

THE FREQUENT ERRORS OF THE STUDENTS' WRITING OF WIDYA DHARMA UNIVERSITY KLATEN IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/2015

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Abstract : The purpose of this study is to identify frequent errors in the written texts made by students of Widya Dharma University Klaten in academic year 2014/2015. This study was categorized into a case study since it limited the participants to the students of second semester in Widya Dharma University Klaten. The data sources of the research were written texts made by the students. The data were students' errors, which were analyzed through classification, frequency counting, and description.

The finding of the study shows that there were forty three errors made by the students in their written texts. These errors can be classified into eleven types of errors. These are associated with the use of verbs (25.6%), punctuations (4.6%), articles (16.3%), prepositions (2.3%), plural/singular nouns (14%), spellings (14%), pronouns (9.4%), parts of speech choices (4.6%), word orders (2.3%), word choices (4.6%), and miscellany (2.3%). The most frequent error is related to the verb uses and the least frequent errors are related to the prepositions, word orders, and miscellany.

Keyword : error, writing, student's writing

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one subject which have to be learned by the students who are majoring English Education Study Program in Widya Dharma University Klaten. Students are expected to acquire writing, besides listening, reading, and speaking. In writing activities, the students deal with grammar, cohesion, coherence, editing, and revising. It is a fact, however, that mastering those materials is not an easy job for them. Many teachers still look for the best method in order to help students acquire the writing ability.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher conducted an observation in English Education Study Program in Widya Dharma University Klaten in order to find out the students' writing ability. It can be seen that their written texts contained many errors. The texts showed problems in the use of articles, tenses, prepositions, parts of speech, and word choices. They still had difficulty applying grammar rules and making

errors in writing texts. Although, they had learned grammar rules, types of texts, and how to make written texts.

Based on the problem above, this study is aimed at identifying errors in the students' written texts. The researcher determines common errors made by the students in their written texts and classifies those into some categories. More specifically, this study is focused on error analysis of students' written works. Analyzing those errors is important since it can explain why the students make those errors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Errors

An error is a faulty performance both in speech and writing which shows an incorrect system or an incomplete learning (Brown, 2000). The term faulty indicates a deviant form which is not appropriate with the rules of the system. Committing errors does not

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mean everything goes wrong, but it reveals incomplete learning since the learning process does not finish yet. Here, there is no intention of committing errors or producing deviant forms since the learners do not realize them. Intention is a key feature in determining what errors are. Errors are also defined as unintentionally deviant languages and are not self-corrected by its author (James, 1998). Since they are unintentionally deviant or the learners do not know whether they are errors or not, the learners cannot correct those errors by themselves. The learners make errors because they try something which is beyond their level of language processing (Spratt et al., 2005). As a conclusion, errors are unintentionally deviant languages indicating an incorrect system or an incomplete learning in which the learners cannot correct these errors by themselves.

A mistake is another faulty performance which is produced by all people in the native and second language contexts (Brown, 2001). All people (including native speakers and second language learners) may make mistakes although they completely have knowledge related to what are being learnt. Mistakes are different from errors in which the former appears because of tiredness, fatigue, carelessness, lack of attention, and other performance aspects. It means that they actually know the right term. However, they produce the wrong one because those aspects influence their performance. They can correct mistakes by themselves if they are pointed out.

Both errors and mistakes are deviant forms in the language learning. Theoretically they are different. Conversely, they are difficult to be varied as in the study of error analysis. The one who does error analysis in the students' writing, for instance, encounters a problem in differentiating between errors

and mistakes. Since the students' writing does not show whether the deviant forms are errors or mistakes, he/she cannot differentiate them. The study of error analysis examines all forms of deviant languages and calls those languages as errors.

Errors Analysis

An error analysis is a study of errors made by second language learners (Brown, 2000). This study includes observing errors, classifying them into some features, and counting those errors. The area of error analysis can be defined through comparing the learners' interlanguage and the target language (James, 1998). The term interlanguage here means the learners' knowledge or their version of the target language. It means that they have a language system which may be correct or incorrect according to the rules of the target language. Producing the incorrect ones indicates making errors. The study of error analysis is in this term; analyzing the learners' language system which causes errors. It only focuses on the troublesome aspects of the language system that will be analyzed. In other words, it investigates what the learners do not know and how they cope with those troublesome aspects.

The process of classification refers to a process in which errors are classified into some features. Errors made by the learners have to be identified and then described. Initially those errors are identified. Based on the identification process, those errors are classified into some features. These features are varied according to what the aim of the study is.

There are generally three criteria in classifying errors. They are modality, medium, and level (James, 1998). The term modality implies whether the language produced is receptive or productive. The term medium refers to whether the language produced

is a written form or a spoken form. Based on both criteria, there are four skills in which the error analysis can be implemented: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Meanwhile, the term level indicates the level of language. Substance, text, and discourse levels are those levels. From the classification, it can be simplified into this term: each skill (whether it is listening, reading, speaking, or writing) has three levels of language. So, the error analysis may be focused on speaking in the discourse level, listening in the substance level, writing in the text level, etc. It depends on the aim of the study. Since this study is concerned with errors in writing, this chapter only presents error classifications in writing. Referring to the above classifications, there are three levels of errors in writing. Those errors are classified into substance, text, and discourse errors (James, 1998). Error analysis in writing may be focused on one or all of those items.

There is a procedure which has to be followed when doing error analysis. This procedure consists of detecting errors, locating errors, describing errors, classifying errors, counting errors, and profiling errors (James, 1998).

Errors Classification in this Study

Based on the classifications above, this study proposes eleven items in written texts to classify the learners' errors. Those items are verbs, punctuations, articles, prepositions, singular/plural nouns, spellings, pronouns, parts of speech choices, word orders, word choices, and miscellany (Spratt, 2005 and Darus, 2009).

Errors of verbs are errors related to incorrect uses of verbs in sentences. Verbs are words that take a part as predicates, markers of grammatical categories, actions, and states (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). There are some items dealing with verbs that

can cause errors such as in the cases of tenses, linking and action verbs, modals, *to*-infinitive forms, etc. Errors in the uses of verbs happen when those items are used incorrectly. The examples of those errors are uses of the past tense in narrative texts, an absence of linking verbs, a redundant use of auxiliaries in action verbs, uses of modals that are followed by past verbs.

The punctuation errors are ones which show incorrect uses of punctuation marks such as commas, semicolons, periods, capitalizations, and dashes. These errors can be seen in the uses of those marks in sentences. Some examples of the punctuation errors can be seen in the uses of small letters at the beginning of sentences, the uses of periods instead of commas after dependent clauses, and an absence of quotation marks in direct sentences.

Errors of articles refer to errors in the uses of articles in sentences. Two types of articles which usually cause errors are definite and indefinite articles (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). These two articles cause errors when they are used inappropriately such as in the cases of definite articles are used in place of indefinite articles, no articles used when they are needed, and articles are not used when they are needed.

Errors in the use of prepositions are related to incorrect uses of prepositions in sentences. Prepositions are linking words connecting nouns, pronouns, and gerunds with others (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). Moreover, prepositions are associated with possession (the leg of the table), direction (to the cinema), place (at the garden), time (before now), etc. Errors of prepositions take place when the prepositions *of*, *to*, *at*, *before*, etc are used incorrectly in sentences.

Errors in the use of plural/singular forms are concerned with incorrect uses of nouns whether they

are plural or singular forms that relate to other aspects such as verbs, pronouns, determiners, etc. There are aspects which have to be considered in plural/singular errors such as in the cases of subjects must agree with the following verbs, nouns must agree with the referring pronouns, determiners must agree with their following nouns, etc (Rozakis, 2003). The plural/singular errors occur when those aspects are not implemented correctly.

The spelling errors refer to errors which indicate incomplete alphabet symbols written by the learners. These errors happen when letters or syllables are dropped in words, unnecessary letters or syllables are added in words, mispronounced letters or syllables are used, etc (Rozakis, 2003).

The pronoun errors are errors that show incorrect uses of pronouns in sentences. Pronouns are words used in place of nouns (Rozakis, 2003). Errors in the uses of pronouns cannot be separated from the preceding nouns. These errors can be seen in the uses of subject pronouns, object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and relative pronouns. Those types of pronouns can cause errors if they are used incorrectly.

Part of speech errors are errors related to nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions (Frank, 1972). However, these errors are different from the verb and preposition errors since part of speech errors are focused on choices of parts of speech. Some examples are the choices between nouns and verbs, adjectives and adverbs, nouns and adjectives.

The word order errors are associated with incorrect uses of word orders in the sentence arrangements. For example, in sentences, verbs go before objects and adverbs of place come first before

adverbs of time (Murphy, 1989). Besides those aspects, errors of word orders can be seen in orders of noun, verb, adjective, adverbial, and prepositional phrases.

Errors of word choices are ones that indicate incorrect choices of words in sentences (Spratt et al., 2005). These errors happen when chosen words are not appropriate to contexts. Errors in the choices of words can create misunderstanding or messages of the texts are not delivered successfully.

Errors which are not classified into those ten types are categorized into miscellaneous errors. This type of error is used to accommodate errors that cannot be classified into the other types. These errors varied such as errors related to using Indonesian language in producing English words or errors caused by pronunciation of two words that are similar.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

This study was categorized as a case study since the researcher focused on small groups in which there were a limited number of people participating in the study (Lodico, 2010). Here, the researcher described frequent errors in the texts made by the students. In conducting this study, firstly the researcher selected a population. Secondly, she asked all participants to make texts in written forms. They had to make the texts in which the topic was determined before. Thirdly, the researcher analyzed those texts. For the analyzing process, the researcher classified errors into some types. The students' errors in the texts put into those types. After that she gave a description about those types of errors based on statistical analysis.

The researcher conducted the study in Widya Dharma University, especially English Education Study Program. The subjects of the study covered the second semester students in academic year 2014/2015. The researcher analyzed the students' written texts based

on these types of errors. These errors were verbs, punctuations, articles, prepositions, plural/singular nouns, spellings, pronouns, parts of speech choices, word orders, word choices, and miscellany.

The data sources in this study were in the form of students' writing which collected through a written test. For the data analysis technique, the researcher used the descriptive analysis to interpret the data. The study was intended to calculate the total number of the objects of the research (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2008). The researcher looked for the frequencies of the objects and converted them into percentages.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Data Finding

The data sources of this study are the students' written texts. There were ten written texts which were collected as the data sources of this study. Those texts contained three different themes of texts the students chose in the writing session. The themes were people, things, and places.

The length of the texts varied. The data sources showed that there were three texts containing one paragraph, one text containing two paragraphs, three texts containing three paragraphs, two texts containing four paragraphs, and one text containing six paragraphs. Meanwhile, in terms of word counts, there were five texts consisting of less than 100 words and five texts consisting of 101-200 words.

For data analysis purposes, the researcher grouped the errors into 11 error types. These eleven types were related to the uses of verbs, punctuations, articles, prepositions, plural/singular nouns, spellings, pronouns, parts of speech choices, word orders, word choices, and miscellany. At the beginning, the researcher used the theory of written error

classification in order to identify the error types. In this case not all types were used; only the appropriate types were chosen. Meanwhile, these types did not cover all of the errors so that the researcher added a new type of errors into the classification. In general, these types of errors were determined from the theory from which the researcher chose the appropriate types and added one type.

The classification resulted in the frequencies of errors. The frequencies were raw numbers which were then converted into percentages. Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages of the errors.

Tabel 1. The Frequencies and Percentages of the Error Occurrences

No	Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Verbs	11	25.60%
2	Punctuations	2	4.60%
3	Articles	7	16.30%
4	Prepositions	1	2.30%
5	Plural/singular nouns	6	14%
6	Spellings	6	14%
7	Pronouns	4	9.40%
8	Parts of speech choices	2	4.60%
9	Word Orders	1	2.30%
10	Word Choices	2	4.60%
11	Miscellany	1	2.30%
Total		43	100%

The table shows that there are a total of 43 errors found in the data sources. The most frequent error is related to the verb uses and the least frequent errors are related to the prepositions, word orders, and miscellany. The general description of the error type is given in the discussion of the finding

Discussion of the Finding

The first type is categorized into verb errors. The verb errors are associated with the incorrect use of verbs in sentences. Some examples of verb errors are "She a good example for me." and "It happen every day." The first example "She a good example for me." is incorrect since there is no auxiliary used. The correct sentence should be "She **is** a good example for me. While, the second example "It happen every day." is also incorrect since the verb is in wrong choice of tense. The correct sentence should be "It **happens** every day."

The second type belongs to punctuation errors. The punctuation errors show the use of inappropriate punctuation marks in a sentence. There is an error referring to the uses of commas. The errors of commas occur in a case as the absence of a comma before the conjunction *and* that connects three items. The example of this type is "My mother is beauful woman, sweet, high, patient and funny." There is the absence of comma before the conjunction *and*. The correct sentence is "My mother is beauful woman, sweet, high, patient, and funny."

The third type of error is related to article errors. The article errors indicate the incorrect uses of articles that accompany nouns. The data show the absence of articles and the incorrect choices of definite or indefinite articles. The absence of articles indicates the absence of an article accompanying the noun. The choice of definite or indefinite articles shows the

wrong choice of either the definite or indefinite article before a noun. Some examples of this type of error are "Teedy is highly active cat." and "In front of my sister room, there is the living room." The first sentence is incorrect since there is an absence of the article. It should be "Teedy **is** highly active cat." The second sentence is also incorrect since there is wrong choice of article. The correct sentence of the second example is "In front of my sister room, there is **a** living room."

The fourth type is categorized into preposition errors. These errors show the wrong uses of prepositions in a sentence. There is dealing with the absence of prepositions when no preposition is used when it is needed. The example of this type of error is "I wish make my parents happy." The correct sentence is "I wish to make my parents happy."

The fifth type of error belongs to plural/singular errors. These errors indicate the wrong uses of plural/singular nouns or pronouns in a sentence. More specifically, these incorrect usages occur between determiners and their following nouns. One example of plural/singular errors is "Roses can grow in different size from compact, miniature, and climbers which reach seven meter in height." The correct sentence is "Roses can grow in different size from compact, miniature, and climbers which reach seven **meters** in height."

The sixth type is categorized into spelling errors. These errors indicate the wrong arrangement of letters in a word. The data show four sub-types of the spelling errors; namely: the omission of letters, the insertion of extra letters, the substitution of different letters, and some letters whose arrangements are exchanged. The omission of letters, here, shows the incorrect use of words which have incomplete letters in their

arrangement because of the letter omission in such words as *beauful*, *certainly*, etc. The insertion of extra letters points out to inappropriate spellings of words because of the letter insertion in such words as *carefull*. The substitution of different letters results in words having wrong spellings such as *noughty* for *naughty*. Some letters whose arrangements are exchanged occur when some of their letter positions are exchanged as in such word *metres*.

The seventh type belongs to pronoun errors. These errors are associated with the incorrect uses of pronouns such as when an object pronoun is used as a subject pronoun. One example of pronoun errors is "She had record three albums that established herself as one of the most popular singer in around 1900." The correct sentence is "She had record three albums that established **her** as one of the most popular singer in around 1900."

The eighth type is categorized into part of speech errors. The part of speech errors exhibit the incorrect choice of parts of speech in a sentence. One example of this type is "I will introduction my parents." The correct sentence is "I will **introduce** my parents."

The ninth type belongs to word order errors. These errors indicate the wrong orders of the words in a sentence. The example is "I love forever my parents." It should be "I love **my parents forever**."

The tenth type is related to word choice errors. The term word choice indicates the wrong choice of

words in that they do not match the context. One example of word choice errors is "In the second floor, there are five rooms available and there are three person which live." The choice of the word "person" is inappropriate. The correct term is 'people'. So, the correct sentence is "In the second floor, there are five rooms available and there are three people which live."

The eleventh type is categorized into miscellany of errors. These errors refer to errors which cannot be classified into the ten main categories. The miscellany errors have one sub-type. That is the use of Indonesian language to produce English words or phrases. The example of this type of error is "In front of my room, I put my shoes and aqua galon." The correct sentence is "In front of my room, I put my shoes and drinking water."

CONCLUSION

Based on the data in the research findings, there are eleven types of errors that have been identified. The order of errors from the most frequent to the least frequent one is as follows: verbs (25.6%), articles (16.3%), plural/singular nouns (14%), spellings (14%), pronouns (9.4%), punctuations (4.6%), parts of speech choices (4.6%), word choices (4.6%), prepositions (2.3%), word orders (2.3%), and miscellany (2.3%). The most frequent error is related to the verb uses and the least frequent errors are related to the prepositions, word orders, and miscellany.

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