COMMON STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY WRITING

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Abstract: *Grammar is one of important aspects in learning English. Most students faced difficulties in applying correct grammar in their writing. This study aimed to find out common students' grammatical error in writing. This research was a descriptive research. This study showed that the most common students' grammatical error is in the use of preposition with the percentage 36.8%. The error was commonly caused by the interference from their first language (interlanguage error) and the students' problems inherent within the target language.*

Keywords : Grammar, Errors

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is one of English aspects that is difficult for most students or learners. It has rules that explain how the words are arranged or formed in a language. The mastery of grammar is needed to encounter either spoken or written form. Based on preliminary research, Business English students of State Polytechnic Bengkalis have difficulties in mastering grammar. It was proved by low students' achievement in English Grammar. Most students got low scores in grammar test. Approximately the average score of

Final Semester of Grammar was 56 of 100. Due to the low scores, the researcher who is a lecturer in this polytechnic has tried to vary teaching methods. The lecturer did not only use traditional method but also implemented Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It aims to create various atmosphere of teaching and learning process. It is expected that the students enjoy the class in learning grammar, avoid boredom and monotonous learning process. However, the result was unsatisfied. The students still made many grammatical errors either in

speaking or writing. In writing, the grammatical aspect became serious problems for them because they did not really master it. The errors occurred repeatedly and most students could not correct by themselves. Therefore, Error Analysis should be done by the teacher to help students identify their errors. This research aims to find out students' grammatical errors in writing. The research is supposed to be beneficial for teachers or lecturers who especially teach grammar to get input and know the problems faced by the students so they can help them in learning grammar better.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Error Analysis (EA)

Students who study English as foreign language often face problems. One of the problems is making grammatical mistakes and errors. There is a difference between mistake and error. According to Richard (1985), error is "the use of a linguistic item in a way which fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faulty or incomplete action." Gas and Selinker (2001) maintain that a mistake can be self-corrected while error is caused by inadequate knowledge. Errors made by the students in learning grammar should be analyzed in order the result of analysis can be used to solve students' problems. Sidhar in Zainil (2008) states that in error analysis, problem faced by the students should be focused on several aspects. They are: 1) Overgeneralization. It is a process that learners use generalization. They are not really careful about exception. 2) Performance errors. In this case, the errors happen if the students do not pay attention fully about the language they use. 3) Markers of transitional competence. In solving students' problem of making errors, avoid giving harsh comment because students' competence improves in time.

Furthermore, Zainil (2008) describes that errors made by students can be classified into:

a. Interlanguage errors, which are caused by interference from L1

b. Intralanguage errors, which are caused by the problems inherent within the target language.

c. Developmental errors, which are caused by the process of development in learning.

According to Ellis and Barkuizhen (2005), Error Analysis (EA) "Consists of a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining learner errors. To be more specific Corder in Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) explains some steps in analyzing errors. They are:

1. Collection of a sample of learner language

This step is important to provide data for the Error Analysis (EA). Sample collected should be taken into account in terms of the learner, language and production because the factors can influence the errors observed.

2. Identification of errors

It involves a comparison between learners' sentences and native speakers' sentences in the same context. The errors are sometimes not easy to be identified. Therefore, the identification of errors should include the domain (an error as the breadth of the context; word, phrase, clause, previous sentence or extended context) and extent (an error refer to the size of the unit that needs to be reconstructed in order to repair the errors) of each errors.

3. Description of errors

In this step, the researcher will describe students' errors by specifying how forms produced by learners are different from those produced by native speaker.

4. Explanation of errors.

The sources of errors made by the learners were determined.

5. Error evaluation

This process involves in determining the gravity of errors made by the students.

Grammar

Grammar is important to be mastered. Chin (2000) mentioned that grammar is the sound, structure, and meaning system of language. All languages have grammar, and each language has its own grammar. "Grammar deals with the form of sentences and smaller units such as clauses, phrases, and words (Huddleson and Pulum: 2010). Learning grammar is not easy for some students. They face many difficulties in forming words into correct sentences. As a consequence, their grammar proficiency is low.

The Role of Grammar in Writing

Writing is a skill in which a learner should practice a lot in order he

or she is able to express his or her idea smoothly. According to Nunan (2003:88), writing "As the mental which had physical act of forming letters and words." Writing is an activity that expresses feeling, thought, and some ideas into written form.

Furthermore, Heffernan in Safra (2014) states that writing is an productive and expressive activity. Writing skill needed to be honed regularly because it does not come automatically. In other words, The students should do more practices in order they are able to write well and master the components of writing.

Grammar has a great role in writing "Grammar makes written content more readable and in turn more interesting". However, grammatical errors come in many forms and all can easily confuse and obscure meaning. Some common errors are with sentence structure, subject/verb tense, punctuation, spelling, and other basic mechanics and parts of speech". (Johnson: 2014).

Argumentative Essay

According to Clouse (2004: 365), "an essay is a piece of writing

several paragraphs long instead of just one or two parts." There are three main parts of essay: 1) An introductory paragraph that consists of two main parts namely general statements and a thesis statement. 2) Body that consists of one or more paragraphs. 3) Concluding paragraph that consists of a summary of the main points and the final comment on the subject.

In writing, there are some types of essay. They are narrative, descriptive, argumentative essay, etcetra. According to Coffins, et al (2003), "The argumentative essay is used when learners are demanded to provide greater arguments to source material to prove a particular point, to demonstrate understanding, and show a perspective, a position or stance on something." In addition, Glattorn (1990) states that an argumentative essay is used to tells a certain issue that is supported by the writer's opinion and some evidences. The evidences given can make the opinion become good and strong argument. He further describes that there are some ways to convince the readers. First, a writer gives as many logical reasons as he or she can to show

why it is a good argument. Second, the writer gives as many facts as he or she can to show why it is a good argument. Third, the writer gives an example to illustrate his or her argument. Examples do not prove the arguments. They only illustrate what you mean. Fourth, the writer quotes any authorities that support his or her argument.

Methodology

This study was a descriptive research in which it described the condition of the sample without other interferences. The population of this research was 28 students of the fifth semester students of Business English Study Program of State Polytechnic of Bengkalis. Because the population was not large, all population was taken as sample of this research. In collecting data, the students were asked to write an argumentative essay consisting of 200 words. The topic was "The Effect of Television on Students' Behavior. Then, the researcher analyzed and classified the students' grammatical errors.

Result and Discussion

Having collected the data, it was analyzed by the researchers and two other raters. The grammatical errors analyzed were in the forms of prepositions, tenses, verb agreement, plural/singular nouns, and incomplete sentences. They are presented in the table.1 below:

Table 1. Categories of Grammatical Errors

No	Type of errors	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
1	Prepositions	64	36.8 %
2	Tenses	30	17.2 %
3	Verb Agreement	20	11.4 %
4	Plural/ Singular Nouns	38	21.9 %
5	Incomplete Sentences	22	12.7 %
Total		174	100%

Source : Analyzed Data

From the table above, it can be seen that the most common students' grammatical errors is in the use of preposition with the percentage 36.8%. For examples:

1) "Children imitate what they watch in Television" (Anak-anak meniru apa yang mereka tonton dalam Televisi). The word "dalam" was translated into the word in. It was an error in the term of preposition. The correct preposition was on. It was found that the error was caused by the interference from their L1 which is called interlanguage errors.

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2) Television has bad effect <u>by</u> many people. It can be seen that the word <u>by</u> is misused. Therefore, the correct preposition is <u>for</u>. Such error was caused by the problem faced by the student inherent within the target language which is called intralanguage error.

The result can be discussed more details as in the following:

1. Errors in the use of preposition

The errors in the use of tenses are subcategorized as in the table 2.

Table 2. Errors of prepositions

No	Type of errors	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
1	Omission of preposition	11	17.1 %
2	Addition of preposition	9	14.1 %
3	Misuse of preposition	44	68. 8%
Total		64	100%

Source : Analyzed Data

The table above shows that the errors in the use of preposition among the participants were high, especially errors in the use of the correct prepositions. Many participants used incorrect prepositions for a sentence. They also omitted prepositions for

sentences, or added prepositions to sentences which did not need prepositions. For examples:

a) Television has bad effect <u>by</u> many people. (misuse)

The correct preposition used is <u>for</u>.

b) It makes they don't focus (?) what they do. (omission)

There should be a preposition in the sentence, which is <u>on</u>.

c) …by watching <u>in</u> television. (addition)

The preposition <u>in</u> the sentence should be omitted, because it is not needed.

2. Errors in the use of Tenses

The errors in the use of tenses are subcategorized as in the table 3 below:

Table 3. Errors of Tenses

No	Type of errors	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
1	Present progressive instead of simple present	10	33.3 %
2	Present progressive instead of simple past	3	10 %
3	Simple past instead of simple present	10	33.3 %
4	Past perfect	1	3.3 %

	instead of present perfect		
5	Simple past instead of present perfect	2	6.7 %
6	Simple present instead of simple future	1	3.3 %
7	Simple present instead of present progressive	1	3.3 %
8	Present perfect instead of simple present	2	6.7 %
Total		30	100%

Source : Analyzed Data

The table above shows the total errors made by the participants in using tenses. The participants seemed to be difficult to choose the correct tenses forms for the sentences, so that there were errors occurred in the writing. Here are some examples of errors made the participants:

 a) Television given many interested and favorite program. (simple past instead of simple present).

 The correct sentence should be "Television gives many…"

 b) I have a brother. He was five years old. (simple past instead of simple present)

 The correct sentence should be "I have a brother. He is five years old.", because the writer is telling the present age of her/his brother.

3. Errors in the use of Verb Agreement

The errors in the use of tenses are subcategorized as in the table 4 below:

Table 4. Errors of Verb Agreement

No	Type of errors	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
1	Omission –s/-es ending for third singular subject's verb	16	80 %
2	Singular subject's verbs instead of plural subject's verb	3	15 %
3	Addition of –s/-es ending for verb in negative form	1	5 %
Total		20	100%

Source : Analyzed Data

The table above shows that another error made by the participants is the use of verb agreement. The most major error in the use of verb agreement made by most participants is in omitting the –s/-es endings for the verbs of third singular subject (he, she, it). The examples of sentences containing verb agreement errors written by the participants are:

a) Television usually have many programs…

b) Television give entertainment…

Both sentences above are incorrect because there is no verb agreement between the subjects and the verbs. The subject in the sentences above are the third singular subjects. Therefore, the verbs must be added with ending-s or –es. The correct sentences are:

a) Television usually has many programs… (Change 'have' to 'has' for third singular person)

b) Television gives entertainment…(add –s ending to 'give')

4. Plural/Singular Nouns

The errors in the use of tenses are subcategorized as in the table 5 below :

Table 5. Plural/Singular Nouns

No	Type of errors	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
1	Omission of –s/-es endings for plural nouns	34	89.5 %
2	Singular nouns instead of plural nouns	4	10.5 %
Total		38	100 %

Source : Analyzed Data

The most common error in plural/singular nouns made by the participants in writing is omitting the –s/-es endings for the nouns. The signal words for plural were written, such as several, many, etc., however, there were no agreements between the signal words and the nouns. The participants also used singular noun form, while the sentence needed the plural noun. For examples:

a) On TV, <u>many program</u>… (omission of ending -s)

'many' in the sentence indicated plural. It means that the noun followed must be added with ending –s or –es. So, the correct sentence is 'On TV, many programs…'

b) There are <u>several effect</u>…(omission of –s ending)

'several' also indicated plural. The –s ending for the noun 'effect' should be added. The correct sentence should be 'There are several effects'.

5. Incomplete Sentences

The errors in the use of tenses are subcategorized as in the table 6 below :

Table 6. Errors of Incomplete Sentences

No	Type of errors	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
1	Omission of verbs	15	68.2 %
2	Omission of subjects	3	13.6 %
3	Omission of objects	2	9.1 %
4	Omission of helping verbs	2	9.1 %
Total		22	100 %

Source : Analyzed Data

The table above shows that the participants also made another error in writing, which is incomplete sentence. The analysis concluded that there were many incomplete sentences found. The errors included the omission of verb, subject, object, and helping verb. Here are some examples of incomplete sentences written by the participants.

a) There (?) many effects of television, such as… (no verb)

The sentence is incomplete because the verb is omitted. The correct sentence should be 'There are many effects of television, such as…

b) TV is an electronic (?) that (?) very useful for us. (no and object and to be)

The sentence is incomplete because the helping verb (to be) and object are omitted. The correct sentence should be 'TV is an electronic device that is very useful for us.

Conclusion

Students often face difficulties in learning grammar. It is because many rules and formulas must be remembered in grammar. The purpose of this research was to know the most common students' grammatical error in argumentative essay writing. From the result, it can be concluded that the most common students' grammatical error is in the use of preposition (36.8%). The error was caused by the interference from their L1 (interlanguage error) and the students' problems inherent within the target language. Therefore, the result of this study is expected to be an input for language teachers to help learners to avoid the interference errors and solve students' problem in learning target language.

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