ERROR ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH ESSAYS MADE BY
THE FIFTH SEMESTER OF ENGLISH STUDENTS
AT FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY

Adil Fitra¹, Yusrita Yanti², Nova Rina²
E-mail: adilfitra1617@gmail.com
¹English of Department, Faculty of Humanities, Bung Hatta University
²English of Department, Faculty of Humanities, Bung Hatta University

ABSTRACT

The study attempts to investigate the errors found in English essays written by 15 students. The subjects of this study were the fifth semester of English students at Faculty of Humanities, Bung Hatta University. This study uses qualitative method as basic of the research. The aims of this study is to identify the types of errors in the grammatical categories found in the essay writing tasks, as well as analyzing the categorizations of errors that cause to happen the interference of L1. There are some theories used to guide me in analyzing the data, they are Corder (1974) as a founder of error analysis states that error analysis is the part of investigation in learning process of language, Yanti (1997), Gass, (2013). The results show there are a number of types of errors, such as (1) tenses, (2) spelling, (3) gerund, (4) word choice, (5) word order, (6) the verb be. The errors were identified based on the error categorizations, such as from the sentence level errors, the element errors, and the main errors or the source of errors.

Keywords: error analysis, interference, grammatical categories, learning process.

INTRODUCTION

English has been an international language that some people around the world might understand it well, even though it is not a mother language for some countries, especially in Indonesia. English is a second language for this country. However, it is not all of Indonesian people that are able to use English in an exact way. They should learn how to use English well in daily life. In order to create the accurate English, it is an obligation for people to learn what it is called as “grammar”.

Grammar constitutes one of the steps in learning a language because it consists of the rules that describe structural forms of a language. That is what the experts explain in their book within giving a definition of grammar. Swan (2005, p. xix) mentioned in his book, “Grammar is the rules that show how words are combined, arranged, and changed to show certain kinds of meaning”. Furthermore, Harmer (1983, p.12) also stated that “grammar is the description of the ways in which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentence in that language”. From the both experts’ statements mentioned above, they hint that grammar totally defines to create certain kinds of meaning of words or sentence and lead to make a proper sentence in the rules of the language.

For the beginners, such as Indonesian students, it is probably hard to use the English grammar when they combine a sentence in accordance with the existed rules. It happens because they have not mastered all of the grammatical rules. Sometimes, the biggest obstacle of incapability of students in writing is that they are confused to match between Indonesian grammatical style and English grammatical style. Therefore, the usage of English grammars should be learnt, concerned, and comprehended well by Indonesian students.

Writing texts in English actually is a thing that can be either said ‘easy’ if we master
the grammatical rules or ‘hard’ if we have lack knowledge of them. Even if we have no paying attention of the rules, it can arise some misinterpretations against the texts that we have written.

Nevertheless, it is still regarded as a normal thing as long as students keep learning and practicing how to form a sentence in a correct way. As Norrish (1983, p. 27) stated (as cited in Komala, 2014) “it’s natural for the students as human being to make error, even many native speakers produce many mistakes in speaking and they would be unaware of the way they speak unless they heard recording of themselves” Therefore, making mistakes in learning English is something usually happened when we are speaking or writing in English language.

There are previous researches that become insipiration of this study. Yanti, Y. (1997), in her thesis, studied about the error analysis in communication strategies. She described the kinds of errors in which she found them on the conversation in Minangkabau speakers in the transcripts.

The research related to error analysis in students’ writing has also inspired the writer done by Darus, & Subramaniam (2009). Sawalmeh (2013) does a research through the case of students of the Preparatory Year Program. He concludes based on the discussion of the findings and the examples described that the students in writing English essays committed ten common errors, such as verb tense, word order, subject/verb agreement, pronouns, spellings, capitalization, prepositions, articles, double negatives and sentence fragments. He says that it can also happen because the most of the students tried to transfer their L1 (first language) that can make them hard to fit.

The previous research that the writer has also seen is from Hsu (2013) in which he studied about the cause of grammatical errors and his research goes to the ESL teachers and learners. Another research done by Thomas (2014). He studied the use of English tenses by the first year of Engineering Students. He found that The writer takes a conclusion that mon errors done frequently by the students as L2 (second language) learners, such as tenses (present tense, present perfect tense, present continuous tense, present perfect continuous tense, past tense, future tense, sequence of tenses, conditional clauses in tenses). Komala (2014) in her thesis studies the usage of wrongly English tenses from junior high school students.

Research Questions

1. What are the types of errors in grammatical categories found in the essay writing tasks of students of Bung Hatta University?
2. What are the categorizations of errors made by students of Bung Hatta University in their essay writing?
3. Is there any interference between first language and second language? If yes, in what form?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Error Analysis

According to Gass (2013), error analysis is the analysis method in linguistic field in which the errors of a learner’s will be compared with the TL (target language) form. Error analysis sees the learners’ errors by doing some procedures to accurately correct them considered grammatically wrong. Corder as a founder of error analysis in SLA (Second Language Acquisition) also stated in his book (as cited in Mohideen, 1996):

"The study of error is part of the investigation of the process of language learning. In this respect it resembles methodologically the study of the acquisition of the mother tongue. It provides us with a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and may give us indications as to the learning process." (Corder, 1974, p. 125)

The study of error becomes a process to enhance the ability of students to upgrade their writing and speaking skills. This process can also be guidance for the second language learners (L2) to reduce and avoid the errors during learning. In hope, they can more realize that the
grammatical studies are significant for them to sharpen and advance their L2 skills.

**The Procedures of Error Analysis**

There are some procedures of errors according to Ellis (1997), the procedures involved in each of the steps are:

a. **Identifying Errors**
   To identify errors, we need to compare the learners’ sentence written with what is considered to become the correct sentences in the target language which fits them.

b. **Describing Errors**
   After all the errors have been identified, they can be described and classified into types of errors. There are several ways of doing this. One way is to classify errors into grammatical categories. For example, we could gather all the errors relating to verbs and then identify the different kinds of verb errors in our sample of errors in the past tense.

c. **Explaining Errors**
   After identifying and describing errors, we need to explain why they occur. When we try to explain them, the explanation should be extensive, systematic and, predictable.

**Second Language Acquisition**

People who learn the second language automatically have undergone the concept of Second Language Acquisition. According to Ellis (1997), Second Language Acquisition is the way people in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue: inside or outside of a classroom, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as the study of this. In general, English as a second language in Indonesia has been easily learned by people via any media, such as newspaper, television, radio, even social media (like Facebook, Google Plus, Twitter, etc.) are the best way to learn the second language fast.

**Contrastive Analysis and Interference**

Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) involves between two languages; first language (L1) and second language (L2) in order to recognize the errors that will be made by L2 learners. This statement is strengthened by Gass (2013) stating that CAH is a method of comparing languages in order to predict what errors of a learner that will be made and to alienate what should be learned in an L2 learning situation.

Contrastive Analysis, according to Ellis (1997), is “a set of procedures for comparing and contrasting the linguistic systems of two languages in order to identify their structural similarities and differences”. It can be concluded that this method results from the existence of negative transfer from L1 that becomes one of the sources of errors so that it influences L2 acquisition. When L1 learners are accustomed to try to transfer their mother language to the L2, the negative transfer (another term of interference) would be the largely errors sources. Here is the description of the interference when it occurs:

![Interference Diagram]

The scheme described above shows that there is a confluence of two languages in which L1 often influences L2 so that it emerges the case of the interference. It happens because the L1 learners still need to adapt their habits to learn the L2 acquisition. For instance, most of Indonesian students are still befuddled to make a sentence in English within determining the third person singular in simple present tense. Some of Indonesian students make this kind of error: “Education have great role in human life”. In Indonesian language, there is no alteration of verb to follow the third person singular. That is why many Indonesian students frequently deal with this grammatical dissimilarity.

**Errors and Mistakes**

There are distinctions between errors and mistakes in error analysis. Corder (1967) (as cited in Hsu, 2013) stated that mistakes are categorized as non-systematic errors out of chance circumstances, while errors are
systematic errors which often occur in second language learning.

Gass (2013) also affirmed what Stephen Pit Corder said in his book that mistakes are able to be recognized by the learners and correct it if necessary. Whereas, errors are systematic that occur repeatedly and are likely to be not recognized by the learners.

**Categorizations of Errors**

Errors are categorized based on basic types. There are two main error types within an error-analysis framework as Gass (2013) stated: interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Interlingual errors are those that can be attributed to the NL. It means that there is negative transfer resulting from L1. Intralingual errors, on the other hand, are those that can be attributed to the TL. They refer to language being learned, independent of the NL.

Corder (1967) (as cited in Khanom, 2014) has categorized the errors into: overt errors and covert errors. “Overt errors are unquestionably ungrammatical at the sentence level and covert errors are grammatically well-formed at the sentence level but are not interpretable within the context of communication”.

Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982) (as cited in Garrido & Romero 2012) categorize 4 taxonomy of errors in which learners modify target forms: *omission*, *addition*, *misformation* and *misordering*. Omission errors is an element that should be present but it has been omitted. Addition is the existence of an element that should not be any part of the sentence or utterance. Misformation is the misuse of the form of morpheme or structure. Misordering is incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance.

**METHOD OF RESEARCH**

Qualitative inquiry is the method of the research. Glesne & Peshkin (1992, p.7) explains that the qualitative inquiry allows qualitative researchers to approach the complexity of social interaction, to respect it in its own right. In addition, according to him, qualitative researchers avoid to simplify social phenomena, so they instead explore the range of behavior and expand their understanding of the resulting interactions.

The approach of this study is the syntactic approach. As defined by Yule (2010), the word “syntax” comes originally from Greek and literally means “a putting together” or “arrangement.” It means that syntax is the study that focuses on the rules of words.

**Source of Data**

As reported by Arikunto (2016, p. 129), paper is source of data which consist of words, sign, pictures, and video transcription. The data of this research are taken from the writings of students of Bung Hatta University at fifth semester in the Academic Writing class.

**Technique of Data Collecting**

Documentation is chosen as technique of data collecting. According to Arikunto (2006) technique of documentation is searching data about things by using documents such as notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, magazine, and journal.

A number of data are taken from the assignments of students of Bung Hatta University in Academic Writing Class. Then, it is identified in their tasks which sentences that can be the source of data. The final step is highlight the data considered as errors and typing them via computer in order to be clear data.

**Technique of Data Analysis**

The technique of data analysis will be done based on the Stephen Pit Corder’s techniques in doing error analysis (in Ellis, 1997). First, the data are identified by comparing the learners’ written sentences with what has been considered as errors. Second, the error will be described by classifying the errors from grammatical categories such as tenses, spelling, gerund, word choice, word order, and the verb be. The final step is by explaining the errors with the extensive, systematic, and predictable explanation.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The subjects of study consist of fifteen students from their essay writing tasks. The errors made by students are in the use of (1) tenses, (2) spelling, (3) gerund, (4) word choice, (5) word order, and (6) the verb be.

• Tenses

According to Swan (2005, p. 25), “tense is a verb form that shows the time of an action, event, or state”. It means that the tense helps determining when the action, event, or state occurs.

1) *a) Everyday#, the teacher always taught the different topics.

b) Every day, the teacher always teaches the different topics.

In this example (1a), there have already been two errors here done by student (1). First, it can be seen that there is misformation type of verb tense because this sentence has two simple present tense signs that the student uses it as past tense. This sentence uses adverb of time ‘every day’ and ‘always’ becoming one of the characteristics of simple present tense. Every single verb in present tense uses v1. For the third person singular, it should add ‘-s/-es’ as the suffix. Taught is v2 used in past form. Therefore, it cannot be put in present form.

Second, the student means to explain when it usually happens. This is why the student applies the word ‘everyday’ in this sentence. But, it is the adjective form since there is no space between the word ‘every’ and ‘day’. Therefore it should need a space between both of words. From the errors detected, it can be seen that this is included to overt error because this sentence is clearly ungrammatical. From the source of error or the main error, this can be also categorized as intralingual error since it relates to the student’s skill in learning L2. The example (1b) corrects the error occurring to (1a).

2) *a) Children’s social skills are will be increase VT while attend the class.

b) Children’s social skills will increase when they attend the class.

In example (2a), it can be seen that there is wrong form of future tense made by student (7). The student puts two kinds of verb be that they are not required in this simple verb form, such as ‘are’ and ‘be’. The verb be ‘are’ cannot be present in this sentence since it is intended to make form of simple future. On the other hand, the verb ‘be’ is not required in this sentence because it is not followed by V3 or adjectives.

If it is seen by the element error, it belongs to addition due to the existence toward both of the verb be. From the source of error, it can be categorized as intralingual error, as it more relates to the learning process of the student in which the student does not recognize the kinds of verbs. At the sentence level error, it is included to overt error because it is grammatically incorrect. Therefore, the example (2b) corrects the errors by omitting those verbs that position in the wrong place.

• Spelling

According to Coulmas (1996), spelling results from the conventions which determine how the graphemes of a writing system are used to write a language.

3) *a) People especially SP a teacher begin to invite their student to study in outdoor like in a field/park.

b) People, especially a teacher, begin to invite their student to study outdoors like in a field/park.

In the example (3a), there has been misformation of word here made by student (2). Because the student has not mastered the English vocabulary, the student is still wrong to spell the word ‘expecially’. ‘Especially’ has no meaning in English. ‘Especially’ is the correct word to express the idea.
From the element error, this error is included to overt error because it can be seen clearly. There is no sign of interference in this error because it is included to intralingual error relating to the student ability learning L2. Therefore, the student should change the word as the correct one is in the example (3b).

- **Gerund**

Haryono (2002) stated that gerund is verb used or has function as noun. In other words, this is a verbal noun.

4) *a) The characters of mother are **manage** GER **all necessity which** at home, and **teach** GER or **give** GER motivation children in study so that the children **more** conscious in study and get best **prestation**.

   b) The character of mother are **managing all necessities** at home, and **teaching or giving** motivation children in study so that the children **is** more conscious in study and get best **achievement**.

In the example (4a), student (14) tries to explain the characters of mother. Then, this is not proper if he gives explanation in the simple form of verb. Therefore, he has to change it as a gerund by adding ‘ing’ as the suffix, as shown at the example (4b). This can be said that in the example (4a), this is included to misformation as one of error types because it is incorrect to put simple form of verbs when they have position as nouns.

From the source of error, this error results from interlingual error because if it is translated into Indonesian, it will have no change for the simple form of verb, that is the reason why the student still gets influenced in sense of Indonesian language. Besides, at the sentence level error, it is included to overt error because it is not a well-ordered sentence.

- **Word Choice**

Wingersky, Boerner, & Holguin-Balogh, (2009, p. 120) states that “Word choice often determines whether or not you get your message accross”. It hints that a sentence meaning is determined by the accuracy of word choice.

5) *a) **Preschool** WF usually decorate the class with colorful objects.

   b) **Preschool students** usually decorate the class with colorful objects.

In the example (5a), student (7) is still not aware of placing the adjective properly. ‘Preschool’ is included to adjective. In fact, adjective cannot be placed as a subject in a sentence. To correct it, the student should make it as a noun phrase as shown at the example (5b) to make sense of what message the student wants to deliver in his writing.

From the element error, this can be categorized as omission error because the student omits what should be there in a sentence. This is also included to overt error because it is incorrect grammatically. In addition, the source of error his results from as intralingual error because the error results from TL, and is independent of NL as well.

- **Word Order**

Word order is a grammatical signal which follows the rules of syntax. Meyers (2005) states that “the location of a word can determine its function, and the word order of a sentence determines its meaning” (p. 231)

6) *a) Why **does** Ø education **must** be taught since on kid **periode**?

   b) Why **must** education **be taught** since on kid **period**?

In the example (6a), student (10) does not know how to use auxiliary verb in the interrogative sentence. There have been two errors here. First, from the element of error, what it is called as misordering occurs because it is wrong to place the auxiliary verb ‘must’ after the subject ‘education’.

In addition, the student adds the auxiliary verb ‘does’ that is not needed because the auxiliary ‘must’ is more representative to be
used. This second error is called as addition. This can be categorized as intralingual error because the student still learns how to write in a grammatically structural way. Therefore, the example (6b) corrects the error which occurs to (6a).

- **The Verb Be**

  Azar (2002) states that a sentence with the verb be as the main verb has three basic patterns, they are; be + a noun, be + an adjective, be + prepositional phrase.

  7) *a) She **sure** to the children.

    b) She is sure that she **has been** already close to the children.

  In the example (7a), there are two adjectives here. However, there is no indication that supports to happen to form a sentence. Every adjective as predicate should follow ‘to be’ in order that a sentence is well-ordered. First, the adjective ‘sure’ follows the linking verb ‘is’. Second, the adjective ‘close’ is begun with the adverbial time ‘already’. Therefore, it is one of the characteristics in the present perfect tense that will have the formula (has + been) to the third person singular shown at the example (7b).

  From the main error or the source of error, it can be categorized as interlingual error because it seen by the error made student (3), it results from the interference of NL in which it has no need of the verb ‘be’ to be followed by adjective words in Indonesian language. At the sentence level error, this is included to an overt error because it is wrong grammatically in a whole sentence.

**TABLE OF ERROR ANALYSIS**

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**Discussion**

The errors are identified based on the error classifications. The errors are mostly found in tenses. Some students are still confused to use the appropriate tenses, especially in simple present tense in which it becomes the most found errors among the other sub-error type, such as; simple future tense. Meanwhile, the error classification of the verb be is included to the most found errors after the tenses.

Moreover, some students do not use the appropriate words in their writing or, in other words, it correlates to the word choice. From the analysis, the writer concludes that some students are erroneous to use the right words contextually...
and grammatically. After analyzing the spelling of the student in their writing, it can be found that some students still do not know how to make the correct spelling of words. It proves that the students have not mastered the English vocabularies. Some students are also difficult to understand the use of gerund. Sometimes, the students use it as verbs, but they are no longer verbs as the suffix ‘–ing’ turns them into nouns. In addition, interference of L1 gets bound in creating sentences written by students in this class because it is difficult for some students to adjust English written style with Indonesian written style.

From the categorization of sentence level error, most of the students do some errors concretely or it can be given the term as overt error. It has proven that the students, in this Academic Writing class, are still lack of capability to make grammatically correct and well-ordered sentences. On the other hand, the covert error becoming one of the sentence level error is not identified. It means that the students still have a number of constraints in writing grammatically.

Based on the element error, misformation is the most element that causes some errors to occur. The second rank of element error belongs to omission in which some students do this within creating their writing. Meanwhile, misordering and addition are also involved in the students’ writing, even though they are a few to be discovered.

Based on the main error becoming the source of error, it can be found that most of the errors result from the intralingual error. It means that the errors occur due to the learning process of the students making their writing skills unsuccessful yet. On the other hand, the rest of other errors come from the interlingual error in which it involves any kind of interference from L1 to happen.

**CONCLUSION**

The result of this study shows the errors in terms of (1) tenses, (2) spelling, (3) gerund, (4) word choice, (5) word order, (6) the verb be. From the result of analysis, it has been identified that the errors are mostly found in tenses. The rest of errors belong to the verb be, word choice, gerund, word order, spelling based on the rank amount of errors.

Most of the students made some errors at the sentence level known as overt error. It means that the student cannot write their writings grammatically and well-ordered. On the other hand, the covert error becoming one of the sentence level errors is not identified. It means that the students still have a number of constraints in writing grammatically.

There are four elements of errors done by students based on the theories of experts. Omission is the most element that causes some errors to happen. Misformation has become the second rank of element error in which some students do this within creating their writing. Besides, misordering and addition are also involved in the students’ writing, even though they are a few to be discovered.

Furthermore, the source of errors mostly result from the intralingual error that means the errors occur due to the learning process toward L2. In contrast, interlingual errors which is the source of error from L1 is not many to be detected in the Academic Writing class.

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