

Grammatical Problems Experienced by English Department Students at Vocational Higher Education

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Learning English as a second language requires students to learn English skills and components, including grammar. English Department students, as second language learners, are required to have good grammar acquisition. However, they usually make errors related to grammatical rules. This study was aimed to identify and analyze some grammatical problems experienced by the English Department Students, Politeknik Negeri Jember. The research result is hoped to be beneficial not only for language learning and teaching, but also for linguistics studies. The data were taken from the students who enrolled Upper Intermediate Grammar Course. The students' written works were analyzed to find the problems. The first step was reading the works carefully to find grammatical problems. Having identified the problems, the researcher wrote notes about error kinds. She classified the errors into different categories based on their kinds. Then, the researcher analyzed the data and counted using percentage calculation. This study found that the students made the grammatical problems mostly on sentence constructions, numbers, and tenses. Hopefully, the findings would be beneficial for English teachers to get information about grammatical mistakes frequently made by the students, analyze causes of grammatical errors, and find solution to deal with the problems.

Keywords: grammatical errors, sentence construction, numbers, tenses

Mempelajari Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua mengharuskan mahasiswa mempelajari keterampilan dan komponen Bahasa Inggris, termasuk tata bahasa. Mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris, sebagai pelajar bahasa kedua, diharuskan memiliki tata bahasa yang baik. Namun, mereka biasanya membuat kesalahan terkait dengan aturan tata bahasa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis beberapa kesalahan tata bahasa yang dialami oleh Mahasiswa Program Studi Bahasa Inggris, Politeknik Negeri Jember. Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan dapat bermanfaat tidak hanya untuk proses pembelajaran bahasa, tetapi juga untuk kajian linguistik. Data diambil dari esai yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa yang mengikuti mata kuliah Upper Intermediate Grammar. Esai tersebut dianalisis untuk menemukan kesalahan tata bahasa. Langkah pertama adalah membaca esai dengan teliti untuk menemukan kesalahan tata bahasa. Setelah mengidentifikasi kesalahan, peneliti

membuat catatan tentang jenis kesalahan. Peneliti mengklasifikasikan kesalahan ke dalam berbagai kategori berdasarkan jenisnya. Kemudian, peneliti menganalisis data menggunakan perhitungan persentase. Dari hasil penelitian, diketahui bahwa mahasiswa membuat kesalahan tata bahasa yang sebagian besar terkait dengan susunan kalimat, number, tenses. Temuan ini diharapkan dapat member manfaat bagi pengajar Bahasa Inggris untuk mendapatkan informasi tentang kesalahan tata bahasa yang sering dilakukan oleh mahasiswa, menganalisis penyebab kesalahan tata bahasa, dan menemukan solusi untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut.

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a second language requires students to learn English skills and components, including grammar. English Department students, as second language learners, are required to have good grammar acquisition. Nunan (1999) states, grammar is an account of a language structure and how the units of language such as words and phrases are connected to construct sentences. Thinking about grammar that contains the rule of language construction can cause the English learners feel difficult to communicate. It makes grammar is considered as a complicated subject for most English learners; therefore, they are not interested in learning grammar (Aisyiyah, 2019). In addition, there are opinions that consider grammar is not an essential thing to learn. The condition makes language learners think there is no problem with making errors or mistakes.

According to Corder (1967) in Ellis (1994), when the learners do not have adequate knowledge, the deviation arises and causes errors. It represents insufficient competence". He also states that "if learners do not succeed to complete their ability, a mistake happens; it is caused by problems on processing that avoid learners from accessing their knowledge of a rule in target language and make them reserve on an alternative, non-standard rule that is easier for them to access. On the other hand, mistakes are phenomena of performance. Regarding the two quotes above, an error refers to an 'insufficiency of competence' and a mistake is a 'phenomena of performance'. It means that error cannot be corrected; it is something which has to be learnt so that the learners can fix and comprehend it, while mistakes can be fixed because the learners have learnt the knowledge. Moreover, Richard and Schmidt (2002) mention, "The difference between errors and mistakes are: errors are caused by incomplete knowledge, and mistakes happen if the learner was inattentive, careless, tired, or other aspects while writing or speaking."

Many studies on error analysis indicate that many language learners, as foreign and second languages, make errors either in written or in spoken language. The types of errors can be inter-language errors that are caused by learners' competence in particular stage including interference of the learner's mother tongue, intra-lingual and developmental errors, and reflect general uniqueness of language achievement (Richards, 1975).

Producing errors is common in learning language. It is an integral part and cannot be separated from learning process. Dulay, et.al. (1982) state that producing errors is an unavoidable step of learning. Further, they say that people will be unable to learn language without making

errors at the beginning. Although those errors occur naturally in learning language, it is unwise if there is no effort to correct the errors. Language learners should continuously explore, learn and apply grammatical rules to produce clear and understandable language. Hasan and Munandar (2018) mention, if the learners have mastered grammar system well, they will be able to produce sentences correctly. They also can convey their opinions, information and thoughts to the readers. Meanwhile, when the learners do not have a good comprehension of grammar system, they will get problems in producing sentences.

There is a classification of the errors in accordance with surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay, et.al. (1982). The errors are categorized into four types including omission, addition, miss-formation, and miss-ordering.

Omission is indicated by the nonexistence of an item that has to come out in a correct expression. These omission errors can be omission of articles, to be, or other morphemes. For example: *She is doctor, The book black, He running fast.*

Addition is the opposite of omission. It is indicated by the existence of an item which has not emerge in a correct sentence. This kind of errors may come out in the form of simple additions, double markings, and regularizations. For example: *The girls doesn't go with us, We will live in here* (Simple additions); *She doesn't listens to me, They didn't ate the meal* (Double markings); *She putted it on the table, They have many childs* (Regularizations).

Miss-formation is indicated by the use of the morpheme or structure form which is incorrect. In this case, the learners supply an item that is wrong. For instance: *I saw that houses, Give me that, Mary washed his skirt.*

Miss-ordering is indicated by the wrong position of a morpheme or group of morphemes in a sentence. For instance: *She is all the day lazy, What Daddy is watching?, We don't understand where is he.*

There are some causes that affect learners to make errors when learning language. Richards (1975) states some causes including the interference of the learner's mother tongue, over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized.

The interference of the learner's mother tongue appears because the learners' target language is affected by their mother tongue which contains different construction with the target language. For example: *uniform school, book interesting.*

Over-generalization happens when the learner makes an unusual construction based on his experience of different construction in the target language. For example: *He will runs.; It is occurs.; We are study.*

Ignorance of rule restrictions is caused by the learners are failed to learn the limitations of target structures, that is, the use of regulations to contexts where they do not use. For instance: *That is the girl who I met her.; This is not fit to drink it.*

Under the category of incomplete application of rules, the appearance of construction deviancy shows the level of development of the rules needed to make correct sentences. For

instance: *How long does it take? It take one minute.; What's she doing? She opening the door.; What was he doing? He doing his homework.*

False concepts hypothesized happens because there is misunderstanding on the difference in the target language. For instance: the confusion on the use of too, so, and very, the confusion on the use of articles, prepositions, and so on.

This research was aimed to identify and analyze some grammatical problems experienced by the English Department Students, Politeknik Negeri Jember. The research result is hoped to be beneficial not only for language learning and teaching, but also for linguistics studies.

METHOD

This paper is a descriptive study. It was done to describe grammatical problems experienced by English Department Students of Politeknik Negeri Jember. The participants were taken randomly as many as 30 respondents of 72 students who enrolled Upper Intermediate Grammar Class. The data was collected through students' essay. The students' written works were analyzed to find the problems. The first step was reading the works carefully to find grammatical problems. Having identified the problems, the researcher wrote notes about error kinds. She classified the errors into different categories based on their kinds. Then, the researcher analyzed the data and counted using percentage calculation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on essays of 30 students which were taken randomly, the students made grammatical problems in some areas of linguistic including sentence construction, number, word order, tenses, conjunction, verbal, preposition, and determiner. The total numbers of errors made by the respondents is 401. The distribution of grammatical problems made by the students can be seen in the following table.

Table 1: The distribution of grammatical errors

NO	LINGUISTIC ERRORS	NUMBERS	PERCENTAGE
1	Sentence construction	177	44
2	Number	85	21
3	Word order	6	2
4	Tenses	68	17

5	Conjunction	35	9
6	Verbal	22	5
7	Preposition	5	1
8	Determiner	3	1
Total		401	100

The number of errors on sentence construction is 177 (44%) which can be categorized in miss-formation type of errors. For example: *An example is me; In the language of the definition of college; Back to academic activity so on.* In this case, it seems that the students try to make sentences using word for word translation from their mother tongue, and the limitation of their English acquisition. This category of error makes the readers difficult to understand the sentence. Because when the sentence is not constructed correctly, the meaning is unclear. Unfortunately, this error was mostly experienced by the students.

The second linguistic error, related to *number* is 85 (21%) which can be categorized in *omission* type of errors. For example: *four category, some comment, other campus.* Different from the previous error, sentences containing errors related to numbers are still understandable. This category of error may occur because there is different rule on using number in English from that in students' mother tongue and that in Bahasa Indonesia. In Bahasa Indonesia, there is no different on noun for singular or plural nouns like *satu buku* or *dua buku*; whereas, in English we have to differentiate into *one book* and *two books*.

The next linguistic error, *word order* is 6 (2%) which can be categorized in *miss-ordering* type of errors. For example: *it offers specified competency standard.* This type of error mostly occurs since the students are affected by word order in their mother tongue or that in Bahasa Indonesia.

The number of errors on *tenses* is 68 (17%) which can be categorized in *miss-formation* type of errors. For example: *it will appears; they have try hard; I want to finished.* Surely, it is quite hard for the students to apply many kinds of tenses in producing English sentences; whereas, there is no rule related to tenses in their previous language.

The number of errors on the use of *conjunction* is 35 (6%) which can be categorized in *addition* and *miss-formation* types of errors. For example: *And also I need to more understand; But in that way, but beside that.* This kind of error may happen because of the limitation of students' English proficiency.

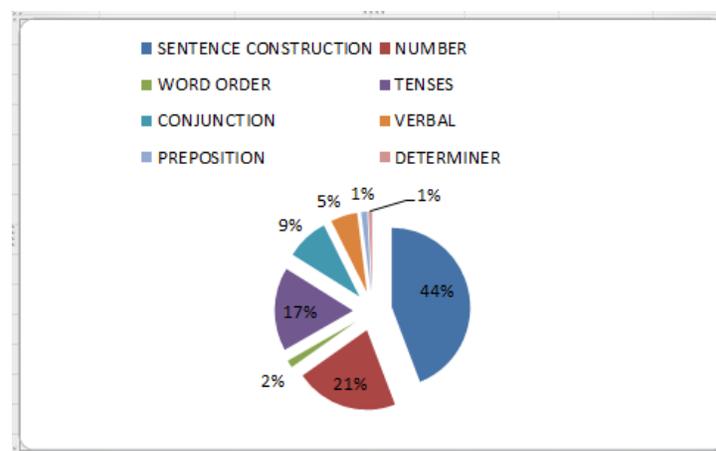
The next error deals with verbal. The number of errors on *verbal* is 22 (5%) which can be categorized in *addition* and *miss-formation* types of errors. For example: *by ask the student, it makes us enjoy do the activities; I need to more learning*. Besides different rules on the form of verbal in Bahasa Indonesia and in English, this error surely happens because of the limited knowledge of the students.

Another linguistic error was on the misuse of preposition. The number of errors on the use of *preposition* is 5 (1%) which can be categorized in *addition* and *miss-formation* types of errors. For example: *what should I do in there; I'm not interested to organization*. This error may happen because the students have limited English acquisition.

The last error found on the students' essay was on the use of determiners particularly articles. The number of errors on the use of *determiner/article* is 3(1%) which can be categorized in *omission* and *addition* types of errors. For example: *I want to be translator; a students; I have an purpose; this two things is more easier*.

In addition to the frequency and distribution of the errors above, we can briefly see the percentage of the errors in the following chart.

Figure 1: Students' Grammatical Error Percentage



CONCLUSIONS

This study found that grammatical problems experienced by the students were mostly associated with sentence construction, numbers, and tenses. The first linguistic category was the most errors experienced by the students. Those errors can be classified into omission, addition, miss-formation, and miss-ordering, in which miss-formation occurred as the most frequent type of errors made by the students. The errors might occur because of the interference of the learner's mother tongue, over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized. To solve the problems, it is highly

recommended for the lecturers to conduct further research on analyzing causes of the errors. Besides, other researchers need to hold studies on developing innovative models on English Language Teaching to improve students' acquisition in learning grammar. Hopefully, the findings would be beneficial for English teachers to get information about grammatical problems frequently created by the students, analyze factors affected grammatical problems, and find solution to deal with the problems. In addition, it is expected to give contribution to the development of linguistic studies.

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