

SENTENCE STRUCTURE ERROR IN WRITING NARRATIVE PARAGRAPH

Oleh

Impiani Zagoto¹⁾, Restu Damai Laia²⁾, Senadaman Wau³⁾

¹FAKULTAS KEGURUAN DAN ILMU PENDIDIKAN (FKIP) UNIRAYA

zimpiani@gmail.com

restudamailaia@gmail.com

swauuniraya@gmail.com

Abstract

Narrative paragraph is a kind of paragraphs that tells events in the order they happened. It can be imaginary or based on the real incident. In writing the paragraph, however, the students made errors in sentences structure. The purpose of this study was to find out the errors made by third semester students of English Department at Nias Raya University. This is was a kind of qualitative research which explained the errors found. The result of this study showed that the sentence errors were on subject-verb agreement, and fragments. Moreover, the students were error in the use of punctuations comma (,) and semicolon (;) in compound sentence. Therefore, it is concluded that leaving out the subject/verb/ both and wrong orders of the grammatical elements of a sentence, and misusing the punctuations cause the error in writing narrative paragraph.

A. INTRODUCTION

Narrative paragraph is a piece of writing that tells a story. The story can be imaginary or based on a real incident. Narration is telling of some true or factious event or connected sequence of events. According to Oshima and Hogue (2007: 24) narration is a story writing which is written in the order that it happen. In addition, Kane (2000:366) defines a narrative as an expressive arrangement of words in which the events are order.

In conclusion, narrative paragraph is a paragraph that tells events which are presented in a clear order, usually according to when they happened. In other words, the time order is used in writing the sentences in the paragraph.

Furthermore, narrative paragraph intends to inform and entertain the readers, to tell the story with amusing way, and to amuse, entertain, and to deal with actual or vicarious experience in different ways. There are four basics of good narrative paragraph according to Anker (2010:121) namely:

1. It reveals something of importance to you (your main point).
2. It includes all of the major events of the story (primary support).
3. It brings the story to life with details about the major events (secondary support).
4. It presents the events in a clear order, usually according to when they happened.

Since a narrative paragraph presents the event based on sequence, the writer used time order to tell what happened first, what happened next, what happened after that. The words or phrases used to show the time order called time order signals because they signal the order in which events happen (Oshima and Hogue, 2007: 24). The time order signals are finally, first (second, third, etc), later, meanwhile, next, now, soon, at last, after a while, after that, in the morning, etc. In the use of the time order signals, a comma is put after a time order signal that comes before the subject at the beginning of a sentence exception then, soon, now (Oshima and Hogue, 2007: 25). In other words, to show the sequences of the events in narrative paragraph, a narrator needs to use the time order signals.

In organizing a paragraph of narrative typically involves three necessities components; they are background information, the events, and the conclusion. The background establish the scene for the audience that includes the topic sentence – establish the purpose, that is what the writer will write about, not a narration, and the characters and setting. Furthermore, the events or story happens in three

stages are the beginning of the story, middle and the end. At the end, the conclusion is a concluding sentence that can be restatement of topic sentence, or prediction about the story, or can be a suggestion.

Moreover, in writing a narrative paragraph, the sentence structure is essential things to be recognized well. The sentence structure is compound sentences with coordinating conjunction and the use of punctuation (Oshima and Hogue, 2007: 30). Compound sentence is at least two simple sentences joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction. Coordinating conjunctions that mostly used in narrative paragraph are *but, and, or, and so*. Next, the use of punctuation *comma (,)* in this paragraph has three rules. Use comma after the time order signal that comes before the subject at the beginning of the sentence; Put comma after the first sentence in compound sentence, then use coordinating conjunction before the second sentence. In addition, put a comma between the items in a series of three or more items. The items may be words, phrases, or clauses, but don't use a comma between only two items.

Although it is quite different with the organizations of other types of paragraph that should follow the paragraph structure, namely topic sentence, supporting sentences and concluding sentence, writing a narrative, however, was being a hard work for students of English Department at Nias Raya University. The writing of the students contains many errors especially in sentence structures. Therefore, this research was conducted to analyze what the errors are in order to be considerations for the lecturer in teaching the narrative paragraph.

B. Research Method

This research was a kind of qualitative research which described the sentence errors made by the 3rd semester the students of English Department at Nias Raya University. The data of this research were taken from the students worksheet on a narrative paragraphs; and it was analyzed based on sentence structures of a narrative paragraph proposed by Oshima and Hogue (2007).

C. Research Finding and Discussion

1. Punctuation errors

a. Omitting comma

Based on the data, it was found that the students omitted comma when the two independent clauses are combined by using coordinating conjunctions. The errors can be seen in the following examples.

Table 1. Errors in Omitting Comma (,)

No	Students' number	Students sentences	Correct sentence
1	13	"I ran quickly and they found me"	I ran quickly, and they found me.
2	27	"You often look for food around there but you're fine".	You often look for food around there, but you're fine.
3	36	"You heard wrong or maybe because you are tired"	"You heard wrong, or maybe because you were tired"

The sentences in the table above showed that the students didn't put comma after first clause. There should be punctuation comma before coordinating conjunction *and*, *or* used in combining the two independent clauses. It is similar to Oshima and Hogue (2007) who stated that a compound sentence consists of at least two independent clauses that joined by comma and coordinating conjunction; comma precedes the coordinating conjunction in compound sentence.

- b. Using comma instead of semicolon (;)
Semicolon in the compound sentence is used when two or more independent clauses are combined in a sentence without coordinating conjunction. Based on data found, however, the students got error in using the punctuation in a sentence.

Table 2. Errors in using comma instead of semicolon

No	Students' number	Students sentences	Correct sentence
1	4	"They are a pair of wise pigs, the pigs Named pignes and pigers"	They are a pair of wise pigs; the pigs were named pignes and pigers
2	6	"Usually, the boy and I always share task of finding food, she to the west and I to the south"	Usually, the boy and I always share task of finding food; she went to the west, but I went to the south

The students' sentences contained errors in the use of comma instead of semicolon to show the connection of ideas between the main clauses. In the first data, it can be seen that there two independent clauses were separated by comma; it was incorrect since the comma used to link the two main clauses. In addition, the second data can be identified that the second main clause was only unconnected to the first main clause by comma instead of semicolon. In combining two or more main clauses in a sentence, one of coordinating conjunctions is used, or semicolon can be used to show the relationship between the two ideas. Greenbaum and Nelson (2022: 125) stated that multiple sentences – sentence that consists of two or more main clauses – are typically connected by one of coordinating conjunction (or, and, but, ...). Furthermore, it is stated that instead of connecting the main clauses with a coordinator, they can be juxtaposed by linking them with a semicolon.

2. Grammatical errors

a. Fragment

Sentence is a group of words that contains at least one subject and one verb; it expresses one complete thought. However, sometimes a group of words looks like a sentence which is

started with a capital and ended with a period, but may be missing subject or verb or both. Such incomplete sentence structures are fragments; it can be called sentence errors. These kinds of errors were found in the students' paragraph.

Table 3. Incomplete Sentence (Fragment)

No	Students' number	Fragments	Correct sentence
1	22	"He not even touched the wall"	He has not even touched the wall She put the
2	31	"Put the package on her scooter and ready to go to work"	package on her scooter; and she was ready to go for work.

The first sentence – "He not even touched the wall" – provided in the table was a kind of fragment or sentence error since there was not verb be – has – as the auxiliary in perfect tense. The correct sentences should be *He has not even touched the wall*. On the other hand, the second one was incomplete sentence because there was not subject of the verb in the first clause – "put the package on her scooter"; and the sentences was not a kind of imperative sentence and so does the second clause; there was not subject and verb. The correct form of the sentence is *she put the package on her scooter; and she was ready to go for work*.

b. Subject-verb agreement

Subjects and verbs must agree whether it is in number or person. The agreement is only found in present tense and in the use of verb *be*. When the subject is third singular, the verb has –s form. In other words, the verb will be plural if the subject is plural, but if the subject is singular, the verb must be singular. In fact, there were found some errors in the students' narrative paragraph that can be seen in the following table.

Table 4. Subject-Verb Agreement Error

No	Students' number	Subject-verb error	Correct sentence
1	24	"There was shoes found in the box"	There were shoes in the box.
2	4	"One of the pigs were angry to	One of the pigs was angry to

the	the wolf
wolf'	

The errors of the subject-verb agreement done by the students were on the use of verb *be*. In the first sentence the verb *be* – *was* – was incorrect; it should be *were* since the subject of the sentence – *shoes* – was plural. In other words, when a sentence begins with *there/here* + verb *be*, the subject follows the verb *be*. In addition, the second sentence was wrong because of the verb *be* used. The verb *be* should *was* because the subject of the sentence – *One* of the pigs – was singular; the prepositional phrase in the subject is not a part of the subject, and it should not be considered in determining the verb.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Sentence structure concerns on how the grammatical components of a sentence are placed together. The wrong order of the elements causes the errors of a sentence included the use of punctuations, and capital letter. Such errors were found in students' narrative paragraph of English Department of Nias Raya University that lies on the use of punctuations – commas (,) instead of semicolon (;) in combining two main clauses into a sentence without coordinating conjunctions, and omitting comma when coordinating conjunction used in compound sentences. In addition, there were incomplete sentences found in the students' paragraph – sentence without subject or verb – which is called fragments. The last, the error was on subject-verb agreement.

Considering the errors made by the students, it is suggested that the students need to be remained about the important of punctuations and the placement of the grammatical elements of a sentence in writing.

E. References

- Anker, S. 2010. *Real Writing With Readings :Pharagraphs and Essays for Colleges, Works, and Everyday Life* (5th ed). Boston : Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Greenbaum, S. & Nelson, G. 2002. *An Introduction to English Grammar*)2nd ed.). New York: Pearson Education.
- Kane, T. S. 2000. *The Oxford Essential Guide to Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Oshima, Alice. & Houge, Ann. 2007. *Introduction to Academic Writing*. 3rd Ed. New York: Pearson Education