STATE UNIVERSITY OF PADANG
A STUDY OF GRAMMATICAL AND MECHANICAL ERRORS IN
STUDENTS' RECOUNT TEXTS ON THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS
OF SMPIT SABBIHISMA PADANG

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Abstrak*: Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisa jenis-jenis kesalahan dalam menggunakan kaidah bahasa dan mekanik yang dibuat oleh siswa dalam menulis teks recount. Metode yg digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif qualitative. Data penelitian ini dikumpulkan melalui tes instrument. Subjek dari penelitian ini berjumlah 24 siswa kelas 2 SMPIT Sabbihisma Padang.Dalam menganalisis sebuah data, peneliti menggambarkan tentang jenis-jenis kesalahan Grammar dan Mekanik. Kesalahan Grammar dikelompokkan menjadi empat bagian. Pertama, ada tiga jenis kesalahan grammar yang ditemukan dalam menggunakan linking verb. Mereka yaitu omission (20%), addition (27%) and selection (14%). Kedua, dalam menggunakan action verb. Mereka adalah omission (35%), addition (48%) and selection (35%). Ketiga, ada satu jenis kesalahan ditemukan dalam menggunakan pronoun yaitu omission (08%). Terakir, ada satu jenis kesalahan dalam menggunakan possessive yaitu selection (17%). Sementara, dalam Mekanik, mereka dikelompokkan menjadi empat bagian. Pertama, ada tiga jenis kesalan Mekanik yang ditemukan dalam menggunakan period. Mereka adalah omission (14%), addition (45%) and selection (5%). Kedua, ada tiga jenis dalam menggunakan comma. Mereka adalah omission (53%), addition (23%) and selection (5%). Ketiga, ada tiga jenis kesalahan dalam menggunakan capitalization. Mereka adalah omission (23%), addition (21%) and selection (52%). Selanjutnya, ada tiga kesalahan dalam menggunakan spelling; mereka adalah omission (9%), addition (11%) and selection (38%).*

Keywords: error, recount, writing

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the process of delivering information or an idea, and expressing human feeling each other. Human needs a language to communicate with other people. Language is used for communication. When people want to speak or to deliver the information with the other people, they cannot do it without language.

Language is a means of communication which takes an important role in human life. As social being, people cannot be separated from language since they need to communicate to others by a language as the medium.

One of the international languages used until now is English. In this case, English as a means of communication has the most important role. Obviously English has dominated world communication either in speaking or writing.Without learning English, it can be estimated that a country will be left behind inmaking cooperation with foreigners in improving the power of knowledge.

English is as a foreign language in Indonesia. It means English is the second language for Indonesian people. It makes English important, so that English must be learnt by the learners. English is taught at Junior High School for the beginner, but in this time English is taught at elementary school and kindergarten as introduction and supplementary subject.

Foreign language learners always make mistakes and errors in their learning process. It is normal for anyone who learns the second language which is different from his mother tongue. Error is systematic and different grades make different errors. By describing and classifying the students' error in linguistic terms, the researcher can build up the picture of the feature of the language, which is causing the students' learning problem.

English is the important language to communicate when people go international. It causes many countries in the world including Indonesia inserting to present English to be one subjectin educational program. That is why, the students of elementary schooluntil university are taught English. English teachers realize that English is one of the difficult subjects because the construction of sentences in English is different from Indonesian language.

There are four basic abilities which are learned in studying English, they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing isone of the skills that must be learned by the students. In writing, the learners must apply the five general components of the writing process; they are content, form, grammar, style and mechanic. The researcher thinks that the composition is important for the learners to develop their imagination in written English. Nevertheless, the learners often do errors in composition because they are still influenced by Indonesian sentence structure in making and composing the structure of English sentence in writing of a paragraph.

One of the types of composition is recount text. Recount tells something happening in the past time, like: history, journey, autobiography, biography, diary, personal letter, etc. As it tells some events, it usually uses sequence words such as: When, while, after, before, until, etc. Then, tense used in recount text is simple past tense,

because it tells past events. To make a good composition, the students must be able to master and apply the structure correctly, especially about tense used. In this case, the tense used is simple past tense. If they cannot do that, of course, errors will arise. Automatically their writing will cause misunderstanding for the readers, because the readers cannot receive the massage or expression of their idea well.

There are several studies that have been previously conducted on analyze recount text as one of the subject materials in the school-based curriculum (KTSP). Sudirman (2003) studies about Grammatical Errors made by the third year English Department students of Padang University in writing an essay. He focuses his study on the grammatical errors in the use of verb. He finds that there are still a great number of students made errors in the English grammar. Sattayatham and Somehoen (2007). They observed the most frequent errors of all medical students' writing at Mahidol University, Thailand. The finding shows that there is dependency between sentence level translation and paragraph level translation, and between paragraph level translation and opinion paragraph writing.Nina Suzanne (2005) about grammatical and diction errors made by the first year students of SMAN 2 Padang when speaking English. The findings of the

research show that there are three types or grammatical errors the students made in using articles and prepositions (omission, addition, and misformation) when speaking English. It is also found that there are six types of diction errors, they are:1) errors in using synonym, 2) errors in making misformation,3) errors in callocation,4) connotative meaning, 5) errors in using the word with the same spelling, and 6) error in using foreign word.

Based on the researcher's observation at the Junior High School Sabbihisma, the researcher noticed that most of the students depend much on their teachers in writing English, especially in writing recount text. The students were not creative in writing recount text. They only followed the teacher's instruction. If the teachers did not give them any tasks to do such as doing exercises, taking a note, making summary, writing one paragraph, or writing recount text, the students would do nothing to improve their writing skill.

The students at Junior High School of Sabbihisma faced problems to develop their ideas to become a good recount text. They could not write a good recount text which is suitable with the generic structure of recount text. If there is no effort or way out to solve this problem as faced by the students, of this school cares with the students' problem in writing recount text,

the students would never write a good recount text. It would be very difficult for the students to solve their problem without a help from teachers. The unsolved problem could make the students hate writing.

In addition, grammar and mechanics aspect should be considered because they are the simplest and the first step in writing skill before going to the more complex skill. If the students are not able to use those grammars and mechanics aspect correctly, it would be worried that their writing which is good content and organization would give no good sense because the readers misunderstand the message conveyed.

Related to the explanation above,the researcher questions of this study are;

1. What kind of grammatical errors are made by the second year students of SMP Sabbihisma Padang in writing recount?
2. What kind of mechanical errors are made by the second year students of SMP Sabbihisma Padang in writing recount?
3. What is the frequency level of each type of grammatical errors made by the second year students of SMP Sabbihisma Padang in writing recount?
4. What is the frequency level of each type of mechanical errors made by

the second year students of SMP Sabbihisma Padang in writing recount?

METHOD

The method of this research is descriptive qualitative. This methodtries to solve the problem in this time, which has actual characteristic. Because of this characteristic, the researcher does not use the hypothesis as temporary answer to solve the problem. The work way of descriptive qualitative is collecting the data, arranging the data and interpreting the data. Qualitative research is concerned with description.

Descriptive research is a type or category of research that refers to investigation with utilizes already existing data or non-experimental research with preconceived hypothesis.

The sample of this research was the second year students of Junior High School which consists of two classes; they are VIIIA and VIIIB. Each of them consists of 24 students. Thus, the total number of the participant was 48 students. And the researcher chose 24 of them randomly. The researcher chose them to be the subject of her research because they have already learnt the English Grammar and they also use more English in the classroom.

The instrumentation that would be used to collect the data in this research was a writing test. In writing test, the

researcher asked the students to write paragraph based on the topic given. This test was constructed based on the syllabus of the second year students.

The data of this study was gathered by assigning the students to write recount text in paragraph. It was to found out the types of grammatical and mechanical errors in paragraph writing, students' works were analyzed one by one. There were five steps in gathering the data: the first,administering the test to the students. The second, collecting the student's writing. The third,reading all of the paragraph has been written by the student. The fourth,finding the errors will be made by the students by giving the codes. And the last,analyze the types of error and its source will be made by the students.

In analyzing the data, the researcher used error analysis method. Corder was quoted byEllis (1994: 48) suggests the following steps to conductan error analysis research:

1. Identification of errors

In this step, the researcher studied the acquired data and tried to find out the grammatical and mechanical errors by underlying the errors. The researcher tried to analyze the data as objective as possible.

2. Classification of errors

Once the grammatical errors had been identified, researcher classified them into four categories, they are:Errors in used of linking verb, errors in used of action verb, errors in used of past tense, and errors in used of pronoun.

And in mechanical errors, the researcher classified them to four categories, they were:errors in using period, errors in using comma, errors in using capitalization anderrors in using spelling

3. Calculation of the errors

In this step, researcher calculated the errors in order to know how frequent theseerrors have been made by the students of the second grade SMP Sabbihisma. In calculating the frequency of these each errors, researcher employed the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \text{ x } 100 \text{ \%}$$

P   = Percentage of the students

F   = Frequency of the students

N   = Number of the students' errors

By calculating the frequency of each error, researcher could identify the mostfrequent error and the least frequent error made by the students.

4. Tabelizing the result

Once the errors were calculated and arranged, researcher tabelized the result of the analysis. This table was meant to ease the identification of the

percentage ofeach error. Therefore, the result of the analysis of the grammatical and mechanical errors inrecount writing made by the students of second grade SMP Sabbihisma was presented in the form of a table.

5. Drawing a conclusion

The last step would be drawing a conclusion based on the analysis. In this step, researcher had to make a valid conclusion in the form of a brief descriptionof the errors.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research are presented in two parts: types of grammatical errors and types of punctuation errors.

Based on the observation and the analysis on the 24 (twenty four) of students' writing papers of the Junior High School Sabbihisma Padang, it was found that there were many types of students' grammatical errors. The types of errors were observed and analyzed based on the surface structure taxonomy. The types of errors founded are: 1) Omission types, 2) Additions types, 3) Misformation types.

The students' errors on the omission types, especially on theomission of major constituents were founded on the omission of linking verb, omission of action verb, omission of simple past tense, and omission of specific participant.

From data on the table, it shown us that the students who made errors in omission of action verb were in highest number. After separating the errors in those categories or their topics, the researcher would mention each item and analyzed the errors. To make clear about elucidation above, the researcher would present the types of errors and analysis as follows:

1. **Findings on Grammatical Errors**
   a. **Omission of Major Constituents**
   1) Omission of "Nominal"

   It was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 54 or (20%) errors in categorization on omission of "linking verb"

   Those sentences were written by the students (sample). From grammatical point of views those sentences were incorrect since those sentences did not use "nominal" for adjective or nominal (to be) in the form of simple past tense. Nominal (to be) or adjective in the form of simple past tense should use "to be" (was, were) but the students activity omitted it.

   2) Omission of "action verb"

   In students' writing result, it was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 92 or (35%) errors in categorization on omission of "action verb"

   The student omit verb in sentence. The sentence should use the past form of the verb (verb 2) after subject. The correct forms

from the sentences above are as follows:

3) Omission of "pronoun"

From the students' writing result, it was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 21 or (05%) errors in categorization on omission of "linking verb"

The students omitted a subject in a sentence and it causes confusion in understanding of sentence and the reader did not know who is mean by writer.

a. Addition Types

1) Addition of "nominal"

It was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 31 or (27%) errors in categorization on addition of "linking verb"

From grammatical point of view, those sentences are incorrect. Actually, verbal sentence in the form of simple past tense did not use "to be" before the verb.

2) Addition of "action verb"

In students' writing result, it was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 54 or (48%) errors in categorization on addition of "linking verb"

Grammatically, the sentences a and b are incorrect because in past sentences, the verb has not to be followed by -ing at the end of the verb. Whether in sentences c and d, the students also failed to recognize the past form of the verb. Instead of using the past form, they added

the verb with –*ed*. This is wrong since the verb is the irregular one. They can not add –*ed*, they just generalized that the past form of the verbs are always added by –*ed*. The correct forms from the sentences above are as follows:

b. Misformations Types

1) Selection of "nominal"

From the students' writing result, it was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 33 or (14%) errors in categorization on selection of "linking verb"

Some of the sentences written by the students in recount writing. Grammatically sentences a and f are incorrect since the verb "be" –was –is not used for the plural noun and plural pronoun. Subjects for the plural in the form of simple past tense should use to be (were). But in the example above, the students use "to be" was. The sentences b, c, d, and e, the students failid use nominal in past form.

2) Selection of "verb"

It was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 85 or (35%) errors in categorization on omission of "linking verb"

The students failed to recognize the past form of the verbs. This is incorrect since in telling their past experiences they should use the past form of the verbs (verb 2).

3) Selection of " pronoun and possessive"

In students' writing recount, it was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 41 or (17%) errors in categorization on selection of "possessive"

The students can not differentiate between possessive adjective and possessive pronoun. They do not understand how to use possessive adjective and possessive pronoun.

2. Findings on Mechanical Errors

From data on the table above, it shown us that the students who made errors in omission of commas were in highest number. After separating the errors in those categories or their topics, the researcher would mention each item and analyzed the errors. To make clear about elucidation above, the researcher would present the types of errors and analysis as follows.

1) Omission Types

From the table 8, it can be seen that the students had made errors on omission types.

a. Omission of Periods

It was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 34 or (14%) errors in categorization on omission of "period"

The student omits the period in writing a title. As a result, the students have omission errors since he did not use period there.

b. Omission of Comma

In students' writing recount, it was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 128 or (53%) errors in categorization on omission of "comma"

The students missed to put comma that required them to use it. Actually, the students have to use comma after an introductory phrase or subordinate clause. Thyner E Thomas argues that is appropriate to use comma after an introductory phrase or subordinate clause. Subordination is the use of complex sentences containing dependent clauses, which are introduced by because, although, while, when, if, since, etc.

c. Omission of Capitalization

From the students' writing recount, it was found that the students did the 56 or (23%) errors in categorization on selection of "capitalization".

The students missed to capitalize in names of specific group of people (nationality, races, and ethnic groups), language and religion. Actually, they have to capitalize in the names of country.

d. Omission of Spelling

It was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 22 or (9%) errors in categorization on omission of "spelling"

The students missed to put "e". Second, the students missed to put "o" after "i". The third, students missed to put "l". The fourth, students missed "n" after "o". The fifth, the students missed to put "t" after "e".

2) Addition types

a. Addition of Periods

In students' writing recount, it was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 71 or (45%) errors in categorization on addition of "period"

Here, the students added period in a sentence where they were not allowed to adding it. The sentences are not in related idea, so it is wrong to combine them by using period but they should be separated by using comma. Hogue and Oshima (1988) argue that period is commonly used at the end of statement. Actually, there is no punctuation mark allowed using in title. In this case the students used period.

b. Addition of Comma

In students' writing recount, it was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 36 or (23%) errors in categorization on addition of "comma"

Here, the students added comma in a sentence where they were not allowed adding it. Because two or more sentences that are not in related idea and may not be combined by using comma. Actually, comma follows each item in a series. If we have only two or three things or items in our sentence, it is not included to a series, and we may not use comma among them. Here, we just use "and" to describe them.

Hogue and Oshima (1988) argue another rule of using comma is the comma is used to set the series of words. For the example above, it is not set the series of words and we may not use comma among them. Here, we just use "and" to describe them.

c. Addition of Capitalization

In students' writing recount, it was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 33 or (21%) errors in categorization on addition of "capitalization"

In this case, the students capitalized the letter in a word that was not allowed them capitalizing it. Actually, we only need to capitalize the first word of sentence, but not in the middle of the sentence. Hogue and Oshima (1988) argue one of the rules in capitalization is capitalizing the first word of sentence.

d. Addition of Spelling

In students' writing recount, it was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 17 or (11%) errors in categorization on addition of "spelling"

In this case, the students added some unnecessary letter in their word.the first student added letter "r" in a word, the second student added "ed", the third student added "u", and the fourth student added "i" after letter "a".

3) Misformation Types

a. Selection of Periods

It was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 8 or (5%) errors

in categorization on selection of "period".

In this type of errors, the students used period in the wrong places. Actually, two sentences that are in related idea may not be separated by period. They should be combined by using comma. Corder (1973:277) states that selection is characterized by incorrect placement or position of morpheme or a group of morpheme in an utterance. Here, the students had a misplacement error because she put period in the place that should be placed by comma.

b. Selection of Comma

It was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 7 or (5%) errors in categorization on selection of "comma".

In this type of errors, the students used comma in the wrong places. Students have to know the rule that two sentences that are in related idea may not be separated by period. It has to be combined by using comma to make our meaning clear. The sentences show that they are related in ideas, so, it is better to combine it become one sentence by using comma. Corder (1973:277) states that selection is characterized but incorrect placement or position of morpheme or a group of morpheme in an utterance. Here, the students put period in the wrong place.

c. Selection of Spelling

It was found in the students' recount result that the students did the 57 or (38%) errors in categorization on selection of "spelling".

In this type of errors, an error happened when students put the letter in wrong position in a word. The first example, the students had incorrect placement of letter "e" and "i". They put "e" in a place that should be placed by "i". The second, they put "a" in a place that should be placed by "e". The third, they had incorrect placement of letter "h" and "i". They put "h" in a place that should be placed by "i". The fourth, they put "a" in a place that should be placed by "e".

Based on the above finding, in fact the students had made various types and level of errors grammatical and punctuation errors. In the case of grammatical error, the most frequent error the student had made in grammar is on the omission type that was the omission of action verb; however, they had never made error on the addition type in the case of double marking of regular past. Moreover, in the case of punctuation error, the most frequent error the student made is in the omission of comma.

It is seen that the students had made errors dominantly on the omission of grammatical components in writing their recount. Based on the review of related literature it could be happened because for the teaching

of grammar was isolated from the teaching and application of writing skills as what Murrow (2004:3) discussed (based on Braddock and Ozbek's idea). She says, "Related to the writing process the case of teaching grammar seldom improves writing, and may even be detrimental. Although grammar is the first prerequisite for effective writing, students are unable to made use of the grammar they known in composition on courses. This arise because they are taught grammar in isolation, and do not have the opportunity to apply it in actual discourse".

Moreover, related to other relevant research finding done by Suzanne (2005) on the Grammatical and Diction Errors made by the first year Students of SMAN 2 Padang when speaking English, where there are three types of grammatical errors made by the students in using articles and prepositions (omission, addition, and misformation), so, in this research such types of grammatical errors are also found. Therefore, it can be said that the students tended to make grammatical errors on these three types, both in speaking and in writing English.

Moreover, it can be seen that the students had made punctuation errors dominantly in the use of comma and capital letter. Based in the review of related literature as what Enlirch (1977) says that punctuation errors is because at the tendency

today that is to use as little punctuation as possible and because few writer can writer for long without having to punder whether a comma, for example, is needed in a particular sentence. So, in this research, the students also made punctuation errors in writing theirs academic papers, it is because of the above tendency. Although Enrich, Barnet and Stubbs (1990:709) discussed that punctuation has only one function that of making writing clearer for the reader, and even when punctuation is not the key to get the meaning of the writing things, it usually helps readers to get their meaning across neatly. The night punctuation enables readers to move easily thought the sentences.

Related to what has been found and discussed by the expert and previous research findings, it can be considered that for the future teaching activities, grammar and punctuation teaching processes should be in an integrated process. They should be the application of grammar and punctuation on the writing teaching and learning activities.

CONCLUSION

From research finding and discussion in chapter IV, it seemed that the errors made by the second year students of Sabbihisma Padang in recount writing especially in (Grammatical) were nominal, verbal, pronoun and possessive adjective. And in (mechanical) were period, comma,

capitalization and spelling. Based on the findings on this research, some conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. There are three types of grammatical errors found in using linking verb, action verb, simple past tense and pronoun. They were omission, addition and selection.

2. The types of Mechanics errors made by the students in recount writing are: errors in punctuation (errors in using period, comma, capitalization), and spelling).

3. The research finding states that the type of grammatical error that frequently made by the students of SMPIT Sabbihisma Padang in recount writing is omission of action verb with the number of error is 92 or (35%).

   The second rate of error frequency is selection of action verb, the frequency of this error is 85 or (35%). Most of the students did this error because English language is different from Indonesia. In Indonesia language, there is no rule about past form. They missed to change the verb from the first form to second form.Sometime, they forgot to distinguish the verb which one regular and irregular.

   According to the findings, it can be concluded that the students have not mastered the use of verb groups. We can see it from the number of the errors made. Although they had been taught about it before, they were still confused which one to use when making a grammatical sentence. It could be because in bahasa Indonesia we do not have the verb conjugations. We do not have time signaling in expressing ideas. They are unfamiliar to this form and because English is still foreign for them. And those are the possible causes of their errors. And the third, errors in using pronoun 21 (08%) are not serious because a few of students made errors. The students still confused in deciding which pronoun should be used tosubstitute nouns, whether it is personal, relative, possessive, or demonstrative pronouns. .

4. In this research, in the errors found that most of the students use period (22%) and comma (32%); 2) errors in capitalization most of the students made error in capitalizing the letter (32%). And 3) errors in spelling (19%) are most of the students wrong to put a letter in word.

   It can be concluded that the students had made errors dominantly on the omission of grammatical components in writing a recount text. It is because of the teaching of grammar were isolated from the

teaching and application of writing skills. In the writing process, the case of teaching grammar seldom improves writing, and many evev be detrimental. In fact, grammar is the first prerequisite for effective writing, but students are unable to use grammar they known in composition courses. This arises because they are taught grammar in isolation, and do not have the opportunity to apply it in actual discourse.

From the findings and discussions it is also concluded that the students had made punctuation errors in 4 types of punctuation. They had made errors in the use of period,

comma, capitalization and spelling. However, they had made errors in the use of comma and period in the high level. It happened because there is the tendency to use as little punctuation as possible and fewer writers can write for long without having to ponder whether punctuation, a comma for example, is needed in a particular sentence.

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