

THE ANALYSIS ON PASSIVE VOICE ERRORS ON STUDENTS' THESES AGREED FOR FOLLOWING THE FINAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

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Abstract

This article is part of the writers' research on the grammatical error analysis. It is the research on the students' theses as the final academic projects for getting the strata one degree at English Department of FKIP UMMY Solok. Ideally the students who have been allowed for joining the final comprehensive exam should be able to write their theses by using correct grammar. However, it was found that some of them still made errors in writing their theses. The aim of this research was to identify the types and percentage of grammatical errors in using passive voice that had been made by the students in their writing products in terms of theses agreed by their advisors for joining the final comprehensive exam. This research was carried out by using descriptive research design. The population of this research was the documents in form of the 81 students' theses which have been agreed for following the final comprehensive exam at three periods of final comprehensive exams from 2012/2013 until 2013/2013 at the English Department of FKIP UMMY Solok. Random sampling technique was used to collect 10 theses (about 10% of the population) as the sample. In collecting the data, the researchers read and analyzed all of the 10 students' theses. It was found that the students made errors in using passive voice in each type of surface strategy taxonomy. The highest level of the students' grammatical error on passive voice usage is on "Omission" type. The omission in *preposition, to be, conjunction, and verbare* about 74.7 % (it is at the highest level). It indicated that the students who had been allowed to follow the final comprehensive exam for their theses still have problem in using passive voice in writing their theses. The lecturers of grammar are suggested to paymore attention to and consider the appropriate teaching technique in teaching English grammar, especially in teaching passive voice. It is also suggested to students' advisors to have more corrections on the students' errors during the correcting process of their students' errors, especially in using passive voice in writing their theses.

Key words/phrases: *grammatical error analysis, passive voice, students' theses*

Introduction

Grammar is one of components of language which is used to give the meaning to the structure of a language. It is an essential part of the use of language process, both in spoken and written language. It is the description of the ways in which the language uses patterns of structure to convey the meaning. It also serves to enhance and sharpen the expression of meaning. So, by using good grammar system of a language, it will be helpful in delivering ideas, messages, and feelings either to the listeners or readers. It means that if there are grammatical errors in using language, in academic writing for example, it will result the disorganized writing and will cause some communicative problems.

Based on the curriculum used at English Department of FKIP Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin University all of students have to be able to write the academic writings in English. One of the academic writings is their theses. It is their final project in form of their research reports for finishing their studies to get the strata one degree. In writing these theses they should master English grammar rules. They have to consider and use appropriate grammar in order to be easy for the readers to get their ideas. However, it is found that there are many grammatical errors that had been made by the students in their theses although those theses had been agreed by their advisors for joining the final comprehensive exam—the last exam for getting the sarjana degree. Those errors were in punctuation, sentence structure, paragraph development, diction, vocabulary usage, constructing active and passive voices, and the use of parts of speech. In this research the analysis focused on the use of passive voice in students' scientific writings—theses.

In fact, there are many good ideas on teaching and learning components that have been written by the English Department students of FKIP UMMY Solok in their theses. Those ideas can give positive contributions for the readers who want the improvement and development of English teaching and learning process in the classroom. However, many sentences in these theses were written ungrammatically, especially in using passive voice. The students make errors in identifying kinds of tense in passive form. In each kind of tenses, they still have difficulties to determine the use of "to be" (*is, am, are, was, were, be, been, being*) as a main verb or auxiliary verb corresponded with the subjects as its attendance in a sentence. They should be

more careful with the transformation of "to be" when they have to change an active sentence into a passive one.

Some of students still did not understand more about the form of passive voice. As the result, they had not been able to construct their ideas in passive sentence appropriately. The students still used verb one or verb two instead of *-ed* participle in making sentences in using passive voice. Some of them were difficult to determine or identify object in active sentence. So, they were still confused to change active sentence to become passive sentence. Because of the conditions above the researchers wanted to describe the analysis results of the students' errors on grammar in using passive voice in their theses agreed for following the final comprehensive exam at the three periods of final comprehensive exam from 2012/2013- 2013/2014 at the English Department of FKIP UMMY Solok. The reason of choosing the three periods was to know whether the errors were decreased from one period to others.

Literary Review

Numerous studies on passive have been conducted from various spectrums to obtain thorough understanding on both passive and active voice constructions. One of them is the research conducted by Yanuar, et al (2014) who conducted the research on the comparison usage of active and passive voice. Passive voice construction is mainly used in method section to get rid of personal whims and fancies, and thus obtain impersonality and universality of the research (Ahmad, 2012). Ahmad found that 70% of passive was implemented in method of Medical and Natural Science articles. Baratta (2009) investigated the stance derived from the passive voice as it was an advantageous tool to indicate the writer's feeling, which underlined the speaker as the subject focus, not as the rear-object. Passive voice to indicate author's stance is supported by the semantic class of words, that each word conveys different meaning and purpose. Biber (2004) gave new sight on how stance verbs vary from different kinds of genre, including academic writing. There are several forms of passive, mostly are constructed in form of the auxiliary be and an *-ed* participle. However, passive can also be formed with auxiliary get, which is called the get-passive. Passive construction occurs either as short passive or long passive. Long passive contain a by-phrase which specifies the agent of the action, however there are also exception to the use of *by* to govern the agentive phrase, i.e *the room was permeated with gay and he is known to me* (Coetzee, 1980). In principle, the long passive can be replaced by an active clause with the same meaning, yet it will be less appropriate than the passive voice (Biber et al., 2003).

Biber et al.'s (2003) principals for choosing long passives in writing include: (1) the information-flow, in which preference for presenting new information at the end of a clause; (2) end-weight, in this case the agent does not hold up the processing of the rest of the clause; and (3) the long passive place initial emphasis on an element of the clause, which is the topic or theme. In other words, long passive construction allows the object agent to have less attention from the readers and somehow lack of responsibility. Meanwhile, short passive is when the agent is not specified. According to Biber, et al. (2003), the short passive is a useful device in academic writing because it gives the status of topic to the direct object of the corresponding active clause. The sense of objective detachment also appears by employing the non-agentive passive.

There are more ideas about the concept of passive voice and its advantages in writing. According to Duke Graduate School Scientific Writing Resource (2013: 6) there are many advantages of using passive voice, especially in writing scientific writing. The advantages can be as: 1) **Passive stressed what was done.** It makes sense to use passive to stress what was done if that is the purpose of writing. 2) **Passive is more objective and scientific.** Some people claim that passive voice is inherently more scientific than active voice. The use of passive voice encourages precision and probity. The use of passive voice let the facts stand on their own, removes some accusations of bias, and presents an "air" of feeling of logic. **Passive voice provides structure control.** The passive is not only acceptable but a necessary tool if a writer is to have complete control over the structuring of sentences. In this case the key to use passive voice is to switch the order of the subject and object. It is important to have the correct backwards-linking information at the beginning of the sentence. Passive voice has its place in scientific writing and has many functions in writing even orally. Using passive voice more scientific, objective, and provides structure control because of that, most of researchers tended to use passive voice in their written. It should be used when necessary to maintain the cohesion.

Methodology, Result, and Discussion

The kind of this research is a descriptive research. It is the error analysis process. Error analysis, according to Sokeng (2014) is a branch of applied linguistics, emerged to demonstrate that learner errors were not only because of the learner's native language, but also reflected some universal learning strategies. This was as a reaction to the contrastive analysis theory, which considered interference as the basic process of second

language learning. Richards and Schmidt (2010: 201) define Error Analysis (EA) as the study and analysis of the errors made by second language learners. EA may be carried out in order to identify strategies which learners use in language learning, to try to identify the causes of learner errors and obtain information on common difficulties in language learning, to act as an aid to teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials.

This research was aimed at identifying the types and percentage of students' grammatical errors in using passive voice in their academic writing in terms of theses agreed by their advisors for joining the final comprehensive exam. The population of this research was the document in form of the whole students' theses which had been agreed by the advisors for following the final comprehensive exam at the three periods of final comprehensive exam (from 2012/2013 – 2013/2014) at the English Department of FKIP UMMY Solok. There has been taken 10% from the whole of the population. There were 10 students' theses as the sample of this research. All of these theses have been analyzed to determine types of passive voice errors that had been made by the students.

The instrument of the research was the students' theses. These theses were the key instruments of the research in order to know the grammatical errors on Surface Strategy Taxonomy that had been made by the students in using passive voice in their theses. Observation sheets in form of tables with the indicators for grammatical errors was other instrument used for collecting the data on how the errors made by the students in using passive voice. All of the errors were collected and classified based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy suggested by Dulay (1982: 150). By reading the whole sentences made by the students in their theses the whole identified grammatical errors on passive voice have been tabulated into the table of observation sheets.

To analyze the data, first, the researchers as the analysts had to write down and incorporate the whole grammatical errors in using passive voice. Second, the whole identified grammatical errors have been classified based on their types and then they were put in tables of observation sheets. Finally, to calculate the percentage of each type of the students' errors the researchers had to use the formula that is suggested by Arikunto (2009) where the frequency of each type of error (in percentage) was calculated by dividing the frequency or number of errors in each category/type with the total number of identified errors then multiplied with one hundred percent. The percentage then was classified into the following interval table as suggested by Arikunto (2009):

Table 1: The Classification Level of Students' Error

| Interval of Students' Error | Classification of Students' Error |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 81% - 100% | Very high |
| 61% - 80% | High |
| 41% - 60% | Average |
| 21% - 40% | Low |
| 0% - 20% | Very low |

Findings of the Research

Based on the analysis of passive voice on the 10 (ten) of students theses agreed for following the final comprehensive at three periods of final comprehensive exam (from 2012/2013 – 2013/2014) at the English Department of FKIP UMMY Solok, it was found that there were many types of students' grammatical errors in using passive voice based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy Dulay (1982: 150). They were: *Omissions, Additions, Misformations and Misordering* types, can be seen on the following tables:

Table 2: Students' Grammatical Errors in Using *Passive Voice* Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

| Students' Theses | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Total Number of Errors | % | |
|---------------------------|----|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------------------------|-----|-------|
| Surface Strategy Taxonomy | OM | Prep | 11 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | 13 | 2.7% |
| | | TB | 18 | 15 | 17 | 39 | 37 | 33 | 18 | 26 | 16 | 17 | 236 | 49.2% |
| | | CI | 8 | 8 | 9 | 28 | 10 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 89 | 18.6% |
| | | VR | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | 10 | 2% |
| | AD | DM | - | 2 | - | 4 | 1 | 2 | - | 2 | - | 1 | 12 | 2.5% |
| | | RG | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| MF | SA | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | RE | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | AF | 9 | 1 | - | 2 | 12 | - | 2 | - | 2 | 1 | 29 | 6% |
| | AL | 8 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 15 | 6 | 4 | 68 | 14.2% |
| MO | SJ | 4 | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 8 | 1.7% |
| | Auxi | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 0.2% |
| Total Number of Errors | | 61 | 47 | 30 | 82 | 71 | 46 | 36 | 50 | 27 | 30 | 480 | 100% |

Notes:

OM = Omission AD = Addition MF = Mis-Formation MO = Mis-ordering
 Prep = Preposition DM = Double Marking RE = Regulations Errors SJ = Subject
 TB = To be RG = Regulation AF = Archie Forms Auxi = Auxiliary
 CJ = Conjunction SA = Simple Addition AL = Alternative Forms
 VR = Verb

From the table 2 above, it can be seen that the students had grammatical errors in using *passive voice* based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy categories. In the *Omission Category* their total number of errors on omission of *preposition* was 16 (3.4%), in omission of *to be* was 230 (49.1%), in omission of *conjunction* was 94 (20%), and in omission of *verb* was 10 (2.1%). In *Addition Category* the students' total number of errors on *double marking* was 12 (2.6%), in addition of *regularization* and *simple addition* there is no student who made errors. In *Misformation Category* there is no student who made errors in *regularization*, in *archie form* their total number of errors was 29 (6.1%), and in *alternative forms* was 68 (14.5%). In *Misordering Category* the students' total number of errors on *subject* was 8 (1.7%), and the last, in *auxiliary* was 1 (0.2%). It seems that the most frequent errors in using *passive voice* the students had made are errors on omission of "to be".

In this research the researcher analyzed students' grammatical errors in using *passive voice* based on surface strategy taxonomy categories. There are four types of errors based on this category: Omission, Addition, Misformation and Misordering. The followings are the *Findings on Omission Type*:

Table 3: Students' Grammatical Errors in Using *Passive Voice* on Omission Types Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

| Students' Theses | Surface Strategy Taxonomy | | | | Total Number of Errors |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|------|------------------------|
| | OMISSION | | | | |
| | Prep | TB | CJ | VR | |
| 1 | 11 | 18 | 8 | 3 | 40 |
| 2 | - | 15 | 8 | 1 | 24 |
| 3 | - | 17 | 9 | 1 | 27 |
| 4 | - | 39 | 28 | 1 | 68 |
| 5 | - | 37 | 10 | 4 | 51 |
| 6 | - | 33 | 5 | - | 38 |
| 7 | 1 | 18 | 7 | - | 26 |
| 8 | 1 | 26 | 5 | - | 32 |
| 9 | - | 16 | 2 | - | 18 |
| 10 | - | 17 | 7 | - | 24 |
| Total Number of Errors | 13 | 236 | 89 | 10 | 348 |
| % | 3.7% | 67.8% | 25.6% | 2.9% | 100% |

Based on the table 3 above it can be seen that in writing their theses, the students had made some kinds of *omission* errors. In the omission of *preposition*, the total number of error was 16 (4.6%), in the omission of *to be* was 230 (65.7%), in the omission of *conjunction* was 94 (26.7%) and in the omission of *verb* was 10 (2.9%). It seems that the students made errors on the omission of *to be* more frequently than other omission category. However, they made errors on the omission of *verb* less frequently than others. The *findings on Addition Type* can be seen in table 4 below. It can be seen that the students had made errors in *passive voice* on addition type in category of *double marking*. The total number of error was 13 (3.7%). In the *regularization* and in the *simple addition* category there is no student who made errors.

Table 4: Students' Grammatical Errors in Using *Passive Voice* on Addition Types Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

| Students' Theses | Surface Strategy Taxonomy | | | Total Number of Errors |
|------------------------|---------------------------|----|----|------------------------|
| | ADDITION | | | |
| | DM | RG | SA | |
| 1 | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 |
| 3 | - | - | - | - |
| 4 | 4 | - | - | 4 |
| 5 | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| 6 | 2 | - | - | 2 |
| 7 | - | - | - | - |
| 8 | 2 | - | - | 2 |
| 9 | - | - | - | - |
| 10 | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Total Number of Errors | 12 | - | - | 12 |
| % | 100% | - | - | 100% |

The followings are the *Findings on Misformation Type*:

Table 5: Students' Grammatical Errors in Using *Passive Voice* on Misformation Types Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

| Students' Theses | Surface Strategy Taxonomy | | | Total Number of Errors |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------|-----|------------------------|
| | MISFORMATION | | | |
| | RE | AF | AL | |
| 1 | - | 9 | 8 | 17 |
| 2 | - | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| 3 | - | - | 3 | 3 |
| 4 | - | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| 5 | - | 12 | 7 | 19 |
| 6 | - | - | 6 | 6 |
| 7 | - | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| 8 | - | - | 15 | 15 |
| 9 | - | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| 10 | - | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Total Number of Errors | - | 29 | 68 | 97 |
| % | - | 29.9% | 70% | 100 |

From the table 5 above, it can be seen that the students errors on *misformation* type are: 1) in the *regularization* category there is no student who made error. In the *archie forms* category the total number of error was 29 (29.9%), and in the *alternative forms* category was 68 (70%). It can be seen that students had made errors in *alternative forms* category more than in *archie forms* category.

The next are the findings on *Misordering Type*. From the table 6 below, it can be seen that the students had made errors in *misordering* type. In the *subject* category the total number of error was 8 (88.9%). Meanwhile in *auxiliary* category was 1 (11.1%). It seems that the students had make errors more frequently in *subject* of *misordering* types of passive voice.

Table 6: Students' Grammatical Errors in Using *Passive Voice* on Misordering Types Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

| Students' Theses | Surface Strategy Taxonomy | | Total Number of Errors |
|------------------|---------------------------|------|------------------------|
| | Misordering | | |
| | SJ | Auxi | |
| 1 | 4 | - | 4 |
| 2 | - | - | - |
| 3 | - | - | - |

| | | | |
|------------------------|-------|-------|------|
| 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 5 | - | - | - |
| 6 | - | - | - |
| 7 | 1 | - | 1 |
| 8 | 1 | - | 1 |
| 9 | 1 | - | 1 |
| 10 | - | - | - |
| Total Number of Errors | 8 | 1 | 9 |
| % | 88.9% | 11.1% | 100% |

Moreover, in general, the types and level of students' grammatical errors can be shown in the following table:

Table 7: The Types and Level of the Students' Grammatical Errors

| No. | The Types of Errors | Total Frequency of Errors | Percentage of Errors | Level of Students' Errors |
|-----|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Omission | 348 | 74,7 % | High |
| 2 | Addition | 12 | 2,6 % | Very low |
| 3 | Misformation | 97 | 20,8% | Very low |
| 4 | Misordering | 9 | 1,9% | Very low |
| | Total Number of Errors | 466 | 100% | |

Table 7 above shows that in general the levels of the students' errors on grammar in using passive voice are various. The highest level of their errors is on the **omission** type that is 74.7 % (**high**). On the other types **additions**, **misformation** and **misordering** types, their level of errors in using passive voice are **very low** (2.6%, 20.8%, and 1.9%).

Discussion

The result of this research found that the students had made errors on grammar in using passive voice. Based on types of Surface Strategy Taxonomy the first type—omission is at a high level of error with the percentage is 74.7 %. The second—the addition type is at a very low level with the percentage is 2.6 %. Third type—misformation is at a very low level too with the percentage 20.8 %. The last type—misordering is also at a very low level with the percentage 1.9 %. In the case of using passive voice, the most frequent grammatical error made by the students in using passive voice in their theses at the three periods of final comprehensive exam is on *omission* type. As Richards and Schmidt (2010) say an error results from incomplete knowledge. It is made by a learner when writing or speaking and is caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspect of performance (p. 201). Hubbard et al. (1983) say all incorrect forms produced by students are errors but it is important to make a difference between genuine errors caused by the lack of knowledge about the target language or incorrect hypotheses about it and mistakes caused by temporary lapses of memory confusion, slips of the tongue and so on (p. 134). Sokeng (2014) quotes Erdogan (2005) suggests two ways to distinguish between an error and a mistake: the first one is to check the consistency of learner's performance. If he sometimes uses the correct form and sometimes the wrong one, it is a mistake. However, if he always uses it incorrectly, it is then an error. The second way is to ask learner to try to correct his own deviant utterance. Where he is unable to, the deviations are errors; where he is successful, they are mistakes.

The results of this study have shown that the students made a lot of different types of grammatical errors in using passive voice. The sources of these errors can be interlingual and intralingual. Great care should be taken by anyone grammar lecturers or students' theses advisors. In order to check that their writing does not contain any grammatical mistakes, learners also have to carefully proofread their work and check that all the sentences are well-labelled and stated.

Another recommendation is that it is also best to check using grammar books so as to be really sure that the meaning the learner is trying to pass is clear and the grammar he is using is correct. The best way can be to say in simple ways what the learner has to say.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Conclusion

Based on the result of the data analysis on in the ten (10) of students' theses agreed by the advisors for following the final comprehensive exam at the three periods of final comprehensive exams (from the first semester of 2012/2013 until first semester of 2013/2014 academic year) at the English Department of FKIP

UMMY Solok, it can be concluded that the students had made various types and level of errors in using passive voice in their theses. They had made errors dominantly on the *Omission* type. It is at a **high level**, but they have errors on *Addition/Misformation*, and *Misordering* types at **very low level**. In general it can be concluded that **Average Level**. These errors are because of most of the students did not understand how to use accurate grammar on passive voice. They cannot check their errors by themselves while they are writing. All of errors happen because their errors were not checked by their advisors before they were allowed to follow the final comprehensive exam.

Suggestions

Based on the finding of the research and conclusion above, it is suggested to the future students of English department to pay close attention to the use of correct grammar, especially in using passive voice in writing their theses as the academic writings. The students should follow their advisors' correction in the errors they had made in their theses. It means that the students' theses advisors should pay attention to the action of analyzing and correcting their students' errors in using passive voice. Because these are errors, so the students cannot check their errors by themselves. So, advisors' correction is needed to minimize their students' grammar errors in order to get the high language quality of their theses. It is also suggested to the English lectures who teach grammar at the English Department of FKIP UMMY Solok to teach grammar, especially in teach passive voice, integratedly with the writing activities.

Lectures should be able to not only detect and describe the errors from a linguistic view, but also to understand the psychological reasons for their occurrences. Correction of errors is as important as identification and description of them. Such research work should help lecturers to be aware of the most common and salient grammatical errors students make and they should be able to make use of them in the teaching process appropriately.

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