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GRAMMATICAL ERRORS ANALYSIS ON EFL LEARNERS' WRITING: A case study at Junior High Islamic Boarding School in Jember

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Abstract

Writing is supposed to be a complicated language skill. There exists a lot of sub-skills should be learnt by EFL/ESL learners in order to write well such as vocabulary acquisition and grammatical mastery. In the process of writing, the learners should put ideas into phrases, clauses, and sentences by keeping the well-formedness of the structure. The learners should also be aware of that linguistic aspects when they are constructed a composition. Due to the complexity of writing skill, the learners potentially make error/s. The errors were potentially occurred in Junior High Islamic Boarding School in Jember. The recent study was intended to investigate the dominant error/s made by the EFL learners at Junior High Islamic Boarding School in Jember. The study also tried to explore the factors cause those learners made the error/s. The study was a case one which employed the qualitative approach. This study revealed that the dominant error made by the students was misformation errors which were occurred because of the interference of the learners' mother tongue i.e., the learners still got confused to change the verb into past participle, as what it was called as intralanguage error in which it was taken place because inadequate knowledge how to use or to change verb. In addition, it was occurred by some other factors such as environment, the process of teaching and learning including of learning style and feedback, the availability of learning source, and low motivation. In conclusion, the dominant errors made by EFL learners at Junior High Islamic Boarding School in Jember were omission of to be, omission of plural, omission of article, omission of preposition, simple addition, misformation, and misordering. In addition, the factors contributed to the errors were inadequacy of grammar competence, environment, learning feedback, and low learning motivation

Keywords: Grammatical Errors, Writing Skill

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Introduction

One of the English language skills which is supposed to be the complicated one is writing and usually it is taught last (Tuan, 2010)(Asni & Susanti, 2018). Compare to other three English skills, writing skill requires a lot of sub-skills and sub-competencies which are not easy to learnt and acquired. Some of the sub-skills and sub-competencies should be possessed by EFL/ESL learners are syntactical competence and lexical or vocabulary mastery. Without such competencies, the EFL/ESL learners will not be able to write well or at least they will be hindered to write fluently and accurately. Grammar, as one of the competencies, is prominent and fundamental in English language

writing. Sub-rules of grammar such as the use of articles, parts of speech, sentence pattern, and tense absolutely determine the well-formedness of sentence/s (Muhsin, 2016)(Alufohai, 2016). Those competencies are acquired through language acquisition or language learning. In EFL context, especially in Indonesia, the competencies are obtained by EFL learners through language learning which is mostly taken place in formal environment or school setting.

However, achieving the competencies is simple matter for EFL learners. They should learn hard to get the competencies due to the linguistic differences of English and their mother tongue or first language

(Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013) which dominantly is *bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language). The linguistic differences potentially cause the learners make errors (Anwar, Ahmed, & Road, 2016) (Kumala, Aimah, & Ifadah, 2018). The errors occur when the learners do not understand well about the English grammar (Fridayanti, 2017). The errors will go on repeatedly until the learners understand English linguistic rules properly and apply them in writing English sentence/s. In other words, if an EFL teacher does not try to remind the learners about the errors they made and to improve the learners competencies on English grammar, the errors will occur over and over again along with the instructional process until the learners' attain a particular competence and proficiency expected.

The errors are potentially occurred at *MTs Unggulan Al Qodiri 1 Jember* (Junior High Islamic Boarding School Jember). The students and instructional process at the school meet the characteristics of learning which can generate errors. The recent study was intended to investigate the learners errors in writing recount texts. The investigation was focused on 1) finding out the dominant errors made by the EFL learners and; 2) digging up the factors caused them made the errors.

Method

The study was a case one which employs qualitative approach. The design of the study was descriptive qualitative in which it tried to dig up data in natural setting in the form of corpus of errors made by the students. The study was conducted during February up to May 2019 at *MTs Unggulan Al Qodiri 1 Jember* (Junior High Islamic Boarding School Jember). The population of the study was 122 eight grade students of the school. Only 22 students who became the sample which was determined

clusterly and purposively because the students had homogenous characteristics. The data related to the first problem were collected in the form of texts which were written individually by the students. The second data related to the second problem was collected by using interview. The procedure of the study was firstly the students (EFL learners) were asked to write recounts texts based on the topics provided by the researcher. Afterwards, the texts were analyzed by using the method introduced by (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) which employed some steps of data technique analysis which comprised data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion withdrawal.

Findings and Discussion

In that school, the students are taught three languages i.e., Indonesian, Arabic, and English. The school is run by Al Qodiri, a reknown Islamic boarding school in Indonesia. Based on the findings, it was shown that the grammatical errors were found in the sentences of the texts made by the students as what is described in Table 1.

No	Types of Grammatical Errors	Number the Errors
1.	Omission of to be	18 (11 students)
2.	Omission of plural	14 (11 students)
3.	Omission of article	20 (10 students)
4.	Omission of preposition	17 (13 students)
5.	Simple addition	49 (13 students)
6.	Misformation	183 (19 students)
7.	Misordering	10 (9 students)
Total		311

Table 1. The Grammatical Errors Made by the Students

Table 1 reveals that there exists a lot of errors types made by the students i.e., **omission of to be, omission of plural, omission of article, omission of preposition, simple addition, misformation, and misordering**. Out

of the total number of errors (311 items), 'omission of to be' was added up to 18 items which were made by 11 students. In case of 'omission of to be', the students did not put 'to be' in their sentences. It seems that they applied Indonesian language structure in writing the sentences. Indonesian language as their mother tongue or first language definitely influenced them in writing English sentences. The employment of the first language in writing target language or L2 in this case English is classified into the 'interlanguage interference' (Sermsook, Liamnimitr, & Pochakorn, 2017). The number of 'omission of plural' means that the failure of the students to put 's/es' at the end of plural inflection, is 14 or made by 11 students. This type of errors is also classified into the 'interlanguage interference' because Indonesian language does not constrain the adding of 's/es' at the end of plural inflection. The omission of the plural is oftenly classified into the interlanguage interference because there are no plural nouns in *Bahasa Indonesia* (Safrida & Kasim, 2016).

Next is 'omission of an article' error type, which means that the students failed to put an article that should be appeared in their sentences, appeared 20 items or made by 10 students. This type is also caused by the influence of their first language (Indonesian language), in which the language does not constrain 'article' of sentence. In the case of 'omission of article' the students missed the article in their sentences because they assumed that in making sentence in the target language (English), article is not constrained.

The following type is 'omission of preposition'. Such type of error was added up to 17 items or made by 13 students. The students did so because they supposed that the preposition was

not required. It seems that preposition is a big problem for EFL learners (Safrida & Kasim, 2016). This type of error is regarded as intra-language interference because of the complexity of the use of preposition.

The findings of the study also revealed that the students made 'addition' errors. In such type of errors, because of inadequate knowledge of grammar, the learners just added inflection 'ed'. This type of errors which was also known as overgeneralization made by 13 students or appeared 49 times.

Besides, the students made misformation errors which was caused by the lack of competency in using verb. The students got confused how to employ verb in constructing grammatical sentences. It was occurred because the first language (Indonesian language) does not constrain the change of verb whereas the changes of verb, in English rule determines the kind of the tenses. The data of the study indicated that 'misformation' was the biggest number of errors.

'Misordering' errors were the lowest errors (10) made by the students (9). 'Misordering' errors mostly were committed by the beginner learners (Safrida & Kasim, 2016). Those errors were happened because the students put the morpheme in the wrong place. It was found that misordering errors were occurred because of interlanguage interference errors. In the first language phrase structure or in Indonesian language, noun is followed by adjective (noun+adj) while in the target language or English phrase structure rule, adjective is followed by noun (adj+noun).

The findings also revealed that there were some factors which contributed to the students to make errors. Data obtained by interview indicated that environment (Rany, Jafre,

Abidin, & Mei, 2013), the process of teaching and learning including feedback and learning style (Quibol-catabay, 2016), the availability of learning sources, and low learning motivation become the potential factors to the occurrence of errors. As it was described previously that English is one of two foreign languages (English and Arabic) taught to the student beside Indonesian language. Something which is supposed to be the lack of students' English linguistic (structure) competence is the proportion of learning hour. English is only learnt by the students as the obligatory subject which is taught 3 hour per week. This learning hour is supposed to minimum compared to Arabic learning times which almost used dominantly as the means of communication. Besides, the teacher rarely gave corrective feedback to the students' works whereas it is extremely important (Ariyanti, 2016)(Ananda, Gani, & Sahardin, 2014) to improve the learners' proficiency and competence.

Besides, the findings indicated that the students who became the subjects of the study were found to possess low learning motivation. As a matter of fact, motivation has a significant contribution to English as second/foreign language learning success (Muchemwa, 2015). In other words, the students with low motivation tend to fail in learning English or at least they are potential to make errors.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and the discussion, two conclusions were drawn. Firstly, the types of errors found were omission of to be, omission of plural, omission of article, omission of preposition, simple addition, misinformation, and misordering. The errors were categorized into Interlanguage and Intralanguage errors. The dominant error made by the eighth

grade students of MTs Unggulan Al Qodiri 1 Jember was 'misinformation errors'. Secondly, the contributing factors to the error were language environment which was dominated by Arabic and Indonesian; the process of teaching and learning including minimum feedback; learning style; and low learning motivation.

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