GRAMMATICAL ERRORS ANALYSIS OF THE THIRD SEMESTER STUDENTS’ RECOUNT ESSAYS

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Abstract
Considering the importance of students’ errors in English learning process, this research was conducted to identify grammatical errors made by the third semester students of Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa. Two research questions are put forward in this error analysis research. They are (1) What are the grammatical errors types made by the students when they write a recount essay? (2) What is the most grammatical error made by the students? This research applied a descriptive qualitative method with the students’ writing as the key data. The data were collected using the writing assignments of the writing lecturer. James’ theory of grammatical error categories and Corder’s theory of error analysis procedure became the main baseline theories in the data analysis. The data used in this research were collected from 16 scripts written by the third semester students. The findings show that there were 245 errors figured out in students’ recount essays. This research further revealed that 138 (56.3%) of the whole error were related to inappropriate usage of tenses. It was the most dominant error appearing in students’ writings. This category was followed by the errors of prepositions usage with a frequency of 31 (12.6%), poor usage of articles with a frequency of 29 (11.8%), errors of singular/plural with a frequency of 21 (8.6%), improper use of irregular verbs with a frequency of 11 (4.5%), poor usage of adjectives with a frequency of 7 (2.9%), inability to apply the rules of concord with a frequency of 6 (2.5%), and possessive case with a frequency of 2 (0.8%). These errors indicated students lacked of grammatical knowledge and had not been able to write an acceptable writing especially a recount text.

Keywords: error analysis, grammar, writing, recount text, grammatical errors

Introduction
As EFL learners, students possibly face obstacles in acquiring the language. The struggles of learning English is not only a problem for learners in junior & senior high schools, but also students of English Education Department. They still have problem in making use of English both in productive and receptive skills. They also have difficulties in applying grammar for those four skills which potentially have led them to make errors.

Error always occurs during learning process. Brown (1994) defines error as “a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner.” The deviation comes as a result of their second language learning process when they have not fully mastered the target language. The inability they have affects them in performing the language. Since errors are part of students’ process of learning language, they will automatically decrease the existence of errors in their performance by the time they fully mastered the competence.

Inability to make use of the language competence especially the knowledge of grammar actually can be a serious issue regarding the importance of grammar in a language. Singh,
Singh, Razak, and Ravinthar (2017) state that grammar is viewed as the most essential aspect of the language learning for second language learners. Grammar also plays a crucial role in assessing learners’ competence. Braganza (1998) says that violating the essential rules of grammar can have an adverse effect on the propositional content and this then can affect the credibility of the writer. As a conclusion, it can be said that the less grammar errors writer makes, the more credible he/she is as a writer.

Error especially in grammar indeed does not only give negative effect. Weinreich (1991) considers learners’ errors as a particular importance because making errors is a device the learners use in order to learn. In other words, the errors can also be a good material to investigate students’ competence and evaluate the system used in the teaching and learning process.

In error analysis research, grammatical error is the error category that is commonly analyzed. Many linguistic researchers have an interest in analyzing this topic. Ma’mun (2016) studied errors made by university students. She classified the grammatical errors according to surface structure taxonomy. Meanwhile, Amoakohene (2017), in his research, classified four types of grammatical errors which are concord errors, wrong tense usage, inappropriate use of article, and poor usage of prepositions. In analyzing learner’s errors, researcher can apply several different theories and strategies. There is no specific limitation in classifying and categorizing the errors. This fact undoubtedly makes error analysis an interesting study to do.

Researchers can also use various types of text as the data source to get the errors. Recount text is one of the text types that is common and necessary to be analyzed. This text is important to be learned and students should be able to master it. Nevertheless, students still make lots of error in their writing since a recount text is categorized as a difficult text. By analyzing students’ recount text, the researcher can provide the data that are expected to help students in improving their performance in writing a recount text.

Method

In the first step of the research, the researcher designed the research method. The descriptive qualitative method was applied because the data of this study is in the form of text and the findings would be presented in the form of descriptions. Seliger & Shohamy (1989) state that descriptive research concerns with providing descriptions of phenomena that occur naturally, without the intervention of an experiment or an artificially contrived treatment. This research does not interfere the students’ writing and allow them to act and produce their works naturally.

The data of this study are the students’ recount essay writings. The instruments used in order to collect the data were the students’ writing assignments. Those assignments were written by the subjects in their writing class. This activity was conducted at the end of the class. They were asked to write a recount text based on a specific theme. After they finished writing the essays, the researcher collected the writing.

The essays were analyzed by using the error analysis procedure proposed by Corder (1967). This procedure includes five stages which are collecting language learner sample, identifying the errors, classifying the errors, explaining the errors, and evaluating the errors.
Results and Discussion

Grammatical Errors Types

By analyzing 16 scripts of students’ written texts, the researcher figured out 245 grammatical errors. These errors were then categorized into eight different categories which were prepositions, articles, singular/plural, adjectives, irregular verbs, tenses, concord, and possessive case. The errors of each category were then calculated by using Bullman’s formula illustrated in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Grammatical Errors Frequency](image)

1. Most Grammatical Errors

The distribution of errors, which have been categorized and counted, was presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatical Errors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular/Plural</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular Verbs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenses</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concord</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive Case</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the data presented in Table 1 and Figure 1, inappropriate usage of tense was the highest error found in students’ recount texts. It was the most dominant one with 138 errors or 56.3% of the whole error made by the students. The next most dominant error committed by the students was in line with the errors of making use of prepositions with a frequency of 31 (12.6%). It was followed by the poor usage of articles with a frequency of 29 (11.8%). The errors of singular/plural came in the fourth position with a frequency of 21 (8.6%). This was followed by improper use of irregular verbs with a frequency of 11
(4.5%), poor usage of adjectives with a frequency of 7 (2.9%), inability to apply the rules of concord with a frequency of 6 (2.5%), and possessive case with a frequency of 2 (0.8%).

2. The Explanation of Grammatical Errors Types

These are some examples of each type of grammatical errors made by the students in their recount texts.

1. Prepositions

The researcher found out 31 inappropriate prepositions in students’ essays. It was the second highest percentage of errors committed by the students. The data, which has been analyzed, revealed that misformation of preposition was the most common error appearing in almost all of the text students wrote. Some omissions and additions of prepositions also appeared. Those erroneous words indicated students’ lack of knowledge in applying proper prepositions in a sentence.

Table 2. Inappropriate usage of prepositions and their correct forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Erroneous Sentences</th>
<th>Correct forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>When we arrived on the hotel</td>
<td>When we arrived in the hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>My friend accompanied me to register <strong>in</strong> a university.</td>
<td>My friend accompanied me to register <strong>at</strong> a university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>We arrived at Ngoburan <strong>beach</strong> <strong>10.00 a.m.</strong>.</td>
<td>We arrived at Ngoburan beach at 10 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>In my hometown famous for its beautiful beaches.</td>
<td>My hometown is famous for its beautiful beaches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examples in the table above present some of the ways in which errors related to the errors of prepositions. The first and second sentences are the instances of misformation of prepositions. Instead of applying the word “on”, the first example should have been completed with the word “in”. For the second sentence, the word “at” is the appropriate preposition to refer to the place where the act happened. The third and fourth cases appeared because students omitted the prepositions that should have absolutely been put in those sentences. The last sentence is the example of addition of preposition. The word “in” is not necessary in this sentence.

2. Articles

Poor usage of articles ranked the third position. It recorded 29 items of error or 11.7% of the whole error appearing in the students’ essays. This kind of error mostly dealt with addition and omission problems. Students whether omitted an article that is a must before a noun or added an article that is unnecessary in a sentence.

Table 3. Poor usage of articles and their correct forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Erroneous Sentences</th>
<th>Correct forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>On third</strong> day, we arrived at the beach in the morning.</td>
<td>On the third day, we arrived at the beach in the morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>We visited <strong>central place.</strong></td>
<td>We visited a central place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. I was so happy in the Semarang. I was so happy in Semarang.

4. We went to Kulon Progo by a motor cycle. We went to Kulon Progo by motor cycle.

Table 3 provides an overview of the poor usage of articles in students’ essays that were analyzed. The first and second cases are the examples of omission of articles. The article “the” should have been introduced before the word “third” in order to create a perfect adverbial phrase in the first sentence and the word “a” is a must before the object in the second sentence. On the other hand, the third and fourth sentences were classified as the addition of article. The articles “the” and “a” in these sentences should have been omitted.

3. **Singular/Plural**

Singular/plural was noted to be in the fourth position. Errors, which were found out in students’ texts, related to this category were 21 items. Omission and addition of “s” were mostly committed by the students in making singular/plural forms. Misformation emerged likewise from a few sentences.

Table 4. Errors of singular/plural and their correct forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Erroneous Sentences</th>
<th>Correct forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>We went there to represent our school on <strong>those</strong> competition.</td>
<td>We went there to represent our school at this competition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>There were a <strong>lots</strong> of sellers who sold many <strong>kind</strong> of souvenirs.</td>
<td>There were a lot of sellers who sold many kinds of souvenirs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 provides three sentences consisting of errors of singular/plural. The word “competition” in example 1 is a singular noun and as such the demonstrative pronoun “this” should have been introduced before that word. In example 2, the word “lots” should have been changed into “lot”. On the contrary, the word “kind” came after the determiner “many” which should have been followed by a plural noun. This fact caused the word “kind” to be changed into “kinds” in order to make it plural.

4. **Adjectives**

This category of errors was in the sixth position. Out of 245 errors, 7 items were errors related to the poor usage of adjectives. Table 5 below included three examples out of 7 errors found in students’ essays. As evident in that table, the words “excited”, “could”, and “high” should have been changed into “exciting”, “cold”, and “highest”.

Table 5. Poor usage of adjectives and their correct forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Erroneous Sentences</th>
<th>Correct forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>It was very <strong>excited</strong>.</td>
<td>It was very exciting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The air so <strong>could</strong>.</td>
<td>The air was so cold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>It was the <strong>high</strong> mountain in my town.</td>
<td>It is the highest mountain in my town.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Irregular Verbs**

After the researcher analyzed 16 scripts of students’ work, the result revealed that this type of error occupied the fifth position. Out of the 245 errors, 11 (4.5%) were in the form
of poor usage of irregular verbs. Most of the errors were in the form of omission and 4 errors were in the form of misformation.

Table 6. Improper use of irregular verbs and their correct forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Erroneous Sentences</th>
<th>Correct forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>Lawang Sewu constantly bustling</strong> with tourists.</td>
<td>Lawang Sewu was constantly bustling with tourists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>We to</strong> Semarang by car.</td>
<td>We went to Semarang by car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>My quiverful and I <strong>when</strong> visit to the baron beach in Gunung Kidul.</td>
<td>My quiverful and I went visit Baron beach in Gunung Kidul.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows some instances of errors of irregular verbs. In example 1, there is an omission of verb. The correct form of the sentence should have been completed with the word “was”. Example 2 was likewise lack of verb. The word “went” should have been placed as the verb in order to make the sentence acceptable. Meanwhile, in the third example, the verb “went” was written in the wrong way. The writer might choose the wrong form because those two words have almost the same pronunciation.

6. Tense

As evident in Table 1, inappropriate usage of tenses was the grammatical error category which recorded the highest percentage of errors. Students’ lack of knowledge in applying the rules of tenses led them to make 138 wrong sentences.

Table 7. Inappropriate usage of tenses and their correct forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Erroneous Sentences</th>
<th>Correct forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>This competition <strong>sponsored by</strong> government.</td>
<td>This competition was sponsored by government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>It <strong>is</strong> a pleasant journey.</td>
<td>It was a pleasant journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><strong>We were really understand.</strong></td>
<td>We really understood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The contest <strong>is running</strong> very exciting.</td>
<td>The contest ran very exciting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>It <strong>was the high mountain in my town.</strong></td>
<td>It is the highest mountain in my town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>First, we decided to <strong>visited</strong> a place called “Lawang Sewu”.</td>
<td>First, we decided to visit a place called “Lawang Sewu”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the sentences in Table 7 are some instances where the students made errors in applying the tenses. The first sentence is an example where student did omission in making a passive voice. He did not introduce the word “was” before the main verb. For the example 2, 3 and 4, the sentences should have been written in past tense. The verbs consequently should have made use of the past forms as in “was”, “understood”, and “ran”. On the other hand, the verbs in example 5 and 6 should have been in the form of infinitive. It was because example 5 consisted of a fact and the word “visit” in example 6 was not the main verb but it was a to-infinitive.

7. Concord

Errors of concord ranked the seventh position out of eight categories. There were only 6 errors or 2.5% of the whole error in the texts.
Table 8. Errors of concord and their correct forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Erroneous Sentences</th>
<th>Correct forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Everyone are confuse.</td>
<td>Everyone was confused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>There was many kinds of animals.</td>
<td>There were many kinds of animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>It only cost IDR 20.000 per hour.</td>
<td>It only costs IDR 20.000 per hour.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 reveals that there are some problems of subject-verb agreement. Students made errors by using the wrong forms of verb in their sentences. Example 1 pointed out that improper to-be was used by the student. The word “everyone” should have been followed by the singular verb “was” because it is a singular pronoun. Whereas, the second example should have made use of the verb “were” since the object was a plural noun. Then, for the last sentence, student should have put a singular verb in the form of “costs” instead of “cost”.

8. Possessive Case

After analyzing 16 recount texts, the researcher could only get 2 errors of possessive case. Those are related to the inappropriate usage of possessive pronoun. The students did not enclose the pronouns whereas they played an important role in order to make the meaning of the sentences more understandable and explicit.

Table 9. Errors related to possessive case and their correct forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Erroneous Sentences</th>
<th>Correct forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I and my family plan to spent last holiday in Kulon Progo.</td>
<td>I and my family planned to spend our last holiday in Kulon Progo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Arriving at the hill, all tiredness gone.</td>
<td>After we arrived at the hill, all my tiredness has gone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows two sentences consisting of the deletions of possessive pronoun. The word “our” was obviously important in the first sentence. The use of that pronoun could make the sentence clearer. By adding that word, the writer could help the readers to gain knowledge about whose last holiday that was mentioned. Similarly, in the second sentence, addition of the possessive pronoun “my” could assist the readers to understand more about the sentence. That word could make the point, which wanted to be shared by the writer, complete in meaning.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that there were five categories which recorded more than 10 errors for each category. The first one, which had the highest percentage of errors, was poor usage of tenses with a frequency of 138 (56.3%). Some errors of this category were about the forms of verb. Students mostly used infinitive forms of verb instead of the past forms. Selecting the correct forms of prepositions were likewise a difficult thing to do by the students since the percentage of inappropriate prepositions was in the second place with a frequency of 31 (12.6%). The result was not quite different from the articles usage which was in the third place. 29 errors were found and categorized as the errors of articles. In this category, students dominantly made errors by adding or omitting an article. These acts also happened when students used singular/plural words. This category, which was in the fourth place, recorded 21 errors (8.6% of the whole error). Then, there was poor usage of irregular verbs in the fifth
place. The researcher found out 11 items (4.5% of the whole error) which could be categorized as errors of irregular verbs.

Besides those categories above, there were three grammatical errors categories which recorded less than 10 errors. Firstly, there was poor usage of adjectives which was in the sixth place of the whole category. 7 errors were found out and classified in this category. The errors commonly were in the form of misformation. Secondly, there was inability to apply the rules of concord. This category was in the seventh place of the whole category and recorded 6 errors. The common errors related to the selection of verbs. The last category, there were errors of possessive case. This kind of error could only be found 2 times. Omission was the problem that caused the students to make this grammatical error.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that students still lack of language knowledge. It can be identified from the amount of errors found in their works. Furthermore, those errors indicated that the students lack of grammatical knowledge. They could not apply the rules of grammar properly.

References


