



### INVESTIGATION OF GRAMMATICAL ERROR IN STUDENT'S ENGLISH WRITING AT UIN RADEN INTAN LAMPUNG AS BASIS FOR LEARNING MATERIAL DEVELOPEMENT

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**Abstract:** This research aims to investigate students' grammatical errors (morphological and syntactical) on phrase and clause level in English essay of UIN Raden Intan Lampung students' as the basis for future learning material developement. Qualitative approach is used in this research. Research method which is used is descriptive qualitative with content analysis technique. Research data are words and sentences with morphological and syntactical error. In this research, interactive data analysis is used. The steps of the data analysis are data reduction, data display, and conclusion as well as verification. Validity of the data is done by using source triangulation. Based on the analysis and discussion result, there are several findings. The first is 3 types of morphological errors. They are noun, verb, and adjective errors. The second is 5 syntactical errors. They are noun phrases (NP), verb phrases (VP), adverbial phrase (AvP, noun clause, and adjective clause errors. The third is the most dominant error (verb use error). There were 56 verb errors out of 107 total errors.

**Keywords:** grammatical error, morphology, syntax, qualitative research.

### INTRODUCTION

English is an international language used globally in many countries. There are a lot of which make English as their second language (used for daily basis). Furthermore, International forum such as, United Nations (UN), World Economic Forum (WEF), Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN), etc use English as their formal language in every discussion and meeting. Even more, in Indonesia, it is one of compulsory subjects taught in every educational level

(elementary to higher education). Therefore, It is obvious that English is demanded, especially in modern and globalization era as what we have today. For that reason, It is normal if a lot of people are racing to master it as they see it, in a way, as a mean of convenience.

However, in Indonesia, English mastery is more of a struggle rather than a race for it is a foreign language (used on special occasions only). For this position, in the case of English learning, students in Indonesia are still struggling with grammatical errors due to insufficient familiarity and it happens, even, in higher education level. Commonly, there are several grammatical errors made by university students in Indonesia; phonological, morphological, and syntactical. Phonological errors usually take place in speaking practices while morphological and syntactical errors take place, usually, in writing practices.

From the three mentioned, morphology and syntax are seen as more fundamental in their practice. Through syntactical and morphology systems, the ability of composing linguistical elements (words, phrases, etc) into meaningful structures (sentences, paragraphs, texts, etc) and analyzing as well as selecting those structures to be appropriately used are supported (Leech, 2006:110).

Accordingly, this research focuses on the investigation of morphological and syntactical errors made by university students in their English writing practice. The results found in this research are expected to be used as a future basis for learning material development so, in the future, similar problems can be eliminated or, at least, reduced.

Other researchers have done researches similar to this study in different perspective and they came to a conclusion, more or less, in line with what this study has. The first study came from Kumala, et.al who investigated four types of grammatical errors potentially made by students (omission, addition, misformation, and misordering). Based on the results she found that the two biggest percentage made by the students were omission and addition (37% and 32%) followed by misformation in third position with the percentage of 30%. In addition, they also investigated the cause of those mistakes made and it was found that one of most influential cause was first language interference with the percentage of 61% (Kumala, et.al., 2018:144-149). The second study came from Qamariah, et.al. who found that the majority of students involved in their study made mistakes in the use of verbs. They also found that in total there were 48 errors found in their writing (Qamariah, et.al., 2020: 58-71). Next, the third study was from Erlangga, et.al. who found similar result as Kumala. In their finding, it was revealed that majority of students being the subject of the research made errors in omission (out of total 541 errors) with first language interference as the most influential cause of errors with the percentage of 53,42% (Erlangga, et.al., 2019: 19-29).

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **Differences between Error and Mistake in Language Use**

Language errors are closely related to the interaction among language learners (as user) in a language teaching process. A language learner often makes such errors for many factors. Through error assessment activities, various things can be expressed about language errors made by students. It can be used as feedback in improvements or advancement in the learning process of a learner. Hence, an assessment of language errors aims to find out the types of errors made by language learners and at the same time to evaluate language learning process itself.

However, we often misinterpret mistakes as errors, meanwhile, there are fundamentals in differences between the two that have to be known and understood before we can appraise if students in a language class environment make mistakes or errors so our judgments as well as development made after will be effective, reliable, and valid.

Mistakes are something related to performance, while errors are closely related to competence. Mistakes arise when learners make a bad performance in using language related to things that are usually temporary (circumstantial issues), meanwhile, errors arise usually because they (students) cannot use the language or do not have sufficient comprehension of the language being studied (Daulay, 1982: 139). Therefore, it can be said that mistakes are deviations caused by performance, such as fatigue, forgetfulness, lack of focus or psychological conditions that interfere with the process of using language. Examples of mistakes in using language are mistakes in pronouncing sounds, words, word order, word stress or sentences and so on. these kinds of issues are random (they can happen at any linguistic level). Mistakes can usually be corrected by students on their own if they are more self-aware or focused. Mistakes will not last long since students, in essence, have already comprehended the linguistic system of the language learned. Nevertheless, Mistakes remain a problem that needs attention in the process of learning a language.

On the other hand, errors are systematic issues made by learners because they have not mastered the language system. this condition will be clearly illustrated in the knowledge and understanding of students regarding the language they have. Errors usually occur consistently, and are systemic. Errors can last a long time if no effort is made to correct them.

Furthermore, the problem of classifying a problem and condition that occurs to students, whether these are mistakes or errors, must be considered carefully. there is a very slight difference (sometimes biased for some people) between the two making this determination a difficult condition, therefore there is a need for in-depth study and analysis of it.

### **Definition and Nature of Grammatical Error in Language Use**

For English learners, especially those in countries in which English is a foreign language, errors in grammatical level are commonly happened due to their lack of knowledge and awareness of the discourse and contextual elements of the target language. For example, in Indonesia, to express that someone is not in a good condition people usually say “*saya sedang tidak enak badan*” so people tend to translate it literally to “*My body condition is not good*” instead of saying “*I'm not feeling well*”.

Related to that case, there are several definition of grammatical errors proposed by experts. One of which is stated by Daulay, et al:

“Grammatical errors are the flawed slide of learner speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation and composition that deviate from some selected norm of mature language performance. Teachers and mothers who have waged long and patient battles against their students’ or children’s language errors have come to realize that making errors is an inventable part of learning” (Daulay, et al, 1982:138).

From that definition we can assume that errors in language learning is something unavoidable, means it happens to majority of language learners. However, those errors are not something to grieve about, instead, it can be used as the basis for future development. In detail, grammar in a language is closely related to morphological and syntactical systems. Those two hold fundamental functions in which morphology is related to structures of linguistical elements while syntax is related to organizational principles of those structures (Lyon, 1995:150), (Carter & Mc. Carty, 2006:2).

#### **1. Morphological Error**

By definition, morphology is a study of words formation in its purpose to be a meaningful communicational components (Verhar, 1996:97). Similar idea also came from Hapelmath who said “morphology is the study of the internal structure of words” (Hapelmath, 2002: 1).

In morphology, there are several linguistical components which are the focus of this subdiscipline. According to James, “there are five lexical word types in English morphology; noun, verb, adjective, adverb, and preposition” (James, 1998: 154). Meanwhile, Radford stated that in English, noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, adjective, preposition, adjective, preposition, conjunctions, articles, derivations, and inflections are components concerned in morphology (Radford, 2009:144). Hence, to seek agreement from those two we can say that generally, English morphology deals with noun, verb, adjective, and preposition. In addition, it can be safely assumed that errors in English learning process, especially in morphological ones can take place in all or some of those linguistical components mentioned.

In the case of the use of nouns in English, we know that they are potential subjects or objects used in a sentence (Azar, 2002:217). There are rules and

principles for a word to be categorized as a noun, one of which is composing the “root” or base word with gerund. Let us assume that if an English learner from Indonesia wants to express “*Menari adalah hobi saya*”, they would probably say “*Dance is my hobby*” instead of “*Dancing is my hobby*”.

Next, potential morphological errors for English learners in countries such as Indonesia is in the use of verbs. Again, I would not go into details as we know that there are lots of rules we need to be aware of to use verbs in its proper purposes and context, one of which is the forms of verbs such as infinitives, past forms, and past participles (Widjaja, 2014: 25-27). In this case, as English is not used for daily basis, students in Indonesia tend to use the same form of verbs all the time. For example, instead of saying “*She worked in her office yesterday*” to express “*Wanita itu bekerja di kantornya kemarin*”, they will probably say “*She work in her office yesterday*”.

The third potential errors done by English learners in Indonesia resides in the use of adjectives. According to Lado there are seven categories of adjectives in English; proper, descriptive, numeral, quantitative, demonstrative, interrogative and possessive (Lado, 2008:215). For those who are not familiar with the contextual use of English, memorizing those terms is a hard struggling, not to mention understanding them. To make it worse there is also specific order of words when we use more than one adjective to define a noun. For example, to say “*Pria itu adalah orang yang baik*”, learners in Indonesia will probably say “*This man good*” instead of “*He is a good man*”.

The last potential morphological errors for English learners in Indonesia lies in the use of preposition. Using simple prepositions such as, ‘in’, ‘on’, and ‘at’ properly is still a problem for many English learners in Indonesia, not to mention complex structure in which prepositions are put at the end of a clause such as in “*She is the woman whom I talked to*” (Widjaja, 2014:334). For example, the tendency of learners in Indonesia to say “*I study English in the school*” is higher rather than saying “*I study English at school*”.

## 2. Syntactical Error

Generally, syntax in English is defined as the organization of phrases, clauses, and texts based on formal rules and principles (Tallerman, 2011:1), (Roederick, 1995: 04), (Baker, 1989:1). However, in this research we did not go for complete analysis of highest linguistical level (text) but made a limitation for the smaller level (phrases and clauses) instead and would go further in our next research.

Talking about errors in the use of phrases in English, Kushartanti stated that there are several classification of phrases in which errors might be done. Those classifications include noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, and preposition phrase (Kushartanti & Lauder, 2007:124).

Furthermore, James stated that there are several types of potential errors made by learners in the use of English phrases such as, supererogatory, omission, disorder, misselection, and mixture (James, 1998:156).

### **Error Analysis in Language Learning**

Linguistical error analysis is a common measurement taken by Language teacher and researcher to collect data, identify, elucidate, classify, and evaluate the extent or level of errors found in language learning process (Richard, 1974: 158), (Parera, 1994:145). On the other side, Pateda defines linguistical error analysis as a technique used to identify and interpret errors made in learning process systematically (Pateda, 1989:32). Such practice is done with specific purpose. At least, there are two benefits in doing it;

- a. To collect data which can be used in drawing interpretations as well as conclusions related to the reality take place in the learning process
- b. To provide indications or clues for language researcher, teacher, and curriculum designer to be used as considerations in future learning development.

Nevertheless, we need to be aware of the difference between errors and mistakes. According to Daulay, mistakes is associated with performance, meanwhile, errors is related to competence (Daulay, 1982:139). It means that mistakes is digression in language use influenced by performance, while, errors is one influence by level of competence.

### **METHODS**

This study aims to deeply investigate the grammatical errors (morphological and syntactical) made by students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung in English writing for Intermediate writing subject. The subjects of the research were 24 students in their third semester in English for Education Study Program (academic year of 2015-2016). The study was designed using qualitative research design. Such design is the most appropriate one to be used for this study. As what Mc.Milan and Schumacher (2006:315) said:

“qualitative research is inquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interesting with selected persons in their setting (eg., field research) qualitative research describes and analyzes people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions....” This idea is in line to what Cresswell (2009:4) said:

“Qualitative research is means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data”.

The data were collected on March 2016 from students writing task for intermediate writing subject. the technique used for data collection was documentation. This idea is supported by Setiyadi who said that in qualitative research one of the most suitable data collection techniques can be used is documentation for its readability (Setiyadi, 2006:249-250). Here are the procedural stages in the data collection:

- a. Students writing were collected from final test for Intermediate Writing subjects
- b. Reading stage was done in which researchers read every clause included in each writing to find errors made
- c. Coding stage was done in order to mark errors made by students
- d. The final stage was done is classification of grammatical errors.

To ease the analysis, the data collected were displayed in two kinds of table (morphological and syntactical error tables),

**Table 1. List of Morphological Errors**

Types of Errors	Incorrect	Correct	Total
Noun			
Verb			
Adverb			
Adjective			

**Table 2. List of Syntactical Errors**

Types of Errors	Incorrect	Correct	Total
Noun Phrases (NP)			
Verb Phrases (VP)			
Adjective Phrases (AjP)			
Adverb Phrase (AvP)			
Preposition Phrase (PP)			
Adverbial Clause			
Noun Clause			
Adjective Clause			
Verb Clause			

In the process of data analysis, this study used interactive data analysis technique by Miles and Hubberman (2014: 8) which includes several stages in it such as, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and data verification.

Data reduction is carried out as a process of selecting, focusing on simplifying, abstracting, and transforming raw data emerging from written notes when analyzing grammatical errors in student writing. This process aims to select

data that will be used and needed in research by focusing on important things and putting aside those that are not important.

The next process is data presentation or data display. In this process the researchers analyze the identified errors. This step is made by systematically arranging the data into tables, diagrams as well as relationships between categories and sentences. This is intended to plan the next stage based on the findings drawn. Presentation of data is done in the form of a brief description in order to see the overall picture of the results of the study on the value of grammatical error analysis in student writing, either in the form of matrices or coding. Through this process, then, researchers can draw data conclusions and verify them to reach full sense of potential meaning.

The final step of data analysis process is drawing conclusions and verification which aims to conclude the results based on the data into a credible and consistent research result and make it an easily understood statement. This stage is a description of the research data which can be in the form of new findings, revisions, or the findings of previous researchers. Conclusions are drawn from the formulation of the problem and to meet the research objectives which are then constantly checked for correctness to ensure its validity. The data that has been systematically interpreted are then concluded. This is done by applying inductive thinking, drawing facts from specific things which are then directed to general things to find out the answers to existing problems.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In detail, there are several results of grammatical errors found from the data collected. For morphological errors, there were 22 texts with errors included. Those errors are 4 verb errors in text 1, 2 verb errors and 1 error in text 2, 8 verb errors and 1 adjective error in text 3, 2 verb errors in text 4, 3 verb errors and 2 adjective errors in text 6, 4 verb error and 2 noun error in text 7, 2 noun errors and 5 verb errors in text 8, 2 verb errors in text 9, 2 verb errors and 1 adjective errors in text 10, 2 verb errors and 1 error for noun as well as adjective in text 11; 2 noun errors, 2 verb errors, and 1 adjective error in text 12; 1 adjective error and 2 noun errors in text 13, 1 verb error in text 14, 2 verb errors and 1 noun error in text 16; 2 verb errors, 1 noun error and 1 adjective error in text 17; 1 verb error in text 18, 2 verb errors in text 19, 2 verb errors and 2 noun errors in text 20, 2 verb errors and 1 adjective error in text 21, 1 noun error as well as verb error in text 22, 5 verb errors in text 23; and 2 verb errors as well as 1 noun error in text 24.

For syntactical errors, there were only 12 text with errors included. Those errors are 1 noun phrase error in text 1, 1 adverb phrase error in text 4, 3 noun phrase errors in text 5, 2 noun phrase errors in text 7, 1 noun phrase in text 8, 4 noun phrase errors in text 9, 1 noun and 1 verb phrase error in text 15, 1 verb phrase error in text 16, 2 noun phrase errors in text 17, 6 noun phrase errors in text 18, 1 noun clause error in text 19, 2 adjective clause errors in text 24.



From those findings, total errors made by students at morphological and syntactical level are 15 noun errors, 56 verb errors, 10 adjective errors, 20 noun phrase errors, 2 verb phrase errors, 1 adverb phrase error, 1 noun clause error, and 2 adjective clause errors. Here are list of frequency and percentage of errors made.

**Table 3. Frequency and Percentage of Errors Made by Students**

Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Noun	15	14,01%
Verb	56	52,33%
Adverb	0	0%
Adjective	10	9,34%
Noun Phrases	20	18,69%
Verb Phrases	2	1,86%
Adjective Phrases	0	0%
Adverb Phrase	1	0,93%
Preposition Phrase	0	0%
Adverbial Clause	0	0%
Noun Clause	1	0,93%
Adjective Clause	2	1,86%
Verb Clause	0	0%
Total	107	100%

From Table 3, it is clearly seen that, at morphological level, the most frequent errors made was verb use with percentage of 52,33% and noun phrase use with percentage of 18,69% , in syntactical level.

The findings of this study are in line with previous study done by Qamariah, et.al. (2020:58-71). As what has been discussed previously in the beginning of this article, it was known that they found the majority of students (subjects of their research) made errors in the use of verbs. The only difference found between this research and theirs is that they (the students) performed better with only 48 errors found compare to 107 errors found in this study.

Related to the cause why this happen, we can assume that the same things applied as what was found by Kumala, et.al (2018:144-149) and Erlangga, et.al (2019: 19-29) that the most influential cause triggered the existence of such errors is first language interference as all students involved in those two study are Indonesians. Hence, we can safely assume that they have the same characters and background as the students involved in this study. However, further research needs to be administered to know if it is really the cause of the errors in language use found.

## CONCLUSION

Based on results and findings displayed, it can be concluded that there are two main problems in students grammatical use of linguistical components, namely proper use of verb at morphological level and proper use of noun phrase at

syntactical level. Accordingly, it is recommended for English teacher and future researcher to pay more attention to those two main problems in order to develop better results to help students in their English mastery process. In addition, it would be better if future researches with similar focus can be broadened, in terms of research context.

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