GRAMMATICAL ERROR ON EFL STUDENTS' ARGUMENTATIVE WRITINGS: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

A study on error analysis is an important way to see the ability of the students in the foreign language learning process, particularly in writing. This is also very meaningful to enrich the method of teaching particularly teaching English as a foreign language. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the grammatical errors in the students' argumentative writings and to find the most frequent errors made by the students. There were thirteen students of the International Program argumentative writings used as the data in this study. This study is very important because the students will do their final project in the English language. The data were analyzed based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy which includes omission, addition, misformation, and misorder. The finding shows that all students made grammatical errors in their argumentative writing. The finding showed that there were 13 errors of misformation, 12 errors of omission, 7 errors of addition, and the last was 1 error of misorder. The most frequent error was the error of misformation. This finding is expected to be used as a reference for the teacher in planning the lesson to improve the understanding of the students in argumentative writing.
Keywords: EFL students, Argumentative writing, Grammatical errors

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an important skill that need to be learned in foreign language learning. Writing is one way to express the language in the form of letters, symbols, or words. Through writing, people can communicate or express their idea, however, the meaning of the writing must be cleared in order to avoid the misunderstanding of the readers, and this is very important to be noted by the writer. English foreign learners usually find it difficult to start their writing in their mother tongue, and it is more difficult to write in foreign language. Before writing, it is very important to understand the sentence structure of the target language.

Grammatical error usually occurred in students' writing because of their lack understanding. Brown (2001) stated that grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence(Brown, 1985). The grammatical error can be minimized by understanding the basic sentence of the target language.

Besides understanding the grammar of the target language, the most important thing is the students must practice writing regularly. It needs an effort in arranging words into good sentences, and to develop them into paragraph. This is not only transforming our thought or idea in written form but also it relays to the process of

rereading and revising our writing, monitoring a single words or features that we have written and the process of rereading our writing. It means that the process of writing is not simple, it takes time and a well plan to make a good writing and to be able to understand by the readers.

The complexity of writing activity requires systematic and well-ordered thinking that must be mastered by students and which finally will be the way of their behavior (Gonye et al., 2012)(Jairos Gonye, 2012). Writing can be learned by practicing it and can be a good habit that can influence the way of thinking of the writer. Hagemann (2003) stated conventions as the use of standard written English, involving correctness in sentence formation and structure, grammar, usage, and mechanics that include capitalization, punctuation, and spelling(Hagemann, 2003). This is an avoidable ting that the foreign language learners not making error in their writing, however by involving correctness in sentence formation and structure will help to decrease the errors.

University students must be dealt with more than one types of writing, such as narrative, descriptive, and argumentative writing. However, it is confirmed by the researchers that argumentative writing is the hardest model in writing (Ferretti, Andrews-Weckerly & Lewis, 2007; Neff-

va Aertselaer & Dafouz-Milne, 2008)(Ferretti et al., 2007). The purpose of an argumentative writing is to give or describe the argument. Therefore, before started an argumentative writing, the writer have to do an observation or small research regarding the topic to be able to give the argument.

To improve the writing particularly an argumentative writing, study on error analysis is considered important to be done to help the foreign language learners understand the grammar and structure of their target language. According to Mahmoodzadeh (2012), Error Analysis could be defined as a procedure used to identify, categories, and explain the errors committed by Foreign Learners/L2 learners(Mahmoodzadeh, 2012). Error Analysis also deals with the how people learn and use a language (Al-Khresheh, 2016). Moreover, identifying such difficulties can therefore help English Foreign Learners/English Second Language teachers pinpoint their students' weaknesses and hence revise their teaching methods and learning materials accordingly(Al-Khresheh, 2016). The practical aspect of error analysis is its function in helping to the improve action it must take to correct an unsatisfactory state of affairs for learner or teacher(Oshima & Hogue, 2007). It means that this is useful

for both learners and teachers in improving the writing ability by analyzing the errors of the learners then the teachers can decide the method and the study plan in teaching in order to avoid the same errors in the future.

As the error made by the students, it is also important to see their source of error. According to (Smith, 2001), interference, the Contrastive Analysis insists, is the result of unfamiliarity with the rules of a Target Language and psychological causes, such as inadequate learning. The different of grammar including the sentence structure between the students' first language and their target language can cause the error. While, the similarities between the first language and the target language help them easily to understand the pattern of the target language.

There are numbers of relevant studies that conducted the error analysis on writing. Based on the previous research, the common errors which repeatedly appear were verbs (Thresia, 2015). Another research found that the most frequent errors the verb tense, errors in the article, wrong word order, noun ending, and sentence structure (Alghazo & Alshraideh, 2020).

Hence, the aim of this study is to investigate the grammatical error of the students' argumentative writing. This study must be done as a reference in teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

There is a hope that an advance study on the same area can be done to enlarge the teachers' references in the future.

RESEARCH METHODS

The participants of this study were the undergraduate first year students' Academic Year 2021/2022 of Dual Degree Program ITB STIKOM Bali. They were thirteen students as the subject of this study. Their argumentative essays were used as the instrument of this study to be analyzed to see the grammatical error they made on their argumentative writing. They were given an assignment to write an argumentative writing. The assignment was given after the teacher explained and gave them an example on how to write an argumentative writing with the correct grammar. Students made about one paragraph with the same topic as it was given. The surface strategy taxonomy was applied in analyzing the grammatical errors by (Dulay, H. B., Burt, M. & Krashen, 1982). The data analysis is presented in the form of tables. The qualitative descriptive method is used in presenting the results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the students' errors is presented in this part. The surface strategy taxonomy which includes omission, addition, misformation, and

misorder were applied. The findings are in the following tables.

1. Omission

According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982: 154), an omission is an error type which is characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance.

Table 01. Omission

Student	Number of Error	Error	Suggestion
1	1	… they do not go directly to <u>school</u>.	… they do not go directly to <u>the school</u>.
2	1	…when doing online learning such as signal interference, device <u>limitations</u> and others.	… when doing online learning such as signal interference, device <u>limitations,</u> and others.
3	1	Because this is <u>online learning system</u> of course the student …	Because this is <u>an online learning system</u> of course the student …
	1	… they can't follow the lectures that well, and even <u>not</u> attend the lecturer.	… they can't follow the lectures that well and even <u>do not</u> attend the lecturer.
	1	For some subject that have a tutorial class, <u>not running</u> effectively.	For some subject that have a tutorial class, <u>are not running</u> effectively.
	2	And <u>beside</u> all of that, <u>it also</u> hard sometimes …	And <u>besides</u> all of that, <u>it is also</u> hard sometimes ...
7	1	Students <u>also</u> able to replay the materials …	Students <u>are also</u> able to replay the materials …
	1	From all of <u>that</u> it is hope this learning system …	From all of <u>that,</u> it is hoped this learning system …
8	1	The learning system currently applied, <u>namely</u> the online learning system has advantages and disadvantages.	The learning system currently applied, <u>namely,</u> the online learning system has advantages and disadvantages.
9	1	While social interaction can be <u>key</u> for some, ….	While social interaction can be <u>a key</u> for some, …
11	1	In my <u>opinion</u> online learning has 2 different views …	In my opinion, online learning has 2 different views …
Total	**12**		

Based on the above table of omission, there were twelve errors made by six students. There were omissions of determiner, punctuation, auxiliary verb, preposition, and to be. The dominant errors were made by student three and student

seven made two errors. The other students made one error. This error is usually happened when the students are lack of understanding the rule in their target language. The omission of determiner such as 'a' and 'the' can be happened because of there are not exist in the students' first language. Students usually forget to put a determiner in front of a noun. The important of putting a determiner is to define what a noun is. The same thing as the error of omission of auxiliary verb, there is no equivalent in their first language as well.

Auxiliary verb is used when there is a negative form of sentence, such as 'do not'. The use of 'to be' usually forgotten as well since there is not exist in the students' first language. The use of 'to be' is important to be put in front of an adjective word.

2. Addition

According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982: 156), an Addition is a type of error which is characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in well-formed utterance.

Table 02. Addition

Student	Number of Error	Error	Suggestion
1	1	… many students <u>who</u> abuse the ease to laze.	… many students abuse the ease to laze.
	1	… to do online learning <u>so as to</u> impose their parents' economy especially during pandemics like this.	… to do online learning <u>to</u> impose their parents' economy especially during pandemics like this.
4	1	… we must do our learning in our house <u>via</u> online.	… we must do our learning in our house online.
5	1	… there are also many people <u>who</u> work, including me.	… there are also many people work, including me.
7	2	One of the things that I like from this learning system <u>are</u> the students able to learn from the place that makes them <u>to</u> be more comfortable so they'll able to focus.	One of the things that I like from this learning system <u>is</u> the students able to learn from the place that makes them be more comfortable so they'll able to focus.
12	1	… for those <u>of us</u> who are majoring in IT.	… for those who are majoring in IT.
Total	**7**		

From the above table, there were found eight errors of addition. There were six students made the errors. The addition errors were in relative clause, to be, preposition, and verb. Student one made two errors but, the other students made only one error. This type of error can be happened because of the interference of the students' first language.

3. Misformation

According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982: 158), Misformation errors are characterized using the wrong form of structure or morpheme.

Table 03. Misformation

Student	Number of Errors	Error	Suggestion
1	1	Behind it all, of course, the government considers online learning <u>is</u> the best choice …	Behind it all, of course, the government considers online learning <u>as</u> the best choice …
3	3	Also, some of the <u>student</u> might be not comfortable with this system because it can make some of the <u>student</u> hard to understand all the <u>subject</u> that have been taught.	Also, some of the <u>students</u> might be not comfortable with this system because it can make some of the <u>students</u> hard to understand all the <u>subjects</u> that have been taught.
	1	… the student needs a stable internet to follow all the <u>class.</u>	… the student needs a stable internet to follow all the <u>classes.</u>
	1	Some <u>student</u> sometimes had a bad signal …	Some <u>students</u> sometimes had a bad signal …
	1	For some <u>subject</u> that …	For some subjects that…
	1	…sometimes for the <u>lecturer</u> because they can't supervise the students properly.	…sometimes for the <u>lecturers</u> because they can't supervise the students properly.
4	1	We also can't do a tutorial for some of the <u>subject</u>.	Suggested sentence: We also can't do a tutorial for some of the <u>subjects</u>.
6	2	… the students that <u>does</u> not have a portable laptop but instead <u>has </u>a non-portable desktop PC at home can also partake in online learning.	… the students that <u>do</u> not have a portable laptop but instead <u>have </u>a non-portable desktop PC at home can also partake in online learning.
7	1	Online learning is one of the great learning <u>system</u> …	Online learning is one of the great learning <u>systems</u> …
	1	From all of that it is <u>hope</u> this learning system …	From all of that it is <u>hoped</u> this learning system …
Total	**13**		

Based on the above table, there were found thirteen errors of misformation, and this is the dominant errors made by the students in this research of argumentative writing. The errors were made by five students. Student three made seven errors, student seven made two errors, but the other students just made one error. The misformation errors were in misformation of to be, plural noun, auxiliary verb, and the use of modal verb.

This type of error can be happened because the students' lack understanding for some rules in their target language.

4. Misorder

According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982: 162), error of missorder is the type of error that is characterized by the incorrect placement of morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance.

Table 04. Misorder

Student	Number of Error	Error	Suggestion
13	1	Maybe the current learning that is done online in my opinion is less effective because students don't get special attention from the lecturers who teach, students also can't be free to ask the lecturers or maybe some of the students have problems with internet fees or network disruptions, I hope a pandemic in Indonesia ends quickly so that students can learn effectively.	In my opinion, maybe the current online learning is less effective because students do not get special attention from the lecturers. Students also cannot free ask the lecturers because some of the students have problems with internet fees or network disruptions. I hope a pandemic in Indonesia ends quickly, so the students can learn effectively.
Total	**1**		

Based on the above table of misorder, there was found that the error made only by one student. It seems that the student was confused in making and structuring the sentences into one paragraph. The student made writing in the form of paragraph, but only consists of one long sentence. Therefore, the meaning was not clear and quite difficult to understand.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that there were grammatical errors made by the students in their argumentative writings. Based on findings of this study, it was found that there were four types of grammatical errors on the students' argumentative writings. They were misformation, omission, addition, and misorder. The error of

misformation was the dominant errors among the other three grammatical errors that occurred on the students' argumentative writings. It was followed by the error of omission, addition, and the last one was misorder. The most frequent error was the error of misformation.

The lack of understanding the target language and the interference of the students' first language can cause the errors. Since writing an argumentative essay is difficult and complex skill to be mastered, it is better to give the students the regular exercises on a various topic with an interesting method of teaching.

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