INVESTIGATING GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDENTS' ABSTRACT WRITING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY AT UNIVERSITAS MAHASARASWATI DENPASAR

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Abstract

Scientific writing requires several compulsory elements and writing an abstract is one of them. Writing an English abstract has become a requirement in various both national and international journals. Writing an abstract becomes vital as it grasps the content of the scientific writing general. Thus, an abstract should be accurate, clear, brief, and specific. In the process of writing an abstract, errors could possibly occur due to differences in the language system between the learners' first and second language. This qualitative study aimed to investigate types of grammatical errors made by English Literature students in writing abstracts for their theses at Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar. It involved 26 abstracts taken from the students' theses. The data were collected by both observation and documentation method. This study applied the theory of surface strategy taxonomy by Dulay, et al. (1982) in analyzing the data. From the results of the analysis, four types of grammatical errors were found with a percentage of omission of 60%, addition of 19%, mis-formation of 13%, and mis-ordering of 8%. The results signified the persistence of grammatical errors among seventh-semester students, highlighting the need for further attention and improvement in the abstract-writing skills of English Literature students at Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar.

Keywords – *grammatical error; scientific writing; surface strategy taxonomy*

Introduction

Scientific writing holds significant importance in facilitating the communication and sharing of research discoveries within the academic community. Mastering academic writing is crucial for university students in Indonesia since it is particularly important for various academic purposes such as composing essays, papers, project reports, articles, journal entries, and theses (Utami & Mahendra, 2021). It is a detailed and factual composition of a specific lenght, forming an integral part of scientific work that encompasses research findings, discussions, and conclusions. The primary objective pf scientific writing is to be published (Hermawan, 2019). Additionally, it adheres to well-defined conventions related to format, citation, design, voice, tense, conciseness, and organization, which can differ from writing in other contexts (Day & Sakaduski, 2023). Moreover, meticulous adherence to these conventions is crucial in maintaining the integrity and clarity of scientific communication.

The standardized format ensures that scientific writings are presented in a consistent manner, allowing readers to navigate through the content with ease. Citations play a pivotal role in acknowledging the contributions of previous research and providing a foundation for the current study (Hunter, 2006). The design and voice of scientific writing contribute to the professionalism and objectivity of the discourse, establishing a tone that is both authoritative and impartial. Tense is carefully chosen to accurately depict the timeline of the research

PROCEEDINGS
LITERATES
INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR
LINGUISTICS, LITERATURE, CULTURE, AND ARTS
e-ISSN : 3025-9002
UNMAS DENPASAR

process, enhancing the precision of the conveyed information. The emphasis on conciseness ensures that the essential details are conveyed efficiently, while the organization of the content follows a logical structure that aids comprehension. Therefore, the conventions governing scientific writing not only facilitate publication but also contribute to the overall effectiveness of communicating research within the academic realm.

Indonesia's academic landscape is enriched by a wide array of scholarly journals that cover various disciplines (Steinhauer, 2013). Mastering linguistic intricacies in academic journals can benefit local scholars in several ways (Hossain, 2024). Firstly, it enhances their ability to effectively communicate and engage with the global academic community, thereby fostering international collaboration and knowledge exchange. Secondly, it allows local scholars to navigate and comprehend the contextual nuances and pragmatic aspects of academic writing, which are essential for interpreting and contributing to scholarly discourse. Additionally, proficiency in the language of academic journals, particularly English, can increase the visibility and impact of local research, as English-language publications often receive more citations and reach a broader audience. Therefore, mastering linguistic intricacies in academic journals is crucial for local scholars to actively participate in the global academic arena and ensure the recognition and influence of their research.

The increasing number of Indonesian scholarly journals and the growing interest in research have led to the development of a diverse range of academic publications in the country. However, one aspect that may hinder the visibility and credibility of these journals is the presence of grammatical errors in their abstracts, which can negatively impact the perception of the research and the journal itself. Abstracts providing a snapshot of the study's objectives, methodology, findings, and conclusions (Hartley & Cabanac, 2017). In the context of Indonesian scholarly journals, a thorough examination of grammatical accuracy within abstracts becomes essential. The quality of abstracts significantly influences the perception of research professionalism and impacts the overall comprehension of the scientific content.

Grammatical errors can make the abstracts difficult to understand, leading to confusion and misinterpretation of the research findings. Additionally, grammatical errors can create a negative impression of the author's language proficiency and attention to detail, which can further impact the perception of the research and the journal. An abstract riddled with grammatical errors may cast doubt on the credibility of the research, potentially leading readers to question the thoroughness of the investigation. Grammatical errors in the abstract can impede comprehension, creating confusion and hindering the effective communication of the research outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to address grammatical errors in the abstracts of Indonesian scholarly journals to enhance their quality and credibility.

Several studies have been conducted to investigate this issue. Arniatika (2019) aimed to investigate the types and frequency of grammatical errors in articles' abstract writings of Indonesian Scholarly Journals. This research applied the theory of surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Burt and Kipsarsky. This research found that there were four categories of errors: omission, mis-formation, addition, and mis-ordering. The most common errors mostly omission by the percentage of 50% while misformation error was the least common error with the percentage of 10% (Arniatika, 2019). Wulandari (2022) aimed to know the grammatical

errors found in the articles' abstracts of scholarly journals published by one of Indonesian Islamic State Colleges in 2008-2010. The study found that there are 172 items of grammatical errors, with the most frequent type being omission (41.9%), followed by misformation (33.1%), addition (15.7%), and misordering (9.3%) (Wulandari, 2022).

Recognizing the importance of grammatical precision in abstracts, this study aims to investigate and analyze the prevalent grammatical errors in the abstracts of scientific writing within English Literature students at Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar. By identifying and understanding these linguistic challenges, the research intends to contribute valuable insights to language improvement initiatives in academic writing in Indonesian scholarly journals and inform strategies for improvement. Addressing grammatical errors in abstracts not only enhances the clarity and coherence of scientific communication but also plays a crucial role in elevating the standards of scholarly publications in Indonesia. Moreover, by understanding the frequency of grammatical errors allows for a more nuanced evaluation of their prevalence, enabling researchers and journal editors to gauge the extent of linguistic challenges present in the scholarly discourse. Through this analysis, the research endeavors to provide a foundation for targeted interventions that will contribute to the enhancement of grammatical accuracy in the abstracts of Indonesian scientific writing.

Methods

This study aimed at investigating the types of grammatical errors found in the abstract of scientific writing of Indonesian scholarly journals at Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar. This study was designed to comprehensively explore and understand the types of grammatical errors made by English Literature students when writing abstracts for their theses at Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar. The research methodology that employed in this research was a case study using a qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative research is a comprehensive approach that emphasizes interpreting the complexities of human experiences as well as understanding phenomena that experienced by research subjects holistically (Lexy & Moleong, 2011).

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select a representative sample of thesis abstract. The research data presented in this study were derived from the selected abstract of undergraduate theses in English Literature Study Program at Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar for the academic year 2021-2022. This deliberate sampling approach ensured that the selected abstracts effectively capture the diversity and depth of research within the English Literature academic domain. Purposive sampling technique is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher intentionally select participants based on certain criteria or characteristics relevant to the research question (Tongco, 2007). The criteria for selection include diversity in topics and linguistic proficiency levels to ensure a holistic representation of the students. The selected abstracts undergo meticulous content analysis, focusing on the grammatical errors based on the surface approach taxonomy theory proposed by Dulay et al. (1982) in which the errors are grouped into four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

Finding and Discussion

Mastering writing is considered the most intricate skill among other language skills, as it involves the proficiency in various components that students need to acquire (Brown, 2004). Academic writing may pose a greater challenge than creative writing for numerous university students in Indonesia who are learning English as a foreign language. Due to English not being their primary language, these students may encounter difficulties and make errors (Utami & Mahendra, 2021). In academic writing, composing is considered the most challenging skill for students learning English as a second language or as a foreign language (Cunningham & Harris, 1994). This is happened because writing in a foreign language is not a skill acquired naturally or through self-learning; instead, it is an ability that requires a continuous process, time, and practice.

Writing proficiently is not an easy task for EFL students. Moreover, the challenge extends beyond expressing thoughts; it also involves arranging ideas coherently into a structured piece of writing (Utami & Mahendra, 2021). Students need to attain proficiency in five key elements to create a well-structured text: spelling, grammar, punctuation, coherence, and the organization of ideas (Brown, 2004). Grammar is a subsystem within the organization of language where meaningful units come together to form larger units or combinations of phrases that make up a sentence (Fasold & Connor-Linton, 2006). In the process of second language acquisition, making errors is common, especially in grammatical errors as it is regarded as a part of learning a second language or foreign language.

Error analysis is an approach used to examine the process of language learning (Corder, 1981). Additionally, error analysis as a technique for scrutinizing errors made by learners in speech or writing (Dulay et al., 1982). It refers to mistakes made in assembling words into larger units, including phrases, clauses, and sentences. These errors can also be characterized as inaccuracies occurring at the morphological and syntactical levels. Syntactical errors impact larger textual units beyond individual words, encompassing phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs, and these errors include issues related to phrase structure, clauses, and sentences (James, 1998).

It is further stated that errors have four types, they are linguistic category, surface strategy taxonomy, comparative analysis and communicative effect (Dulay et al., 1982). In this research, the data were analyzed by using the Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy (1982). Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy, there are four types of errors found in the even chapters: error of omission, error of addition, error of selection, and error of ordering. (Dulay et al., 1982). The result showed that omission had 28 errors, addition had 22 errors, misformation had 26 errors and misordering had 10 errors as seen in the following table.

Table 1. Frequency of Errors

Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage
Omission	28	32.5%
Addition	22	25.5%
Misformation	26	30%
Misordering	10	12%
Total	**86**	**100%**

The result in Table 1 showed that the highest rate of error happened in ommision (32.5%) and the lowest rate happened in misordering (12%). First, omission is a type of errors which are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance (Dulay et al., 1982). In other words, omission takes place when required grammatical morphemes or content morphemes are not present in a phrase, leading to seven subtypes: prepositional omission, article omission, to-be omission, conjunction omission, marker omission, verb omission, and pronoun omission. Second, addition is the type of error is contradictive to the previous one. Addition is a type of errors which are characterized by the presence of item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance (Dulay et al., 1982). There are three types of addition errors have been observed in this research: double markings, regularizations, and simple addition with the total percentage of errors was 25.5%.

Misformation errors were found with the total percentage of 30%. The students failed to use past verbs for something that happened in the past. According to the theory, misformation are those characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure (Dulay et al., 1982). Misformation is divided into three forms: regularization, archiforms, and alternating forms. Regularization errors happens when a regular marker is substituted for an irregular one, the archi form happens when there is an incorrect form of demonstrative temporal adjectives in English, and alternating form happens when the writer fail to construct proper forms. The last type of grammatical error that was found and become the least frequently found type of grammatical error in the data was misordering. Misordering is characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance (Dulay et al., 1982). This type of error found

Conclusion

The investigation into grammatical errors in English literature students' abstract writing at Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar reveals the significant challenges these students face in mastering writing skills, especially in an academic context. Academic writing, being more demanding than creative writing, poses a greater hurdle for Indonesian university students learning English as a foreign language. The findings, analyzed using Dulay's Surface Strategy Taxonomy, illustrate the prevalence of four types of errors: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Omission errors, characterized by the absence of necessary elements, proved to be the most frequent, highlighting challenges in producing a well-formed utterance. The analysis further uncovered that misformation errors, constituting 30% of the total errors, were manifested through the students' struggle to use past verbs accurately. The categorization of misformation into regularization, archiforms, and alternating forms provides insight into the specific challenges students face in constructing proper forms. The overall conclusion underscores the complexity of writing proficiency for English literature students at Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar and advocates for targeted interventions and teaching strategies to address the identified grammatical errors. The insights gained from this study contribute to the broader understanding of language learning challenges and offer valuable implications for enhancing writing skills among EFL students in an academic setting.

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