

## COMMON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS MADE BY STUDENTS IN WRITING NARRATIVE PARAGRAPH

By :

**Restu Damai Laia**

Dosen Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris  
Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Nias Selatan  
Email: restudamailaia@gmail.com

### Abstract

This research aimed at investigating common grammatical errors made by students in writing narrative paragraph. This research was conducted at the English Language Education Study Program of STKIP Nias Selatan. The subject of this research was consisted of 23 students of English Language Education Study Program. The data of this research were collected from students' paper in writing narrative paragraph. Based on the data analysis, it was found that the students commonly made morphological grammatical errors and syntactic grammatical errors. The morphological grammatical errors consisted of omission of *-ed*, substitution of simple not-past, misuse of 's, and adding unnecessary 's. In addition, Syntactic grammatical errors consisted of misuse of pronoun, adding unnecessary be, omission of preposition, misuse of determiner, and adding unnecessary to. Substitution of simple not-past dominated the error made by the students. These research findings are expected to be advantageous for English lecturer to find out the effective strategy to solve the students' problem.

**Key words:** Grammatical errors; Error analysis; narrative paragraph

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Every language has its own grammatical rules, and learning English cannot be separated from learning grammar. It is a part of a language which has to be learned by the students. It is very important to be mastered by students in every level of education. Ur (2009:75) defined it as "the way words are put together to make correct sentences". Students have to apply the rules of grammar on the sentences they produce so that the sentences or the writing easily can be understood by the readers. Because grammar is one of category of words, good grammar makes good writing.

Almost all the students in every level of education find that writing is not an easy process. During the process, sometimes students make errors on the use of grammar when they produce English writing. The grammatical errors found in students' paper writing will influence the meaning of the sentence.

Narrative paragraph is telling of some true or fictitious event or connected sequence of events. It has generic structures: orientation, complication, resolution, and coda; and it has grammatical features such as past tense, noun, action verb, adjective, adverb, etc.

Narrative paragraph has been studied since junior high school, senior high school, and college. But in fact, the college students included the third semester students of English Education Study Program, still make the grammatical errors in writing it. Some grammatical errors were found in students' writing such as the use of tense in sentence 'No one know what is going on', it should be 'No one knew what was going on'. Other errors they did, included the use of noun and word order, and article, such as in the sentence '[...] Big

earthquake made much the build destroyed', it should be 'The big earthquake destroyed many buildings'.

An error analysis plays an important role to reveal what common grammatical errors the students do. By knowing what kind their errors, it can be a reference to the lecturer to conduct a good material in teaching writing, especially in teaching narrative paragraph. And if the problem has been found, and it can be solved based on appropriate material teachin. It is expected that students can increase their capability to produce a good narrative writing.

Based on the explanation above, a research on common grammatical errors made by students in writing narrative paragraph were conducted at the third semester of English Language Education Study Program at STKIP Nias Selatan. The purpose of this research was to find out the common grammatical error made by the fourth semester Students of English Language Education Study Program in writing narrative paragraph.

### 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was designed in qualitative research. According to Hancock, et al (2009:7), "Qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena. That is to say, it aims to help us to understand the social world in which we live and why things are the way they are".

The data of this research was grammatical errors and the source of the data was the students' writing papers of narrative paragraph. To get the details about students' grammatical errors in

writing narrative paragraph the researcher took students' writing.

After collecting the data, the next step is analyzing the data. Miles and Huberman's theory (1994:10-11) was applied to analyze the data. The analysis consisted of three concurrent flows of activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

a. Data reduction

Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcription. The data obtained from the document were selected and classified based on linguistic category that are based on morphology aspect and syntactic aspect to classify the grammatical error made by the students.

b. Data display

The completely reduce data were putted into easily understood narrated. The data displayed sistematically and simultaneously were able to explain and to answer the problem in order to comprehend it easily.

c. Conclusion drawing/Verification

Drawing conclusion is the last step in analyzing the data. After selecting and displaying the data, the data were verified. The temporary conclusion could be reexamined by comparing with the data in the field, discussing with the peers and triangulation to get the truth of the data. The conclusion was then verified to gain the credible research finding.

### 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

a. Morphological Grammatical Errors

Based on the classification of the research finding, there are four kinds of grammatical errors made by the students in terms of morphology. The following is the description of the errors.

1) Omission of *-ed*

This error occurred many times in the students' writing paper. The examples of the errors are as follows:

S1 : *My mirror smash*

S2 : *Tsunami also occur*

The sentences above, indicated that the students made error to attach inflectional *-ed* in the regular verb used in their sentence. Inflectional *-ed* indicated the past form of regular verb in simple past and past participle tense. As it was displayed in the table, the verb *smash* should be *smashed*. It was important to use in writing narrative as the use of past tense is one of the identical language features of narrative text. It indicated the actions which happened in the past time. This error occurred many times on the students' paper. Hence, it can be concluded that the students failed to use past regular verb in writing narrative.

2) Substitution of simple not- past

Another error made by the students in writing narrative was dealing with the substitution

of simple not-past. This type of grammatical error occurred more than omission of *-ed*.

S3: *I am afraid*

S4: *Many people lose*

Based on the data above, it was analyzed that the students again made error in using past tense in writing narrative. Past tense, like omission of *-ed*, indicated the characteristic of narrative which told the action or even in the past. However, the grammatical error related to the substitution of simple not-past more referred to irregular past tense. Otherwise, the grammatical error related to omission of *-ed* referred to regular past tense. 'I *am* afraid' sentence should be written in past tense 'I *was* afraid', and 'Many people *lose* their property' should be written as likely 'Many people *lost* their property', since the actions happened in past time. This error was found on the papers of the 15 students. Hereby, it can be concluded that the students made incorrection in using irregular past tense in writing narrative.

3) Misuse of *-s*

It was also found an error related to possessive case incorrection, by which a students misused *-s* (not omission of *'s*) in writing a sentence in his narrative.

S5: *When it's atmosphere was very quiet.*

From sentence, it can be analyzed that the students made an error in using *'s* in their sentence. Consequently, it may influence the understanding of the reader to his purpose. In the sentence 'when *it's* atmosphere was very quiet', the students should not use *'it's*', but *'its*'. It was because *'it's*' does not indicate the possessive adjective of the 'condition of the atmosphere' at that time, but it contains such affirmative sentence of 'it is atmosphere'.

4) Adding unnecessary *'s*

It was found another error which was also related to *'s*. However, this kind of error was not about misuse but additional of unnecessary *'s*. The example of the data displayed below:

S6: *While make them children's wake up*

In the sentence 'while make them children's wake up', it can be analyzed that the student added unnecessary *'s* on the word 'children'. The aims of students adding *'s* was to indicate the plural form of children. However, the students made two errors. Firstly, the word 'children' should not be added inflectional *s* as 'children' is plural form of child (irregular plural form) and it is already contains plural meaning of 'child'. Secondly, by adding *'s*, it arises another meaning, that is the possessive case of children. Therefore, the error was not a misuse of *'s*, but an additional of unnecessary *'s*.

b. Syntactic Grammatical Errors

Besides the grammatical error made by students in linguistic category of morphology, the following was the description of the grammatical error in term of syntax.

1) Misuse of pronoun

The error made by students related to the use of pronoun was found on the students' paper of narrative.

S7: Take care of *them* children

In the sentence above, an error occurred in using possessive adjective of 'they'. In the sentence, the student misused the object *them* to indicate the possessive of the subject 'they'. It should be *their*. The student might not be able to differentiate the function of subject, object, and possessive in this sentences.

2) Adding unnecessary *be*

Another error found was the additional of unnecessary *be*. The data below was the example taken from the student's paper of narrative.

S8: What would be happen

It can be analyzed that the students might overgeneralize to use *be*. In the sentence 'what would *be* happen', the presence of '*be*' was unnecessary. It was because of the sentence was not progressive tense, neither passive voice. The sentence was an active voice. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students overgeneralize the use of *be*.

3) Omission of preposition

Omission of preposition was also made by students in writing narrative. The example of the data of this error was as follow:

S9: [...] front of the house

The error made by student in this sentence was to omit the preposition *in*. The student did not use preposition to show the position of the house in the sentence.

4) Misuse of determiner

Another error found in this research was misuse of determiner *much*. The data supported this finding was as follow:

S10: Without *much* words

The error made by student in this sentence was to use incorrect determiner. The noun used in the sentence was word (countable noun), so that determiner *much* was not appropriate to use. The correct determiner used was 'many', because 'word' was countable noun.

5) Adding unnecessary *to*

Adding unnecessary *to* was also found as the grammatical error in this research. The example of the data is as follow:

S11: No one of us *to* know

The error above shows that the student overgeneralize the use of *to*. It can be analyzed that the student might have low understanding toward the function of *to infinitive*, and perhaps the student misunderstood to the subject of the sentence. The subject of the sentence was 'no one of us' (noun phrase), so that the existency of *to* between the subject and verb or predicate is not correct.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

##### a. Conclusion

Based on the research finding it can be concluded that commonly students made grammatical errors in terms of morphology and syntax. It indicates that students have limited knowledge on the study of English morphology and syntax. Therefore, it can be said that the knowledge on morphology and syntax plays important role in writing narrative paragraph.

##### b. Suggestion

Hopefully, this research gives some advantages to the lecturer, teacher, students, and to the next researchers who are going to research the same field as one of the source knowledge about grammatical errors to improve the students' ability in writing, particularly in writing narrative paragraph. It is suggested to the lecturer to use this research finding as a consideration in designing the teaching and learning material in the future. Knowing the grammatical error made by the students, hopefully, is useful to prevent or to solve students' problem in writing narrative paragraph. Furthermore, the next researcher is expected to use this research findings as reference or guidance to conduct the broader research related to error analysis in the aspect of linguistics.

#### 5. REFERENCES

- Anker, S. 2010. *Real Writing With Readings : Paragraphs and Essays for Colleges, Works, and Everyday Life* (5th ed). Boston : Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Berendsen, H.J.C. 2011. *A Student's Guide to Data and Error Analysis*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Board of Studies New South Wales. 1998. *English K-6 Modules*. New South Wales: Board of Studies New South Wales.
- Brown, H. Douglas. 2000. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (4th Ed). New York : Longman.
- Corder, S.P. 1982. *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Department of Education WA. 2013. *First Steps: Writing Resource Book*. Australia : The Department of Education of Western Australia.
- Dulay, H., Burt, M., Krashen, S. 1982. *Language Two*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hancock, B., Ockleford, E., and Windridge, K. 2009. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Yorkshire: The NIHR RDS EM/YH.
- Harmer, J. 2001. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. 3rd ed. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

- Kane, T. S. 2000. *The Oxford Essential Guide to Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leacock, C., Chodorow, M., Gamon, M., & Tetreault J. 2010. *Automated Grammatical Error Detection for Language Learners*. Toronto: Morgan and Claypool Publishers.
- Miles, M.B & Huberman, A.M. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis*. London,UK : SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Ur, P. 2009. *A Course in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.