

# AN ANALYSIS OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS MADE BY THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS AT SMAN 7 PADANG IN WRITING A PERSONAL LETTER

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to describe the types of grammatical errors in the context of omission, addition and misordering made by the second year students at SMAN 7 Padang in writing a personal letter. The population of this research was the second year students at SMAN 7 Padang. The total number of population members of this research was 274 students and the number of sample members was 64 students. It was chosen by using stratified cluster random sampling technique to get representative sample. The instrument used to collect the data was writing test. To know the reliability of the test, the researcher used inter-rater technique. The reliability index of the test was 0.94. The researcher found that in general (51,55 %) made error in omission. The researcher also found in general 7,81% students made error in addition. Then, in misordering the researcher didn't find the grammatical error made by second year students at SMAN 7 Padang. Referring to the results of this study, the researcher conclude most frequently errors made by the students were omission of be and omission of plurality, followed omission of article, and then followed by omission s/es as the third singular person and addition of verb form. Relating to those conclusions, the researcher suggests students have to practice more in writing personal letter so they can be aware of making kind of grammatical errors. Then, teacher should give more explanation and more exercise about grammar structure in order to make students have enough knowledge and able to use them correctly, and for the next researcher is suggested to study the factors causing students make errors in writing.

**Key Words : Analysis, Grammatical Error, Writing, Personal Letter**

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## Introduction

As an international language, English is used as a means of communication with other people in almost all over the world. There are so many people who learn English from time to time. In Indonesia, for example, English is taught at every level of school from junior high school until

college on purpose of making students to be able to communicate in English.

As we know that in learning English, there are four language skills that should be possessed by student, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. There are also several aspects of English that should be learned by students, such as grammatical structure, vocabulary and pronunciation. If

someone wants to become success in learning English she/he has to pay attention to these aspects.

As already discussed above, writing is one of language skills that students must be able to apply it. Writing skill is more and more important nowadays. Becoming a proficient writer is one of the major objectives of many students, especially for those who want to become members of international business, administrative or academic communities (Tribble 1997:8)

If we talk about writing, grammar is one of the most important aspects that should be considered. In other words, so if we want to write something in English we should pay attention to grammar. According to Thornburry (1999 : 1 ) grammar is a description of the rules that govern how language constructions are formed. Grammar attempts to explain what sentences are acceptable. Ozbek in article of Murrow (2004) says that although grammar “is the first prerequisite for effective writing”, students are unable to make use of the grammar they know in composition courses.

Writing a personal letter is a communication media to share

information or telling something to a friend in written form. In writing a personal letter the students must be able to use present tense and past tense. Then also they have to be able to differentiate between regular and irregular verb. In other words, if they want to make a personal letter they have to understand first about present and past tense. They just pay attention to the meaning of the letter and they don't focus on grammar.

Based on the results of the researcher's observation conducted on February 1, 2015 at SMAN 7 Padang, she found that there were many students who still got confused of using the correct grammar in writing. Most of them got difficulty to determine what verb that they have to use in writing a personal letter and they were unsure about the kinds of tenses they should use. Not every verb should be ended with -d or -ed. They should be able to differentiate between regular and irregular verb in writing personal letter.

A good writing will occur when the writers use the correct grammar so that other people understand about what they write. However, there are several common grammatical errors made in writing. According to Erdogan (2005:

264) errors fall into four categories: omission of some required element; addition of some unnecessary or incorrect element; selection of an incorrect element; and misordering of the elements.

The researcher limited her analysis into writing skill, of personal letter and she focuses on grammatical errors. In grammatical error the researcher focused on (1) omission, focusing on omission of plurality –s, omission s/es as third singular person, omission of be, omission of article, and omission of gerund (2) addition, focusing on addition of verb form, and addition of suffix –ed on irregular verb. And (3) misordering, focusing on misordering of modal auxiliary, and misordering of adjective made by the second year students at SMAN 7 Padang in writing personal letter, but the researcher did not focus on selection.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was designed to describe grammatical errors made by the second year students at SMAN 7 Padang in writing personal letter. The design of this research was descriptive research. According to Gay (1987:189) descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions

concerning the current status of the subject of the study. In short, descriptive research is used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied.

The population of this research was the second year students of SMAN 7 Padang. They have learned about personal letter. The total number of population members was 274 students. They were distributed into seven classes of exact science; (IPA 1, IPA 2, IPA 3, IPA 4, IPA 5, IPA 6 and IPA 7) and two classes of social science; (IPS 1 and IPS II).

In this research, the researcher used stratified cluster random sampling technique. Gay (2009:127) says that stratified sampling is a way to guarantee desired representation of relevant subgroups within the sample, some populations can be subdivided into subgroups, known as strata. The researcher used stratified sampling because the population consists of two majors (exact and social science). She used cluster sampling technique because the members of population were distributed into several classes. The researcher used random sampling technique because the population was homogenous: The members of population used same curriculum,

syllabus, material, and were taught by the same teacher.

In choosing the sample, the researcher wrote the name of each class on nine pieces of paper. Then she put them into two different boxes, one box for exact science and another box for social science. Then after mixing them, she took a piece of paper from each box. The classes that were selected to be the class sample were class IPA 1 (32 students) and IPS 1 (32 students). All the members of the class sample became the sample of this study.

The instrument of this research was writing test. The procedures to do the test are as follows. First the students have been asked to choose one of the five topics provided by the researcher. The topics are *unforgettable experience, my last weekend, my new friends, my daily activity, and their own topic*. Next the researcher gave time around 30-45 minutes to write a personal letter.

The researcher used content validity to see the validity of the test. According to Gay (1987:129) content validity is the degree to which a test measures an intended content area. To have content validity, this test was constructed based on curriculum, syllabus and teaching materials of writing subject used at SMAN 7

Padang. To make sure, the test was consulted with the teacher who teaches English subject on the second year at SMAN 7 Padang.

For the reliability of the test, the researcher used inter-rater technique. Inter-rater technique occurs when two or more assessors are consistent in identifying errors in writing. It means the test was analyzed by two assessors, by applying the same standards in identifying errors of writing test. The use of two assessors was needed to minimize the subjectivity in scoring.

The researcher used pearson product moment formula to find out the coefficient correlation of number of errors given by first and second scorer:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n \sum xy - (\sum x) (\sum y)}{\sqrt{\{n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2\} \{n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2\}}}$$

Where:

- $r_{xy}$  = the coefficient correlation between x and y variable.
- n = the total number of students.
- x = the number of students' errors identified by first assessor.
- y = the number of students' errors identified by second assessor.
- x = the total number of students' errors identified by first assessor.

y = the total number of students' errors identified by second assessor.

According to Gay (2009) a test that has reliability index : 0,70 or bigger is called reliable. The result of data analysis showed that the reliability index of this test was 0,94 (see Appendix 2). It means that this test was reliable, and it could be used as instrument to collect the data of this study.

### **Techniques of Collecting Data**

To find out the types of grammatical errors made by the second year students in writing a personal letter, the researcher collected the data by doing following steps:

- a. The researcher asked the students to do the test in 30 minutes
- b. The researcher asked collects the sheet of writing task
- c. The researcher copied the sheet of writing task
- d. The first and the second assessor identified the types of grammatical errors made by the students based on the criteria.

- a. The researcher identified students' grammatical errors in writing personal letter
- b. The researcher recorded students' grammatical errors in writing personal letter.

### **Techniques of Analyzing Data**

In analyzing the data, the researcher analyzed the students' grammatical errors by using the following steps:

1. The researcher counted total students who made grammatical error for every type of errors.
2. The researcher used the formula below in counting the percentage of the students who made grammatical error:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = the percentage of students' grammatical error

F= frequency of students' grammatical error

N= number of students

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Findings**

In this findings, the researcher presented data and analysis. The data consisted of the result of the analysis of grammatical errors in writing personal

letter was given to the sample (64 students).

And the result of this finding can be seen on Table below:

**Kind of Errors**

No	Kinds of Grammatical Errors	Percentage	Total Number of Students who made Errors
1.	Omission of Errors	51,55 %	33
2.	Addition of Errors	7.81 %	5
3.	Misordering of Errors	0 %	0

**Types of Grammatical Error by**

**Omission**

After analyzing the data, the researcher found that in general 33 (51,55 %) students made error in omission. There were five types of grammatical error in omission. They were omission of plurality –s, omission of –s /es as third singular person, omission of be, and omission of article. To make clear, the findings on omission errors made by the students were presented in detail as the followings:

a. Omission of Plurality -s

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 8 out of 64 students (12,50%) omitted –s in plural noun (see Appendix 6). It means that they still did not understand the importance of ending –s showing plurality for regular noun.

Example:

*You have a lot of new friend*

*My family go holiday to Bandung for three day*

The correct sentences are:

*You have a lot of new friends*

*My family went holiday to Bandung for three days*

b. Omission of –s/es as Third Singular Person

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 1 out of 64 students (1,56%) omitted –s/es as third singular person in writing personal letter, so the student was still difficult to make the differences in using simple past tense and simple present tense. (see Appendix 6). It means that only on students still did not understand about the use of s/es as third singular person.

Example:

*She want to get married next month*

*She always give me some letters*

The correct sentences are:

*She wants to get married next month*

*She always gives me some letters*

c. Omission of Be

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 19 out of 64 students (29,68%) omitted be in their sentences (see Appendix 6). It means that the students still got

confused about omission of be in nominal sentence.

Example:

*I hope you always fine there*

*How your school?*

The correct sentences are:

*I hope you are always fine there*

*How was your school?*

d. Omission of Article

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 5 out of 64 students (7,81%) omitted article in writing personal letter (see Appendix 6). It means that most of the students did not understand about use of –article.

Example:

*This is good news about her*

*There is farewell party there*

The correct sentences are:

*This is a good news about her*

*There is a farewell party there*

e. Omission of Gerund

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher did not find this kind of error because there were no students using gerund in writing personal letter.

### **Types of Grammatical Error by Addition**

After analyzing the data, the researcher also found in general 7,81% students made error in addition. In

addition error, the researcher grouped this error into two kinds:

a. Addition of verb form

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 5 out of 64 students (7,81%) made error in addition verb form in their sentence while writing personal letter. It means the students are understanding in using verb form in verbal sentence.

Example:

*I am want to tell you about my unforgettable experience*

*I am miss you so much*

The correct sentences are:

*I want to tell you about my unforgettable experience*

*I miss you so much*

b. Addition of suffix –ed an irregular verb

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher didn't found that the sample made error in addition of suffix –ed an irregular verb in writing personal letter.

### **Types of Grammatical Error by Misordering**

After analyzing the data, the researcher didn't found the students who made errors in misordering. The kinds of misordering error are as follow:

a. Misordering of modal auxiliary

From the result of the data analysis, the researcher did not find error in misordering of modal auxiliary writing personal letter.

b. Misordering of adjective

From the result of the data analysis, the researcher also didn't find errors in misordering of adjective.

## Discussions

### Grammatical Error by Omission

Writing is communication to understand each other through written form. As already discussed previously, the researcher found that the students have grammatical errors in omission in writing personal letter. According to Erdogan (2005:264) the grammatical error usually made by the students is omission, consisting of omission of plurality –s, omission of s/es as third singular person, omission of be, omission of article, and omission of gerund. The students made grammatical errors because they did not have enough knowledge and probably did not do enough practices of using them in writing, and also they do not understand about the grammatical structure in writing, so they still made grammatical errors.

a. Omission of Plurality –s

This study also found that some students made grammatical errors in omission of plurality –s in writing personal letter was 12,50%. It indicates that there were still some students who did not have knowledge of making nouns become plural. To illustrate, the followings are the examples of error in omission of plurality-s made by the second year students in writing personal letter.

- You have a lot of new friend (error )  
You have a lot of new friends (correct)
- Are there also some of youth organization there? (error )  
Are there also some of youth organizations there?(correct)
- My family went holiday to Bandung for three day(error )  
My family went holiday to Bandung for three days (correct)

b. Omission of s/es as third singular person

The next finding of this study was only one student made grammatical error by omission in s/es as third singular person writing personal letter. That indicates that most of students understood in using s/es as third singular person.

- She always give me some letters (error)



She always gives me some letters(correct)

- She want to get married next month (error)

She wants to get married next month (correct)

c. Omission of be

The result of grammatical error made by the second year students in writing personal letter, it was 29,68% students. It means that the highest error beside grammatical error in omission of plurality –s. The researcher assumed that the students still got confused in using verb or be in sentences.

- You happy to live there? (error)

Are you happy to live there? (correct)

- I hope you and your family good (error)

I hope you and your family are good (correct)

d. Omission of article

Based on the result of percentage grammatical error in omission of article, the students made error 7,81% students. It means that only a few of students made error in omission of article.

- This is good news(error)

This is a goodnews(correct)

- He is good man (error)

He is a good man (correct)

e. Omission of gerund

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found 0% .it means that the students did not make error omitted gerund in writing personal letter. The researcher assumed that the students understand about the use of gerund.

### **Grammatical Error by Addition**

Based on Erdogan (2005:264) states that not only error in omission, but the students usually made error in addition. Where, addition is adding something that no need or not important for the sentence. Addition divided into two types as follow:

a. Addition of Be

The students make error in verb form 7,81 %. The students still add certain items which are not applied in grammar. To make it clear, the followings are the example of errors in addition of be made by the second year students in writing personal letter;

- I am want to visit you and your family...(error)

I want to visit you and your family (correct)

- I am hope you will reply my letter quickly (error)

I hope you will reply my letter quickly (correct)

b. Addition of Suffix –ed on Irregular Verb

Based on the data analysis, there is no students of the second year students made error in addition of suffix –ed on irregular verb.

### **Grammatical Error by Misordering**

Misordering is also kind of grammatical error made by the second year students in writing personal letter. Actually in misordering error the students did not faced the difficulties. Misordering in this research divided into two types, they were:

a. Misordering of modal auxiliary

Based on the data analysis, the researcher did not find the grammatical error in misordering of modal auxiliary in writing personal letter. It assumed that the students knew well about modal auxiliary.

b. Misordering of adjective

In misordering of adjective also no students made error.

Based on the findings and discussions above, the researcher had found out the kind omission, addition, and misordering errors made by the second year students at SMAN 7 Padang in writing personal letter. In term of omission errors, they had errors in omission of plurality –s, omission of s/es as third singular person, omission of be, and omission of article. In term of

addition error, they had error in addition of verb form. While in term of misordering error, they had error in misordering of adjective. And the most error that the students had was error in omission of be and plurality -s, then followed by omission of article and addition of verb form. Finally, followed omission of s/es as third singular person.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **Conclusions**

- a. The second year students at SMAN 7 Padang made grammatical errors in writing personal letter.
- b. The students made errors in kind of omission (51,55%), addition (7,81%) and misordering (0%).
- c. The most errors made by the second year students were omission of be and omission of plurality, followed by omission s/es as the third singular person, and then followed omission of article.

### **Suggestions**

Based on the conclusion of this study, the researcher wants to give some suggestions;

- a. Students need to practice more in writing so they can be aware of

making kind of grammatical errors in their writing especially in writing personal letter.

b. Teacher should give more explanation and more exercise grammar structure in order to make students have enough knowledge and able to use them correctly.

c. The next researcher is suggested to study the causes of errors made by the students in writing.

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