punctuation (25.86%), verb tense and form (32.76%), articles (5.17%), connectives (3.45%), and subject-verb agreement (3.45%). These findings highlight the areas where students struggle, such as constructing accurate verb tense and verb form and using proper punctuation, which significantly affect the coherence of their written narratives.

Keywords: *Grammatical Errors, Written Discourse, Error Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

There are four skills in learning English, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Another complement, namely grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, also supports English language skills. Grammar is one of the most important parts of learning English, especially for EFL students in communicating. Additionally, by becoming

proficient in English grammar, EFL students will be able to communicate clearly both when speaking and writing. Mertosono and Erniwati (2023) states that grammar offers information to help readers' comprehension. Thus, grammar is a set of rules that describe how a language's words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are structured. Purpura (2013) states that grammar is important in assessing communicative language ability. Grammar is the fundamental linguistic resource of communicative language ability. Therefore, the use of proper grammar is helpful for students in communicating both in spoken and written form.

Grammar is related to the writing activity. According to Khalisa (2021) when writing, students consider not just the writing style but also the content, structure, vocabulary, grammar, and language use. In English language learning materials in class, EFL students make many written discourse. Therefore, that is why in writing assignments, students should pay attention to the use of grammar especially in their written assignments such as essays, letters, narratives, description texts, and other texts contained in the English learning materials in the classroom. Alsaawi (2016) states that discourse can be written (in books, articles, newspapers, magazines, and road signs) or spoken (in conversation, verbal encounters, and TV shows). Written discourse is a broader term that includes various types of written assignments given in schools.

In English subjects in senior high school, most of the material faced by students is about text, including exposition, procedure, narrative, hortatory texts, and others. Then it relates to writing activities. In writing a text, it is necessary to use correct grammar so that the reader can understand the meaning of what is written. However, many students are still wrong in using correct grammar. These phenomena can be referred to as grammatical errors. Grammatical errors are common for EFL students. Hsu (2013) states that grammatical errors result in incorrect forms, semantic meanings, and usage.. It means, when grammar is not used correctly, it can cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Grammatical errors can negatively impact students' academic achievements. Therefore, EFL senior high school students need to learn and apply correct grammar, especially in writing. Kusumaningsih *et al*. (2021) state that language errors in language learning are something that cannot be avoided. A person's language mistakes can be a problem if the individual knows the notion of error, but they can also be simple if the person is unaware of their flaws in speech or language. Therefore, EFL students need to know the grammatical errors in their written discourse.

Although these challenges have been recognized by previous research studies, there is still a lack of systematic identification, description, and explanation of specific types of EFL grammatical errors in composing text in the context of Indonesian senior schools. Therefore, this research can contribute to English teachers, especially pre-service teachers and novice teachers, in providing effective improvements (for example feedback) in producing written discourse.

METHOD

This research design is using a case study descriptive qualitative approach. Leavy (2017) states that qualitative research is generally appropriate when your primary purpose is to explore, describe, or explain. It means that the collected data was in words rather than numbers. A case study qualitative descriptive approach is suitable for providing an in-depth description of grammatical errors in EFL students' writing. The descriptive qualitative method allows the researcher to thoroughly describe and analyze the grammatical errors found in written discourse produced by the EFL senior high school students as well as the provision of the correct form. The case study design is particularly suited for this research as it focuses on an in-depth exploration of grammatical errors within a specific group of students, providing detailed insights into their language learning process.

The tool for data collection in this research involves gathering a diverse range of written documents from EFL senior high school students. Ary et al. (2010) states that document analysis can involve written or text-based artifacts (such as textbooks, novels, journals, meeting minutes, logs, announcements, policy statements, newspapers, transcripts, birth certificates, marriage records, budgets, letters, email messages, and others) as well as non-written records (such as photographs, audio recordings, video recordings, computer images, websites, musical performances, televised political speeches, YouTube videos, virtual world settings, and so on). In accordance with this research, the researcher used documents in the form of written assignments of EFL high school students in English subjects as data collection tools. Specifically, the researcher analyzed narrative texts assigned by the English teacher, as this was the only type of text provided during the period of data collection. These written tasks served as the primary source of data, allowing the researcher to examine grammatical errors made by the students systematically. The focus on narrative texts was considered relevant due to their complexity, which requires students to

demonstrate various grammatical skills such as verb tense, sentence structure, and appropriate word choice.

The data analysis technique in this research used Error Analysis (EA). This technique helps in identifying, categorizing, and understanding the grammatical errors found in EFL senior high school students' writing. This approach is based on a method adapted from Marina and Snuviškiene (2005). In this case, the errors are identified and grouped according to the error type, and the examples with frequent and typical errors will be chosen for the analysis, for instance, word form, verb tense and verb form, subject-verb agreement, conditionals, connectives, articles, sentence structure, word order, vocabulary, and punctuation. In examining EFL senior high school students' grammatical errors through error analysis, the researcher will use a program called Grammarly. It aims to help the researcher classify the grammatical errors contained in the written discourse according to the grammatical error categories in this research. The stages in error analysis according to Ellis (1997) include: identifying errors, describing errors, explaining errors, and error evaluation.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Through careful analysis using Ellis (1997) error analysis framework by adjusting the grammatical error categories according to Marina and Snuviškiene (2005), the researcher found that students made errors in various aspects of grammar, including word form, vocabulary, punctuation, verb tense and verb form, article, connectives and subject-verb agreement. These findings align with previous studies, such as that of Ibrahim and Ibrahim (2021) which identified common errors in English grammar among EFL students, including subject-verb agreement, verb tense and verb form, and the misuse of articles.

Similarly, Isma et al. (2023) reported that EFL students often make errors in vocabulary, word forms, articles, subject-verb agreement, and verb tense. For example, errors like “costant” instead of “constant”, “themeselves” instead of “themselves”, and “arise” instead of “arose” showcase recurring challenges in word form, vocabulary, and verb tense and verb form, respectively. Additionally, issues with punctuation, such as missing commas after transitional phrases like “At last,” further highlight the need for improved attention to mechanics. Errors in article usage, such as omitting the in “master heron” instead of “the master heron”, misuse of connectives, as seen in “and” should be removed, and subject-verb agreement errors, like “classmates” instead of “classmate”, underline the necessity of focused grammar instruction to address these weaknesses.

Table 1. Classification of Grammatical Error

No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Word form	10	17, 24%
2.	Vocabulary	7	12,07%
3.	Punctuation	15	25,86%
4.	Verb tense and verb form	19	32,76%
5.	Article	3	5,17%
6.	Connectives	2	3,45%
7.	Subject-verb agreement	2	3,45%

The result of the research showed there are seven categories of grammatical errors made by the grade twelve students majoring in banking at SMK Negeri 1 Ketapang in their narrative text. Each category reflects specific grammatical issues that impede students' ability to produce accurate and coherent narrative texts. The researcher found errors in word form with a total of 10 errors or 17.24%. The students were still lacking in writing appropriate or correct words. They are often wrong in writing the word that should be in the sentence. First, students miswrote words such as "he lay down on the ground breathlees and pretended to be a dead man", students miswrote the word "breathlees" which should be written "breathless". In addition, students also make mistakes by separating words that should not be separated such as "A heron was walking sedately a long the bank of stream", the word "a long" should be "along". This finding is in line with previous research, such as that conducted by Meliyanti (2013), who identified that students often make errors in word forms due to the spelling mistakes they make such as "ofice" should be "office". Similarly, studies by Marina and Snuviškiene (2005) revealed that students often substituted incorrect word forms in their writing, resulting in sentences with altered or unclear meanings.

There were errors in vocabulary with a total of 7 errors or 12.07%. In this case students often do not carefully choose or use vocabulary that should be used in sentences such as "All the mice were much surprised that they had not thought of such a plan before". The word "much" in the sentence is incorrect because of the context of using an intensifier for an adjective like "surprise". The word "much" should be "very" because it is more in line with the rules of intensifier usage in English. Similarly, in the sentence "All we have to do is to hang a bell about the cat's neck." the word "about" should be changed to "around", because in this context, the use of "about" is not appropriate because the goal is to hang the

bell around the cat's neck. So, in the context of the sentence, the preposition “about” is replaced with the word “around” to make it more appropriate. This error in the use and selection of vocabulary shows that students are still lacking in the use of vocabulary that is appropriate or in accordance with the context in the sentence.

There are errors in punctution with a total of 15 errors or 25.86%. Based on the punctuation errors that students have made, it can be seen that students still lack understanding of punctuation rules, such as the placement of commas, the use of full stops, and the correct use of capital letters. As in the sentence “At last a very young mouse got up and said...” there should be a comma after “At last”. “At last” is an opening phrase that serves to provide a time context. In English grammar, an opening phrase is often followed by a comma to separate it from the main clause. These findings align with previous research, such as that conducted by Nanning et al. (2020) revealed that students’ errors in punctuation were in the use of commas and capital letters. Similarly, Ma et al. (2022) found that punctuation errors in students is the use of commas, the cause of which is that students have not been able to master the rules for using commas.

The researcher also found verb tense and verb form errors with a total of 19 errors or 32.76%. Narrative text is generally written in past tense, but students may be confused or unaware of this rule. They often do not pay attention to the tense used, such as using present tense or future tense out of context. As in the sentence “Ella finally <u>feel</u> like she <u>find</u> her hobby something that made her feel happy and confident.” The word “feel” should be changed to 'felt' to match the past tense with the narrative context. Similarly, the word “find” should be “found”. These findings align with Isma et al. (2023) who classified grammatical errors on verb tense, students who make tense errors may struggle with understanding when to use past, present, or future tenses, leading to confusion in their writing.

There are errors in articles with a total of 3 errors or 5.17%. In writing sentences, students still do not understand the use of 'a' and 'an', as in the sentence “There was <u>a</u> old soccer ball that had been lost several months ago” in the use of the article, “a” should be “an”, because the word following it starts with a vowel. Students also do not use articles in sentences where articles should be added, such as in the sentence “A heron was walking sedately a long the bank of <u>stream</u> there is a missing article before “stream” which should be “the stream” and in the sentence “the clear water swarmed with fish, but master heron was hard to please that morning” It should begin with the article “the” because “master heron” refers to a specific subject in the story. These findings align with Meliyanti (2013)

revealed article errors in the use of a, an, and the occur students are still unsure about using a/an as an indefinite article and the as a definite article. True, there is no consistent pattern for using a, an, and the in Indonesian. That is why the majority of pupils make blunders when using these aspects. They may confuse English and Indonesian.

The other error found in students' written assignments is the error in connectives with a total of 2 errors or 3,45%. Students are not correct in using connectives that match the sentence, such as in the sentence "Tomi felt a deep connection to his Family's history with treasured the gift more…" the word "with" is incorrect and should be "and" to connect the two clauses correctly. Also as in the sentence "… his eyes on the clear water, and his long neck and pointed ready…" this shows the incorrect use of conjunction, "and" should be removed. These findings align with Geraldine (2018) which also found errors in the use of 'and' because respondents did not put the conjunction 'and' to link phrases. Similarly, Nurbaidah (2019) who classified errors in narrative text, revealed that students were confused in choosing to use 'and' or other connectives.

Last, the researcher found subject-verb agreement errors with a total of 2 errors or 3.45%. Based on the errors made by students in subject-verb agreement, it can be seen that students do not understand the rules for using singular and plural forms in English, such as in the sentence "She is my classmates" the subject "She" is singular and therefore requires the singular noun "classmate," not the plural form "classmates." Similarly, in the sentence "Now Stevani and I is friends again" the subject "Stevani and I" is plural, requiring the verb "are" instead of "is." These findings align with Nanning et al. (2020) who found subject-verb agreement errors in the use of 'is' and 'are' such as "the Question Card Survey are expected to…" 'are' should be changed to 'is' because it is a third singular person/thing.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the written discourse in the form of student narrative texts, the researcher found that the errors made by twelfth grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Ketapang majoring in banking consisted of 7 types of errors with a total of 58 errors. The types of errors made by twelfth grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Ketapang majoring in banking are word form errors (10 errors or 17.24%), vocabulary errors (7 errors or 12.07%), punctuation errors (15 errors or 25.86%), verb tense and verb form errors (19 errors or 32.76%), article errors (3 errors or 5.17%), connectives errors (2 errors or 3.45%), and subject-verb agreement errors (2 errors or 3.45%).

SUGGESTION

After conducting this research, the researcher would like to make some suggestions to improve the ability of students and teachers in writing activities and teaching and learning grammar. First, for teachers, the researcher hopes the teachers to select teaching methods, techniques, approaches, and strategies that align with the needs and abilities of their students, particularly when teaching narrative texts and writing in general. Providing constructive feedback on students' assignments is essential to help them understand and learn from their errors. Teachers should ensure that grammar instruction is clear and supported with ample practice opportunities, both in writing and in related skills such as reading. Additionally, teachers should create an interactive and engaging classroom environment to further support students' learning process and foster their confidence in writing.

For students, the students should pay more attention in writing, review the feedback from the teacher carefully and reflect on the errors made in the assignment. Do not hesitate to ask for clarification on grammar rules or feedback on writing. Actively participating in class activities will also strengthen understanding and application of grammar. Students should make the most of their time to learn. Students should practice a lot outside the classroom. Improving grammar and writing skills is a gradual process. Students should remain persistent and motivated to practice, learn, and improve their skills over time.

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