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Grammatical Errors in English Descriptive Essay

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Abstract

The current research was conducted at a high school (SMAK Harapan Denpasar) located in Indonesia. It aims to analyze grammatical errors in descriptive writing of grade X students and analyze the factors that cause these errors. The data was taken from descriptive writings about family members. It was collected through the linguistics field technique. Next, it was analyzed by the surface strategy taxonomic theory that proposed by Dulay et al. This theory classified errors into omissions, additions, misformations, and misorderings. The sources of errors were analyzed by the interlanguage and intralingual errors proposed by Richard. The result of the study shows that there are 248 errors. The errors consist of 147 omissions, 79 misformations, 45 additions, and 13 misorderings. The sources of errors are interlanguage and intralingual factors.

1. Introduction

Language is a tool for communication that plays an important role in our daily lives to express our ideas or opinions to others (Dan et al., 2021). According to ONeill & Russell (2019), language is a series of sounds produced by the human speech apparatus, while Richards & Bohlke (2011) state that language is the most effective and complete communication to convey our feelings, intentions, ideas, messages, and opinions to others.

Mastery of language skills, especially English as the international language, is one of the important assets to be ready to compete in the digital era (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015, Ghorbani, 2020). Even the Covid-19 pandemic that the people of Indonesia felt in general and Bali, in particular, impacted the acceleration of technology. Online activities replace some activities. People are required to be able and quickly understand the use of technology. The sophistication of information and communication technology can make people communicate more easily with the international communities. It makes the competition increase. The younger generation at this time is the generation with the stages of productive age. The role of language and the ability to communicate, especially in international language, is crucial.

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English consists of four skills, namely reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills. Competence in the language must be supported by a correct grammatical understanding to convey information or ideas without misunderstanding. Apart from speaking, writing is another way to express thoughts or ideas. Writing is not an easy skill to master, especially for students who rarely use English to communicate daily. In mastering these skills, students will not avoid mistakes during learning, both grammatical errors, word spelling, sentence formation, and others. Errors can be caused by a lack of knowledge about the use of English or due to the influence of the first language (Dulay et al., 1982; Corder, 1982). These errors cannot be ignored. Teachers should be able to analyze the errors made by students because, as stated by Saville-Troike (2012), error analysis is the first approach to studying second language acquisition. By knowing mistakes, teachers can correct those mistakes so that students can improve their competence.

Learning English in schools, especially at SMAK Harapan Denpasar, gets more attention from the Perguruan Kristen Harapan Foundation because English is a bridge between Harapan schools and sister schools in Australia, Singapore, and Thailand. To keep the cooperation intact, the closer and all the cooperation programs run smoothly, of course, must also be supported by the students' ability to speak English. In addition, English is an international language that is very necessary for students to master as a strength to continue to higher education levels and to be able to compete after they graduate from school.

English lessons, especially grammar, are being taught to students from elementary school to university. Grammar is often considered boring and difficult for students to learn because there are many rules that students must understand and remember. Therefore, students often make mistakes in applying grammatical rules in forming words, phrases or sentences, spoken or written. This study analyses grammatical errors in English descriptive essays of grade X *MIPA 1 SMAK Harapan* students and analyses the factors that cause the errors.

2. Theoretical Basis

The grammatical errors referred to in this study consist of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. This type of error is following the surface strategy taxonomy presented by Dulay et al. (1982). A student in mastering English, especially in learning to form sentences, may omit words or morphemes that are actually needed in the sentence or even add morphemes that are not needed in the sentence (James, 1998; Zanches, 2021). Students may also use the wrong form of a morpheme or misuse it in the intended context and there is also the possibility of being wrong in stringing words or ordering morphemes so that the sentence is wrong or cannot be understood. Through surface strategy taxonomy, in this study, students' errors in forming and assembling words to form phrases, clauses or sentences become a descriptive essay.

The descriptive essay is a text that describes an event or an object very clearly so that the reader seems to be able to feel or see the object. Writing descriptive essays using the simple present tense. According to Quirk et al (1985), the simple present tense is used to express routine or habitual activities, eternal state truths or general statements that are timeless and also current circumstances and to instantaneous state events.

The grammatical errors found were analyzed using the error analysis theory of Richards (1974) to find the factors causing errors in descriptive essays written by students. Richards (1974) states that errors can occur due to two factors. That factor is the interference of the first language to the second language (interlanguage errors) and students' competence in the second language is still low (intralingual errors).

3. Research Method

The linguistics field method (Garvin, 2019) was used to obtain data. The first data is a descriptive essay with the topic of family members written by students of grade X MIPA 1 SMAK Harapan. This school is located on Jalan Raya Sesetan Denpasar- Indonesia. The second data results from interviews collected to obtain information related to the factors that cause errors in student essays.

The data collected was analyzed using the method proposed by Sudaryanto (2015), using the surface strategy taxonomy theory from Dulay et al. (1982) to analyze the errors found. Data analysis is supported by advanced techniques to include errors in omission, addition, misformation and misordering. Factors causing errors were analyzed using the theory of interlanguage and intralingual errors from Richards (1974) and combined with interviews.

4. Discussion

The grammatical errors found in students' essays were analyzed based on the surface strategy taxonomy, which classifies errors into four types; omission, addition, misformation, and misordering (Dulay et al., 1982). the factors causing the errors were analyzed using the theory from Richards (1974). Based on the causes, errors are categorized into two; interlanguage and intralingual errors.

3.1 Grammatical Errors

Based on the results of the analysis, 284 errors were found. The errors consist of 147 omissions, 45 additions, 79 misformations, and 13 misorderings. The errors are discussed descriptively with grammatical references from Quirk et al. (1985) and Swan (2016).

3.1.1 Omission Errors

An omission is a form of error that removes an item that should be in a sentence. In this study, several omissions were found in sentences and phrases written by students in their essays. The omission errors are the omission of the copula be, omission of article a/an/the omission of -s/es for plural markers, omission of 's for possession, omission of -s/es in third-person singular verbs, omission of prepositions, omission of auxiliary verbs, omission of -er for the comparative level, omission of the main verb, and omission of the subject. The following are examples of sentences containing omission errors.

No	Omission Errors	Incorrect Sentences	Correct Sentences
1	Copula be	He_ really a strong man	He <u>is</u> really a strong man
2	Article	She is __ very simple woman	She is <u>a</u> very simple woman
3	-s/es for plural marker	Four brother_	Four brother<u>s</u>
4	‘s for possession	My mother_ name is Ni Wayan Partini	My mother<u>’s</u> name is Ni Wayan Partini

5	-s/es in third person singular verbs	He always support_ me	He always supports me
6	Preposition	He does not work because he still _ school	He does not work because he is still in school
7	Auxiliary verb	His_ not working	He doesn't work
8	-er for comparative	Rainer is tall_ from me	Rainer is taller than me
9	Main verb	Every day always _ up early for cooking give breakfast for family	She always gets up early to cook breakfast for her family every day
10	Subject	__ has two children	He has two children

Tabel 01.
Omission Errors

3.1.2 Addition Errors

Addition is a form of error that adds certain items that are not needed in the sentence. The addition errors found are the addition of articles, the addition of auxiliary verbs (be, have), the addition of modal verbs, the addition of -s/es as a plural marker, the addition of 's, the addition of -er, the addition of prepositions, and the addition of -ed. The following are examples of sentences that contain addition errors.

No	Addition Errors	Incorrect Sentences	Correct Sentences
1	Article	He has a slanted eyes	He has slanted eyes
2	Primary verb	She is have one sister and four brother	She has one sister and four brothers
3	Modal verb	After that she would study until around 6 PM	After that, she studies until around 6 p.m.
4	-s/es for plural marker	She has 3 childrens	She has three children
5	's	I love my father's	I love my father
6	-er	She is stronger girl	She is a strong girl
7	Preposition to	She go to travelling with my father	She goes travelling with my father
8	-ed	Let me introduced you, I Ketut Darmayasa, he is my father	Let me introduce to you, I Ketut Darmayasa, my father

Tabel 02. Addition Errors

3.1.3 Misformation Errors

Misformation is an error that occurs due to the use of inappropriate morpheme forms. Misformation errors found in students' essays were grouped into several categories; subject pronouns, object pronouns, verbs, prepositions, articles, possessive pronouns, singular/plural, and gerunds.

No	Misformation Errors	Incorrect Sentences	Correct Sentences
1	Subject pronoun	Me help him too if him need help	I help him too if he needs help
2	Object pronoun	You can call she Komang	You can call her Komang
3	Verb	She have two bags	She has two bags
4	Preposition	In Monday	On Monday
5	Article	She is the stronger girl and kind	She is a kind strong girl
6	Possessive pronoun	He hobby is doing draw	His hobby is drawing
7	Singular/plural	My mother is a kind hearted women	My mother is a kind hearted woman
8	Gerund	His hobby is play games	His hobby is playing games

Tabel 03. Misformation Errors

3.1.4 Misordering Errors

The last type of error is misordering. This error is caused by placing a morpheme or group of morphemes in an incorrect position or order in a sentence. The following are some examples of sentences containing misordering errors found in students' essays.

No	Incorrect Sentences	Correct Sentences
1	Name my mother is Rai Sudiani	My mother's name is Rai Sudiani
2	She works at hospital Sanglah	She works at Sanglah hospital

Tabel 04. Misordering Errors

3.2 Sources of Errors

Two factors cause errors in learning English. First, errors caused by the influence of Indonesian on English which is known as interlingual errors. Second, errors caused by students' lack of competence in the field or subject of English itself called intralingual errors. Intralingual errors are divided into three categories; overgeneralization, *ignorance of rule restrictions* and

incomplete application of rules. The following is a detailed explanation of the factors that cause errors found in the English descriptive essays of grade X MIPA 1 SMAK Harapan students.

3.2.1 Interlanguage Errors

Interlanguage errors occur due to interference from the first language in this case Indonesian to the target language, English. Sudipa et al. (2011) stated that interference can affect the success of oral and written communication. Examples of incorrect sentences caused by Indonesian interference: "He very love swimming". The first language, Indonesian, influences the error in the sentence. The student brings the structure of Indonesian into English and intends to write "dia sangat suka berenang". However, "sangat suka" is directly translated into "very love". In English, the phrase "very love" is incorect. This causes an error in the sentence. In this case, the word “much” is omitted. The Sentence should be written “he loves swimming very much”.

3.2.2 Intralingual Errors

Intralingual errors are caused by the students' lack of English competence. There are three categories of intralingual errors; over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions, and incomplete application of rules.

a. over-generalization. This error is caused by the implementation of the incorrect new structure as a result of the students' experience in learning English. Example sentences: “He is always play ping pong ball”.

b. ignorance of rule restrictions. This error is caused by a lack of understanding of students in applying the rules in composing sentences so that students apply a structure in an inappropriate context. For example: “He was born on Denpasar”.

c. incomplete application of rules. This error is caused because students compose several sentences incompletely. Example: “My mother works in Kuta”.

5. Conclusion

The grammatical Errors found in the English descriptive essays of grade X MIPA 1 SMAK Harapan students were 284 errors. Most errors are omission errors with a total of 147 errors. Next, it is the misformation error with a total of 79 errors. The other kind of error is the addition which occur 45 times. The least errors found are misordering with a total of 13 errors. Omission errors consist of omission of the copula *be*, omission of article *a/an/the*, omission of *-s/es* for plural markers, omission of *'s* for markers of possession, omission of *-s/es* on third-person singular subject verbs, omission of prepositions, omission of *auxiliary verbs*, omission of *-er* as a comparative, omission of the main verb, and omission of the subject of the sentence. Addition errors consist of adding articles, adding *primary verbs*, adding *modal verbs*, adding-*s/es* as plural markers, adding *'s*, adding *-er*, adding prepositions *to*, and adding *-ed* to verbs. Misformation errors consist of subject pronouns, object pronouns, verbs, prepositions, articles, possessive pronouns, singular/plural nouns and *gerunds (-ing).*

The cause of the error is interlanguage and intralingual factors. The interlanguage factor is the influence of the first language, Indonesian. Students bring the rules in Indonesian into English. Students also bring the habits in using Indonesian into writing descriptive essays in English. The second factor is the intralingual factor which is the influence of lack of competence on the language being studied, English. Students applying the wrong new structure resulting from their experience in learning English. Students also apply English structures in inappropriate contexts so that errors

occur. In addition, students apply the rules incompletely, resulting in the omission of morphemes or words that are needed in a sentence.

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