Error Analysis of Students' Written English Essay in a Biographical Narrative Context

Almas Rizkika Nabila[1], Yasmiatun[2]
[1] PS Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Satya Wiyata Mandala, Indonesia
[2] Guru SMAN 3 TUBAN
Email: [1]arizkika.nabila@gmail.com, [2]yasmiatun68@yahoo.com

Abstract

The primary concern of this study is to explore the kinds of errors made by second grade senior high school students in their written work. The writer focused on analysing and identifying the student's grammatical error in writing biographical narrative context and concerned in analysing five aspects: sentence pattern, tenses, pronoun, preposition, punctuation and spelling in order to find the percentage of the grammar errors. The writer used qualitative research to describe and analyze students' written work. The research showed that grammar errors made by the second year students in writing biographical narrative context are in tenses form as the highest errors.

Keywords: Biographical Narrative Text, Grammar Errors, Tenses

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, mastering English language is important for everyone because English is international language that is the most commonly used to communicate by the people among the different countries. English already become a second language for people in Indonesia. Students learn English since they were in the basic level of education. There are four skills that students should learn such as listening, writing, speaking and reading. Students should be able to understand about basic skill in English in order to improve their knowledge. Writing is one of language skills and students learn it from primary school to senior high Schools. Writing in a foreign language often shows a big challenge to the students at all stages. It becomes a great challenge because writing is not easy as the students think. They should use correct grammar, sentence pattern, and spelling of word. Students start writing words then arrange them into sentences and making paragraphs to share their opinion or idea.

Biographical Narrative Context is one of the texts that written with the purpose to inform the readers or people about something that happen in the past and it can be experiences or events. In fact, many students do not understand how to write this text correctly and make a lot of error in their text. These kinds of errors are especially common among L2 writers who do not have enough language skills to express what they want to say in a comprehensible way. In this research, the writer observes the error analysis of the students' writing about biographical narrative context. Many of the students in senior high school usually make grammar mistakes in their learning especially in writing. However, sometimes the teacher did not aware about students' mistakes. Then the students made their mistakes repeatedly because they do not have the correction and it was what we have called as error. Therefore, the teachers must try their best to avoid the errors made by the students without discouraging them. This research will help the teachers to correct their errors, improve their teaching and focus on that area that students need to learn again about their error.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Errors in foreign language teaching especially in English are the cases that are not easy enough to stay away from. Errors usually happen in the productive skills like speaking and writing, but to analyze errors in productive skills in short time is difficult. Corder and his colleagues recognized the field of error analysis (EA) in Second Language Acquisition in the 1970s. Error analysis is a type of linguistic study that focuses on the errors learners construct. It consists of a comparison between the errors complete in target language (TL) and within that TL itself.

Error analysis has two objects: one theoretical and another applied (Corder, 1967) . The theoretical object is to recognize what and how learners learn when he studies a second language (L2). The applied object is to facilitate the learner to learn more competently by using the knowledge of his vernacular or dialect for pedagogical purposes. At the same time, the study of errors can serve two purposes, diagnostic and prognostic. Another statement is the sources of errors in studying a language might be derived from the interference of the learners' mother tongue and the general characteristics of the rule process (Richards, 1974) . The errors that are caused by the general characteristics of the rule learning are also called the intralanguage errors. The errors caused by the interference of the learners' mother tongue are called the interlanguage errors.

Error Analysis is one of the most influential theories of second language acquisition. It is concerned with the analysis of the errors committed by L2 learners

by comparing the learners' acquired norms with the target language norms and explaining the identified errors. This view is supported by Stark's study, which also explained that teachers need to observe students' errors positively and should not regard them as the learners' failure to take hold of the rules and structures but rather should view (Stark, 2011). Actually, this error analysis will help the teacher to find the sources of the errors from their students. They can focus to teach which part that the students need to improve their grammar knowledge.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the writer qualitative research to describe the written text as it used to obtain in-depth data or data that contains meaning (Sugiyono, 2007) . The writer used test of writing biographical narrative context, and ask students to write story about the unforgettable moment and their interesting experience in 200 words. The writer classified the grammar errors into five aspects: Sentence pattern (subject and verb), tenses, pronoun, conjunction, punctuation and spelling. Then the writer analyzed the errors that the student made in their writing and calculated them using simple statistic formula. Finally, the data will explain in description analysis.

1. **Place and Time of the Research**

   The research was held at SMA Negeri 3 Tuban. The population for this research was the students of class XI SMA Negeri 3 Tuban. There were 4 classes, and then the writer used random sampling to take 5 students from each class as the sample so there was 20 students' writing to be analyzed.

2. **The Technique of the Data Collecting**

   In order to collect the data, the writer used field research. The writer ask the student from second grade in SMAN 3 Tuban to write about 200 words or 2 paragraphs about their life experience to know how far the studentsare able to make biographical narrative context with good grammatical. The students are given 60 minutes to write their text. The writing text from 4 classes only chooses 5 students as sample, so there was 20 students' writing to analyzed.

3. **The Procedures of the Research**

   There are the procedures of the research:
   - Firstly, the writer makes appointment with English student of SMAN 3 Tuban.
   - Then the writer arranged the time for doing the writing task.
   - The writer gave the task for the second grade class, there were 4 classes.
   - The students did the task in the classroom. The students are given 60 minutes for writing a biographical narrative context about the students' unforgettablemoment of their best experience.

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- Then the writer chose only 5 students in each class for sample, so therewas 20 students' writing to be analyzed.
- The writer classified the grammar errors into five aspects: Sentence Pattern (subject and verb), Tenses, Pronoun, Conjunction, Punctuation and Spelling.
- Finally, the writer calculated the grammar errors and explained it using descriptive analysis.

THE TECHNIQUE OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

According to Corder's (1967), the methods of error analysis are collecting the sample, identify the error and describe the error. The writer used descriptive analysis technique (percentage) with thepercentage from the frequency of information and divided with number of cases.

The formula is:

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

Notes:

P: Percentage

F: Frequency of wrong answer

N: Number of Sample

FINDING AND ANALYSIS

In order to know the description of the grammar errors in the students' writing, thewriter identify the grammar errors and classify into 5 aspects: Sentence Pattern, Tenses, Pronoun, Preposition and Spelling and Punctuation. The writer already corrects 20 articles from students. In this research, the writer is not re-writing all 20 texts from the students' writing text, but directly give the result after identify 20 text of their biographical narrative context. The writer identifies the error based on 5 aspects and describes the error. We can count the students errors intotheir classification of errors. Here is the graphic and result of errors:

Errors Classification					
Students	Sentence Pattern	Tenses	Pronoun	Preposition	Spell and Panctuation	Total
1	5	10	2	-	2	19
2	-	7	1	1	3	12
3	5	5	-	-	2	12
4	3	4	-	-	-	7
5	7	6	4	-	-	17
6	-	4	1	1	-	6
7	7	8	1	2	1	19
8	3	6	2	-	1	12
9	3	7	1	-	1	12
10	4	10	2	-	-	16
11	6	7	-	-	2	15
12	9	2	4	-	1	16
13	6	3	1	-	2	12
14	-	-	-	1	-	1
15	7	5	2	1	1	16
16	3	5	-	2	-	10
17	7	2	3	-	1	13
18	6	4	2	1	-	13
19	3	7	3	-	2	15
20	1	3	1	1	1	7
Total	85	105	30	10	20	
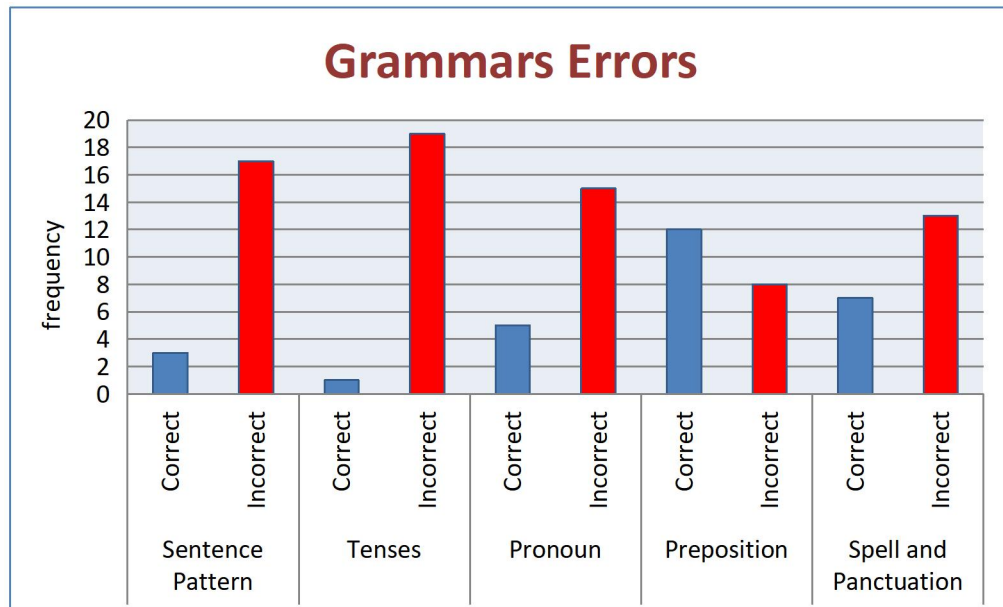
Grammars Errors

Percentages of Students' Grammar Errors

a. **Sentence Pattern**

Students' correct   : $\frac{3}{20}$ x $100\% = 15\%$

Students' incorrect   : $\frac{17}{20}$ x $100\% = 85\%$

b. **Tenses**

Students' correct   : $\frac{1}{20}$ x $100\% = 5\%$

Students' incorrect   : $\frac{19}{20}$ x $100\% = 95\%$

c. **Pronoun**

Students' correct   : $\frac{5}{20}$ x $100\% = 25\%$

Students' incorrect   : $\frac{15}{20}$ x $100\% = 75\%$

d. **Preposition**

Students' correct   : $\frac{12}{20}$ x $100\% = 60\%$

Students' incorrect   : $\frac{8}{20}$ x $100\% = 40\%$

e. **Spelling and Panctuation**

Students' correct   : $\frac{7}{20}$ x $100\% = 35\%$

Students' incorrect   : $\frac{13}{20}$ x $100\% = 65\%$

THE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

After the writer got the finding from the research, analysis the data became one of the important parts to describe the errors. The writer explains every aspect of the category based on the error that students made.

a. **Sentence Pattern**

In the sentence pattern category, 17 students from 20 made an error. Students sometimes forget to put the subject or the verb in the sentence. Subject and verb are very important in making a sentence. The writer assumed that this error caused by the *Mother Tongue Interference* or error resulting from the transfer of grammatical from the source language to the target language. If we compare Indonesia language with English, the pattern is far different. Indonesia language has no "to be" after subject and there are no irregular and regular verb. The result is almost 85% students made the error.

Example:

I many interesting vocation in Bali. (I had many interesting vocation in Bali)
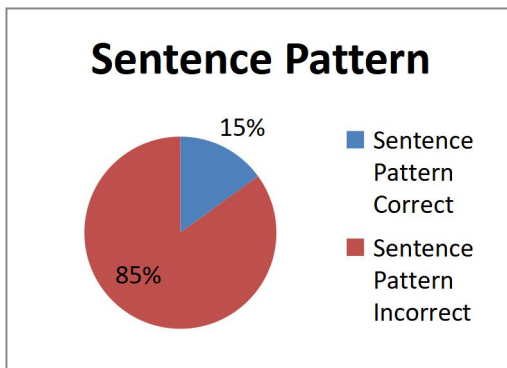
b. **Tenses**

This is the most error that the students made. From 20 students, 19 students made tenses error. Almost all the students made the error in using grammar form. They cannot take good tenses based on the context. Biographical narrative context is kind of text which discuss about experience, so students should make past tense in their writing. Some of them wrote with present tense and the other mixing between past and present. No wonder if 19 students did error for their text, because Indonesia has no grammar rules like English. All the situation in Indonesia language is free, no rules for time. That is why; students sometimes cannot distinguish between Indonesia and English language and he result is they cannot take a proper and good grammar.

Example:

Last week I go to music competition. (Last week I **went** to music competition)

Tenses

5%

■ Tenses Correct

■ Tenses Incorrect

95%
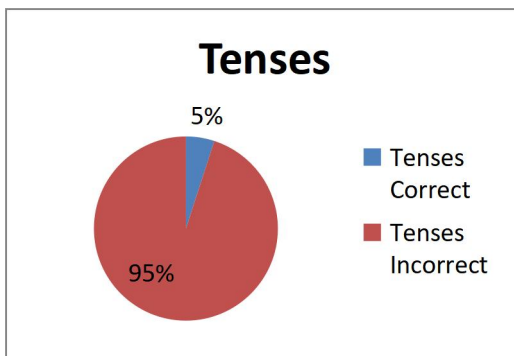
c.   Pronoun

Pronoun is used to substitute nouns. 15 students made error in the use of pronoun. The student failed to recognize nominative case as predicate nominative in personal pronoun, because *I* as a predicate nominative and "me" has been widely used and accepted as the standard expression. Pronoun errors happened because of *Overgeneralization*. Students confused to use first, second or third person pronoun. The students sometime not aware with the pattern of noun and they generalize all the sentence with a same form. A pronoun is a word that is used in the place of a noun or noun phrase.

Example:

My friend buy I a big chocolate when Valentine's Day. (My friend buy **me** a big chocolate when Valentine's Day)

Pronoun

25%

■ Pronoun Correct

■ Pronoun Incorrect

75%
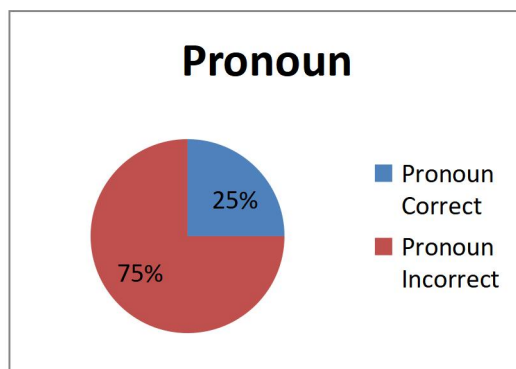
d. **Preposition**

Prepositions are usually quite short and significant looking, but they have very important functions. Nouns or pronouns always follow prepositions. Preposition errors also happened because of *Overgeneralization* thatis an error caused by extension of target language rules to areas where they do not apply. Indonesia language also has a preposition in their sentence and 8 students did error of preposition. This is the smallest error that they did compare with another category. Prepositions are usually quite short and significant looking, but they have very important functions to link a noun to another word.

Example :
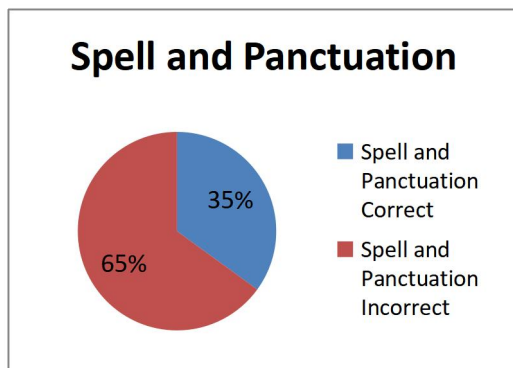We go Bali with all my classmates. (We go **to** Bali with all my classmates)

Preposition
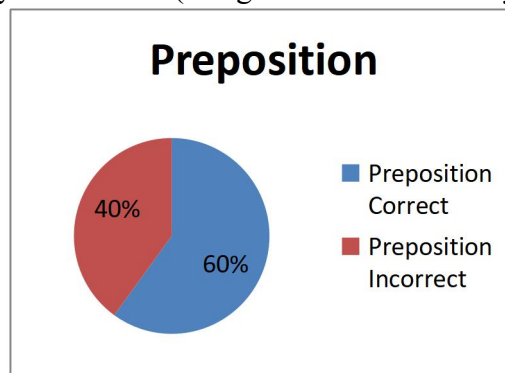
e. **Spelling and pancuation**

The errors in spelling and punctuation occurred because of the *Carelessness.* 13 students wrote a wrong spelling and punctuation. The students did not know aware about the spelling of the word and which word they should use the true punctuation. If they missed the spelling in one word, the word might have a different meaning. The students made errors in writing the word to be the right spelling and sometimes they did not aware to select or to use the punctuation mark.

Example:
I liked this foot and the taste so delicious. (I liked this **food** and the taste so delicious)

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Spell and Panctuation

35%

65%

■ Spell and Panctuation Correct

■ Spell and Panctuation Incorrect

CONCLUSION

The writer concludes that the grammar errors made by the second year students of SMA Negeri 3 Tuban in writing biographical narrative context are in Tense for the highest errors by 19 students or 95%, the second is errors in sentence pattern by 17 students or 85%, the third is errors in pronoun by 15 students or 75%, the forth is errors in punctuation and spelling By 13 students or 65%, and the last errors in Preposition with 8 errors or 40%. This the Table of the percentage:

Grammar errors frequency of wrong answer percentage

Grammar	Frequency	Percentage
Tenses	19	95%
Sentence Pattern	17	85%
Pronoun	15	75%
Punctuation and Spelling	13	65%
Preposition	8	40%

The writer found that grammatical errors are really hard to avoid for senior high students, they are not quite get the lesson about grammar well. Errors in foreign language teaching especially in English are the cases which are difficult enough to avoid. They attend to confuse to use it appropriately. Eerrors are caused by deficiency in competence and a shortcoming in the knowledge of language learners.

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They make errors when they have not learned something correctly. Many aspects that can cause the learners of English as a foreign language make errors. To reduce the grammatical errors instudents' writing, the students should learn more about Sentence Pattern, Tense, Spelling and Punctuation, Pronoun and Preposition. The English teachers also should improve the way they teach and should improve their techniques in teaching by preparing systematic materials to reduce the errors thatare always made by students.

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