PATTERNS OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN STUDENTS' THESIS

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Abstract: Grammar is badly needed by all thesis writers in order that they can produce good outputs as expected by the English Education Department. Therefore, the study aims to reveal the types of grammatical errors and to identify the most types of grammatical errors in students' thesis. In this research, the researcher employed a descriptive qualitative method. In this study, the researchers only focused on analyzing the grammatical errors in English students' thesis at the University of Mataram using a surface strategy taxonomy. The researchers used a purposive sampling method to gather the data. The data were derived from students' theses submitted between 2018 and 2020. There were a total of 9 theses studied for the purpose. The data were classified into 4 determined categories suggested by the theory of Surface Strategy Taxonomy, i.e. (1) Omission, (2) Addition, (3) Misformation and (4) Misordering. The result of the study shows that the theses under investigation contained the four categories of errors. There were a total number of 275 errors found in students' theses. The most common types of errors were in Misformation (49.81%) and the least one was Misordering (0.72%). Implication of the present study is provided succinctly in the concluding part of this article.

Keywords: grammatical error, error analysis, students' thesis

INTRODUCTION

As the final project of an undergraduate student, a thesis is a compulsory a scientific paper that should contain coherent, logical, and scientific research. It should follow the rules of academic writing strictly. A thesis ideally proposes a theoretical proposition that is able to show unique things related to the theory studied in a particular scientific field, to be later proven through scientific research. As scientific research, a thesis is a planned academic activity in an effort to produce knowledge based on empirical data and/or information that is true, new, and valid, which is based on theories and concepts using scientific research methods. Before conducting research, they receive intensive guidance and supervision from their supervisors to develop their research methods, data collection, analysis techniques, and presentation of results of their research. They are demanded to be able to employ their knowledge and skills in analyzing, describing, and explaining a problem related to the phenomenon they study.

In order that students' theses can be accepted by the English Education Department, they should be grammatically well written in English. At this point, it can be stated that grammar plays an important role to make the written language in the theses meaningful and acceptable. In other words, grammar is vital and inseparable from theses writing process. At this point, it can be restated that grammar is badly needed by all thesis writers in order that they can produce good outputs as expected by the English Education Department.

Although grammar has been taught to the students of the English Education Department for more than 3 semesters, however, students seem to have problems with grammatical errors in their thesis writing. Such errors are still widely found in most of the students' writing products. These errors might be trivial and can be ignored, but they may bring any consequences to the quality of the writing products. This fact indicates that many of the students of the English Education Department face difficulties in writing a thesis. Writing is

considered the most difficult skill, not only it requires a lot of vocabulary in composing a paragraph but also good knowledge of grammar in order easy to understand. Therefore, composing a paragraph in writing activity is the hardest one and it takes a lot of time to think about the idea as argued to what the students do in oral activities.

Generally, students found it problematic dealing with English writing. According to Fitrawati and Safitri (2021), students are often confronted with serious problems of grammatical errors when they are assigned to write assignment such as thesis, journal, proposal, paper, etc. This signifies that grammar is badly needed when students need to write understandable piece of written works. Students who conduct academic writing know this. Although they know that grammar is one of the main ingredients in scientific writing which must be considered and given extra attention, many English learners often neglect it. In general, English Foreign Language (EFL) students still make considerable grammatical errors during writing classes.
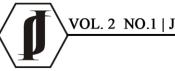
Considering the importance of grammar knowledge for thesis writers, this research attempts to investigate possible grammatical problems that students make in their theses. By analyzing their errors, the researchers may learn more deeply about the types of grammatical errors contained in students' theses. With this in mind, the researchers proposes to write a thesis on the analysis of grammatical errors in students' theses submitted to the English Department of FKIP University of Mataram. The objectives of the study are to reveal patterns of grammatical errors and to identify the most common types of errors in students' thesis.

Grammar is an important part of writing skills to produce understandable and correct sentences. It is considered an essential ingredient for students to master when they construct and develop meaningful thoughts. This idea is in line with Crystal's (2006) proposition. It is said that grammar is entirely central to the study of language. With grammar, speakers or writers of any language can make sense of ideas through the construction of sentences.

In order to analyze a students' written language production, it is important to pay attention or look at their sentence constructions. In English as foreign Language (EFL) setting, the commonest phenomena that appeared from their written production are the appearance of mistakes and errors. Mistakes occur in both native and second language as a result of some sort of slip of the tongue, disordered ungrammaticalities, hesitations, or imperfection in process of generating speech and can be approved also corrected by native speakers. Mistakes are related to the lack of performance such as a slip of the tongue, fatigue, and so on. Thus, mistakes deal with the learners' performance errors where the learner knows the system but fails to use it while errors deal with one's systematic competence. In contrast, errors are considered as an anomaly in the language of the learners. According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982), errors are the malformation of the learner in language or writing. They are related to the lack of learners' competence and it cannot be self-corrected.

There are differences between errors and mistakes. Errors are rule-ordered, systematic in nature, internally principled and free from arbitrariness. It represents the learners' underlying knowledge of the target language that is one's transitional competence. Otherwise, mistakes are random deviations and unrelated to any system. It refers to performance of the learner and might happen in the speech and writing like slip of the tongue, slip of the pen, slip of the ear/hearing and false start.

The present study is an attempt to look at students' writing problems using the theory of Error Analysis (EA). The main purpose of Error Analysis is to describe how learning occurs by examining students' learning outcomes which include their correct and incorrect utterances or written products. There are two approaches to the study of students' errors, i.e. Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA). Contrastive Analysis (CA) concentrates on understanding the learner's errors by identifying the linguistic differences between the learner's first language and target language while Error Analysis (EA) is concentrated on finding and
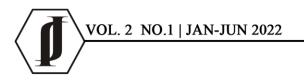
grouping the errors for the importance of language teaching. Contrastive Analysis (CA) aims to compare two languages to determine the potential errors and to identify what needs to be learned and what does not. (Lado, Gass & Selinker, as cited in Sena, 2019).

A number of previous studies of grammatical analysis have been performed to analyze grammatical errors phenomena in writing. First, a study was conducted by Sadiah and Royani (2019) entitled *"An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Students' Writing Descriptive text"*. The results show that 43% of students made errors in Subject Verb Agreement, 19 or 18% in pronoun, 16 or 15% in usages, 13 or 12% in sentence pattern, 9 or 9% in spelling error, and 5 or 5% in capitalization error. The second study entitled *"Grammatical errors Analysis in Students' Recount Text (the case of twelfth year student of SMAN 1 Slawi, Tegal)* was conducted by Haryanto (2007), a student of language and art Faculty Semarang State University. In this study, the researcher found that the total number of errors as many as 235 in which the most common errors in form of verbs. Another previous study was conducted by Emaryana (2010), a students of Tarbiyah and Teachers Training Faculty of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University on the title *"An analysis of grammatical errors in students writing (a case study of first year student of SMAN Cidegud Bogor)*. The result show that 90% of students made errors in capitalization and punctuation.

The previous studies have shown various language errors made English learners in the production of written composition. There were similar difficulties and problems that occurred in their written products due to specific grammatical errors. The previous research studies have also indicated a number of systematic errors that are similar in nature. It can be concluded from these studies that errors have some types of commonalities in English as a foreign language setting. The present study focuses on the errors made by university students in writing their theses. It is an attempt to replicate the previous studies by using a different theoretical perspective, i.e. Surface Strategy Taxonomy Classification (SSTC) to account for the investigated phenomenon. There are a number of concepts used to classify students' errors, i.e., Omission, Addition, Misformation and Misordering. Through this study, the researcher expects to reveal an understanding of error analysis from the SSTC theoretical outlook. The study is also expected to provide future directions for other researchers who want to focus their research on error analysis. The present study aimed to seek the answers to the following research questions: (1) What are the types of grammatical errors in students' thesis at FKIP University of Mataram? (2) What are the most common types of grammatical errors in students' thesis at FKIP University of Mataram?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a qualitative descriptive method. This method aimed to describe exactly a phenomenon or problem that the researcher observes. This means that the researchers investigated the patterns of grammatical errors contained in students' thesis. In this relation, a case study was chosen as the research design. The descriptive analysis qualitative method aims to describe or give an overview of an object of research that will be investigated through samples or data that has been collected. In this study, the researchers only focused on analyzing the grammatical errors based on surface strategy taxonomy in English students' thesis at the University of Mataram. Furthermore, three of students' theses of each year from 2018 - 2020 and overall, with the total of 9 theses were analyzed. The data in this research were taken from English students' theses at FKIP University of Mataram and numerical results were in percentages in table and the errors were descriptively interpreted. The researchers used a document analysis as the basis of collecting data. Document analysis is a systematic procedure to evaluate or to review a document (Bowen, 2008). This research was arranged by some procedures of error analysis stated by Ellis & Barkhuizen (cited in Amiri & Puteh, 2017). Firstly, the researcher collected the document data sampling of the students' thesis at FKIP

University of Mataram and took three of the students' theses from the academic year 2018 to 2020. Secondly, the researchers classified the errors into four subcategories referring to surface strategy taxonomy by selecting and identifying the errors that belong to students' thesis. The researcher might find errors in words, clauses, phrases, tenses, verbs and sentences. A sentence may contain one error or more, and then they were analyzed separately. Thirdly, the result of the data was interpreted descriptively by the researcher. Fourthly, the researchers explain the types of errors in students' thesis at FKIP University of Mataram. Finally, the researchers conducted errors evaluation by tabulating the errors to get the percentage of each subcategory. The researchers made a conclusion based on the data that were already being analyzed using the descriptive analysis technique (percentage) to analyze the data. The formula is as follows:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

P = The Percentage
F = Number of errors
N = Total of errors

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings

The study aimed to discover the patterns of grammatical errors in students' thesis based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy. Four theoretical concepts of error analysis were used to capture the data, i.e. Omission, Addition, Misformation, and Misordering. Table 1 below summarizes the result of the study.

Table 1. Errors on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

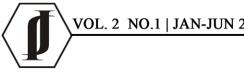| No	Category of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Omission	87	31.63
2.	Addition	49	17.81
3.	Misformation	137	49.81
4.	Misordering	2	0.72
	TOTAL	275	100

The table shows that the highest errors are found in Misformation category. There were 137 errors out of the total 275 errors (49.81%) in 9 theses. The second category belongs to Omission, i.e. 87 errors out of 275 errors (31.63%). This is followed by the Addition category, which was represented by 49 errors out of 275 errors (17.81%). The last category of errors belongs to Misordering, which is represented by 2 out of 275 errors (0.72%). Each category of these errors was further elaborated in the tables below.

Table 2. Distribution of Omission Errors

No	Sub-type of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Omission of Article	41	14.90
2.	Omission of Auxiliary (to be)	21	7.63
3.	Omission of Preposition	16	5.81
4.	Omission of Clause Marker	7	2.54
5.	Omission of Possessive Pronoun	1	0.36
6.	Omission of Pronoun	1	0.36
	TOTAL	87	31.63

The researchers found that there are 6 types of omission errors in the data. The table 2 above shows that the most common types of errors that appeared in the students' theses

were omission of article with total number of 41 errors (14.90%). The frequent case was that the students did not put the required article that makes their sentences grammatically acceptable. Furthermore, the study revealed that the lowest error found in the theses was the omission type of possessive pronoun and pronoun, in which 1 error is for each category. It can be inferred from these findings that students tended to make omission errors in the theses they wrote.

Findings related to the type of addition errors were also identified in the source of data. The Table 3 below shows that the addition category was placed in the second rank of errors. A detailed explanation is given through the examples below. Below is the summary of the findings.

Table 3. Distribution of Addition Errors

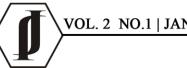| No	Sub-types of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Addition of Article	16	5.81
2.	Addition of Preposition	14	5.09
3.	Addition of Clause Marker	9	3.27
4.	Addition of Plural	4	1.45
5.	Addition of Conjunction	3	1.09
6.	Addition of Verb (ing)	1	0.36
7.	Addition of Pronoun	1	0.36
8.	Addition of verb	1	0.36
	TOTAL	49	17.81

The error of addition is by and large contradictory to the first category mentioned above, i.e., omission. In the addition category, errors were found in the students who put an additional word or phrase in their sentences that are grammatically unnecessary. This causes the appearance of ill-formed sentences. The researchers found that there were 8 sub-types of errors in this category. From the Table 3 above, it can be seen the dominant number of errors were 49 errors (17.81%). The most common type of errors is addition of article (5.81%) while the lowest error is the addition of verb and addition of pronoun (represented by 0.36%).

The Misformation is the third rank of errors in the students' theses. The appearance of these errors indicates that students still have difficulty in determining or using the right words in their theses. Detailed explanation of this error category can be found in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Distribution of Misformation Errors

No	Sub-types of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage (%)
1.	Misformation of SVA	49	17.81
2.	Misformation of Regularization	40	14.54
3.	Misformation of Word Choice	16	5.81
4.	Misformation of Preposition	14	5.09
5.	Misformation of Auxiliary (to be)	12	4.36
6.	Misformation of Letter	5	1.81
7.	Misformation of Article	1	0.36
	TOTAL	137	49.81

Based on the result of data analysis, the researcher found Misformation errors into 7 sub-types. From the table above, it can be concluded that the highest number of errors was found in the students' thesis in the category Misformation of Subject Verb Agreement (SVA) which constitutes 49 errors of the total number (17.81%). The data show that most of the students had problems with the sentence construction involving Subject Verb Agreement. Out

of the total number of Misformation cases, the lowest one dealt with the use of article which was represented by 1 error (0.36%).

Finally, the least type errors found was Misordering. Out of the total numbers of errors, the category of Misordering was only 2 out of the total 275 errors. The case of Misordering was found in the students' incorrect placement of an item or group of item in sentences. The findings indicate that the type of Misordering error made in the students' theses is relatively insignificant.

DISCUSSION

The present study was intended to answer the two research questions aforementioned. To do so, the researchers analyzed and classified the errors found in students' thesis at FKIP University of Mataram based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy (SST) in the type of *Omission, Addition, Misformation*, and *Misordering.*

The findings pertaining to the first research question were in line with the four theoretical categories proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). These four categories were *Omission, Addition, Misformation* and *Misordering.* The finding shows that the most types of errors was found in category of Misformation with 137 errors (49.81%). And the second one is Omission with 87 number of errors (31.63%). The next is followed by Addition with the number of errors are 49 errors (17.81%). The last and the lowest one is Misordering with merely 2 errors (0.72). So, the total number of errors found in students' theses at FKIP University of Mataram based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy Classification (SSTC) are 275 errors.
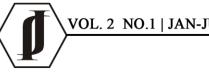
The findings of the second research question show that the most common types of grammatical errors in students' thesis were found in the category of Misformation. The study yields 131 errors (48.69%) regarding Misformation. This was followed by the categories of Omission, Addition, and Misordering. Moreover, the findings also show that the errors made in the students' theses had slightly different ranking orders from the previous studies. Apparently, the study reveals that students' grammatical errors remain unresolved issues. Misformation error was the most predominant problematic issue found in the students' theses.

The results of this study support the theoretical perspective used as the foundation of the current study. Despite some discrepancies, the findings of the present studies show similar route to the previous studies conducted by Emaryana (2010), Haryanto (2007), also Sadiah and Royani (2019). Types of errors made by students show some similarities. This means that errors made by Indonesian students learning English are systematic and predictable. The only difference between the present study and the previous ones lies in percentages of students' errors. Overall, this study supports the relevant previous studies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of findings posed above, it can be concluded that from four classifications of grammatical errors, the most problematic grammatical errors made students was Misformation. This was represented by high percentage of errors (49.81%). The implication f is that students need to get more exposure to grammar inputs. By having more attention to the teaching of grammar, students could minimalize their errors in writing thesis. When they can recognize kind of grammatical rules in formal written work, they may prevent themselves from making mistakes and develop better written English outcomes.

The aim of this research was to explore university students' errors found in theses. To account for the findings, the study uses theoretical perspective of Surface Strategy Taxonomy Classification (SSTC). The findings show that students developed various types of grammatical errors, and that students' theses by and large contain quite significant numbers of error categories. The findings also indicate that students lack grammar proficiency during the process

of their theses writing. Thus, the present research findings are expected to provide information to other students who do theses writing. The results of this study are expected to contribute valuable suggestions to the Department of English of FKIP, University of Mataram pertaining to the provision of students' supports during thesis writing.

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