AN ANALYSIS OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN LEARNERS' DESCRIPTIVE WRITINGS AT SMA AL-KAUTSAR BANDAR LAMPUNG

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Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari tahu jenis kesalahan yang siswa buat yang tergolong ke dalam *surface strategy taxonomy* dan *communicative effect taxonomy* dalam menulis karangan deskriptif, serta untuk menyelidiki jenis kesalahan yang sering dan jarang muncul pada karangan siswa tersebut. Penelitian ini bersifat qualitatif. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 24 siswa kelas XI IPA2 dari SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung. Tes menulis digunakan sebagai instrumen penelitian. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa siswa membuat semua jenis kesalahan dari *surface strategy taxonomy*, yaitu *omission*, *addition*, *misformation*, and *misordering*; maupun *communicative effect taxonomy*, yaitu kesalahan global dan lokal. Dalam *surface strategy taxonomy*, jenis kesalahan yang sering muncul adalah *misformation*; dan jenis yang jarang muncul adalah *misordering*. Dalam *communicative effect taxonomy*, jenis kesalahan yang dominan adalah kesalahan lokal, sedangkan kesalahan global merupakan jenis kesalahan yang jarang terjadi. Ha ini menunujukkan bahwa kesalahan selalu terjadi dalam penulisan siswa.

Abstract. This study aimed at finding out the types of error that learners committed in terms of surface strategy and communicative effect taxonomies in their descriptive writings; and investigating which error types most and least frequently appeared in their writings. This study was a qualitative research. The subjects were 24 learners of class XI IPA2 of SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung. Writing test was used as the instrument. The findings revealed that the learners committed all error types in terms of surface strategy taxonomy: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering; and communicative effect taxonomy: global and local errors. In terms of surface strategy taxonomy, misformation was the most frequent error type, while misordering was the least frequent error type. In terms of communicative effect taxonomy, the most dominant error type was local error; while the least frequent error type was global error. This evidences that errors always occor in learners English writing.

Keywords: communicative effect taxonomy, descriptive writing, surface strategy taxonomy

INTRODUCTION

Writing is, in nature, a significant means which is used to communicate an intention of a writer letterally to someone intended or readers. As stated by Bynre (1980: 24), writing is a primary device of recording speech, even though it must be acknowledged as a secondary medium of communication. Writing, too, is an action form that people apply to convey their thoughts or express their feelings then transform them into a composition of words. This also means that people, in this manner, can create reading that wholly contain entertainment, certain information, or other purposes.

In the schools, particularly in Indonesia, English has been established as one of the compulsory subjects. Every learner, hence, is simply acquainted with and seriuously taught about English at school. In other words, the learners have to master English as a target language, either in spoken or written forms. However, as writing is regarded as the most complex language skill to study, therefore, it becomes the main concern for English teachers to teach students how to construct sentences correctly, or to compose any English composition effectively.

One of the English composition types is descriptive writing. It is needed very much to give a clear description of a place, person, or another object. As claimed by Tolkien in Jeniar (2016: 24) that descriptive writing text, sometimes called "showing writing", is writing that describes a particular person, place, or event in great detail. To make readers simply understand the content or meaning of each single sentence in the paragraphs forming a descriptive composition, the sentences a learner constructs must, of course, be clear and grammatically correct.

In order to be able to write well-ordered sentences, every student should recognize and completely understand the aspects of grammatical writings, particularly in regard with word order. Word order itself is, as Leech (1991: 550) defines, the order of the elements in a sentence or clause. The elements meant, among other things, are agreement of subject and predicate, agreement of pronoun and antecedent, case, linking and auxiliary verbs, tense and tone, voice, adjectives and adverbs. Upon understanding the word order aspects, students will know the function of each aspect used in English sentences.

Nevertheless, the learners always, in reality, confront problems every time they write in English form. As pointed out by Badudu (1985: 7) that even though the learners have learned English in years, particularly in learning writing, they still find difficulties to express their ideas in proper words or sentences. Moreover, they so frequently make some grammatical errors in constructing sentences or in their English composition. For sure, the errors adversely influence the structure of their sentences and the idea they want to communicate.

As a matter of fact, the students commit errors as they lack comprehension about the target language. As confirmed by Hubbard *et al* (1983) that errors are caused by lack of knowledge about target

language or by incorrect hypothesis about it. Making errors, nonetheless, is a part of learning language (Dulay *et al*, 1982: 138). It is undeniable that learners, in fact, so frequently produce errors during the learning process of writing in English form.

As the phenomena noted above are regareded as serious problems, therefore, a kind of study has been made to observe and analyze those errors further, namely error analysis. Error analysis (hereinafter EA) definitely has an important role to reveal what kinds of error the students most do. As mentioned by Hendrickson (1979: 206), EA is a study of learners' errors by observing, analyzing, and classifying the errors to reveal something of the system operating within the learners.

In reference to the errors themselves, Dulay (1982: 146) emphasizes that the errors are classified into four taxonomies, namely linguistic category taxonomy, surface strategy taxonomy, comparative analysis taxonomy, and communicative effect taxonomy. However, this research intended to analyze the learners' errors only based on the surface strategy taxonomy and communicative effect taxonomy. There are four error types included in surface strategy taxonomy, i.e. omission, addition, misordering, and misformation. While in terms of communicative effect taxonomy, there are two error types, i.e. global and local error.

Actually, there are many studies having been done to investigate the error types the students made in their English writings, such as a study conducted by Halimah (2014) at the third semester students of English

Department of Suryakancana University. She analyzed the learners' errors in their descriptive writings in terms of surface strategy taxonomy. The findings revealed that the students committed errors in all forms, i.e. omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. However, the most severe error type prominantly appearing in their writings was omission. She also inferred that the reason why they made errors since they had poor knowledge of both English grammatical rules and differences of language rules between Indonesian and English.

With respect to the reasons clarified above, therefore, the major purpose of this study are (1) to investigate the error types the students made in their descriptive writings in terms of surface strategy and communicative effect taxonomies; and (2) to find out which error types that most and least frequently appeared in their writings on the basis of both taxonomies.

METHODS

This study was designed in form of qualitative research. The population was the second grade learners of SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung in academic year of 2016/2017. Class XI IPA 2 consisting of 24 students was selected as the sample. To gain the data, this study applied writing test, more specifically writing test of descriptive model, which had been administered on March 17th, 2017. The students composed their descriptive writings in conformity with the topics provided. The results of the students' works were then analyzed by performing several

significant steps: identification, classification, calculation, tabulation, and inference. In classification, this study only classified the learners' errors in terms of surface strategy taxonomy and communicative effect taxonomy; the errors were then related to some word order aspects, i.e. agreement of subject and predicate, agreement of pronoun and antecedent, linking and auxiliary verbs, adjectives and adverbs

RESULTS

Administering the investigation and data analysis, this research eventually could discovered the recent findings which, definitely, in reference to the research purposes. Here are the findings of the research:

Error Types Found in Learners' Descriptive Writings

As mentioned earlier, the errors found in the learners' descriptive writings were classified in terms of both surface strategy taxonomy and communicative effect taxonomy. After analyzing the data, the results obviously evidenced that the learners committed all forms of errors in terms of both taxonomies. In terms of surface strategy taxonomy, the learners made omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. While in terms of communicative effect taxonomy, they committed global and local error.

Frequencies of Error Types Emerging in Learners' Descriptive Writings

By the research findings, the error types found in the learners'

compositions had different frequencies of the appearances. Beisdes, the learners' errors analyzed based on the both taxonomies also needed to be related to some grammatical aspects of writing, more accurately aspects of word order. It was actually intended to see what areas and which area that the learners mostly made errors at. In order to be more acceptable and clearer to view the frequencies of each error types, the results are hence separately presented based on each of both surface strategy taxonomy and communicative effect taxonomy which are shown as follows.

Frequencies of Learners' Errors based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

As revealed earlier, there were exactly four types of errors in terms of surface strategy taxonomy found in the learners' descriptive compositions: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Nevertheless, each of the error types had different frequency of the appearance in the learners' writings. According to the results of the data analysis, it evidently indicates that the learners, in terms of surface strategy taxonomy, committed 458 errors in their compositions. The most persistent error type prominently emerging in the learners' writings was misformation with 250 errors (54.6 %). It was then followed by omission type amounting to 147 errors (32.1 %), and thereon, addition in the occurance of 50 errors (10.9 %). Certainly, the least frequent error type appearing in their writings was misordering as many as 11 errors (2.4 %). To be clearer, Table 1 below illustrates the case:

Table 1. Frequencies of learners' errors based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

No.	Grammatical Aspects of Word Order	Surface Strategy Taxonomy				Total of Each Related Aspect	
		Ommision	Addition	Misformation	Misordering		
1	Agreement of subject and predicate	15	12	161	1	189	41.3 %
2	Agreement of pronoun and antecedent	13	0	28	0	41	8.9 %
3	Linking and auxiliary verbs	67	7	14	0	88	19.2 %
4	Adjectives and adverbs	52	31	47	10	140	30.6 %
Total of each error type		**147**	**50**	**250**	**11**		
Precentage		**32.1 %**	**10.9 %**	**54.6 %**	**2.4%**		
Whole number		**458**					

Besides, they committed errors at all areas of word order aspects: agreement of subject and predicate in number of 189 times (41.3 %), agreement of pronoun and antecedent amounting to 41 times (8.9 %), linking and auxiliary verbs as many of 88 times (19.2 %), adjectives and adverbs with 140 times (30.6 %). Clearly, as could be seen from the rates, the learners mostly made the errors dealing with agreement of subject and predicate.

Frequencies of Learners' Errors based on Communicative Effect Taxonomy

In terms of communicative effect taxonomy, the learners, in their compositions, also made errors in all forms: global and local errors. To know the frequency of each error type grouped in this taxonomy, the table below shows the case.

Table 2. Frequencies of learners' errors based on Communicative Effect Taxonomy

No.	Grammatical Aspects of Word Order	Communicative Effect Taxonomy		Total of Each Related Aspect	
		Global Error	Local Error		
1	Agreement of subject and predicate	38	100	138	61.3 %
2	Agreement of pronoun and antecedent	4	22	26	11.6 %
3	Linking and auxiliary verbs	14	14	28	12.4 %
4	Adjectives and adverbs	7	26	33	14.7 %
Total of each error type		**63**	**162**		
Precentage		**28 %**	**72 %**		
Whole number		**225**			

By Table 2 presented above, it noticeably indicates that the learners, in terms of communicative effect taxonomy, committed 225 errors in their compositions. Evidently, the most dominant error type conspicuously appearing in the laerners' writings was local error with 162 errors (72 %). Meanwhile, the infrequent error type the learners made in their descritpive writings was, of course, global error amounting to 63 errors (28 %).

In addition, they made errors at all areas of word order aspects: agreement of subject and predicate in number of 138 times (61.3 %), agreement of pronoun and antecedent amounting to 26 times (11.6 %), linking and auxiliary verbs as many of 28 times (12.4 %), adjectives and adverbs with 33 times (14.7 %). Certainly, as could be seen from the rates, the learners mostly made errors in relation to agreement of subject and predicate.

DISCUSSION

The results of this present study have evidently showed that the learners, in their descriptive writings, committed all error types in terms either or both of surface strategy taxonomy and communicative effect taxonomy. To know further how the learners could make such types of errors, the causes, and the contacts with related theories and forgoing studies, here are the clear discussion in regard with the research findings.

Learners' Errors in Terms of Surface Strategy Taxonomy

As already revealed in the research findings, that the learners committed errors in their descriptive writings in all forms, particularly, of surface strategy taxonomy. Ordered from the most to the least frequency, they made misformation as many of 250 errors (54.6 %), omission in number of 147 errors (32.1 %), addition with 50 errors (10.9 %), and, last, misordering amounting to 11 errors (2.4 %). As could be noticed form the rank, it is evident that misformation was the most prominent error type in the learners' writings, while the least frequent error type the learners made was misordering.

These findings, apparently, support some previous related studies, such as a study conducted by Waway (2013). He revealed that learners, in their recount text writings, committed errors in all forms of surface strategy taxonomy. Moreover, she also found that the most persistent error type in the learners' writings was misformation (46.7 %); while the least frequent error type was misordering (5.1 %). This evidence has actually indicated that learners, in general, tend to frequently commit misformation, and they infrequently make misordering when writing in English form.

To know further the evidences of, specifically, the findings of this recent study concerned with error types the learners made in terms of surface strategy taxonomy, discussion below discusses the error types ranged from the most to the least frequency:

Misformation

The results have evidently showed that misformation was in the first rank. It means that the learners mostly committed misformation in

their descriptive compositions. Additionally, based on the research results, all learners, without exception, made misformation in their writings. This is one of the reasons why misformation becomes as the most prominent error type in the learners' writings.

Understanding the definition of misformation itself, Dulay *et al* (1982) explain that misformation is indicated by the use of worng form of morpheme. This also means that one or more of sentence's aspect has wrong formation. Accordingly, it could be said that English foreign languge learners still have serious problems in using the correct form of a word or morpheme.

Moreover, the learners made misformations at all areas of word order apsects chosen in the study: (1) agreement of subject and predicate, (2) agreement of pronoun and antecedent, (3) linking and auxiliary verbs, (4) adjectives and adverbs. This evidence, too, becomes the part of the reasons that misformation has the most number of errors the learners made.

Nonetheless, concerning the word order aspects, the learners mostly committed misformation dealing with subject and predicate agreement as many of 161 times. This means that they so often wrongly used inappropriate forms of verbs when the subjects in the sentences were singular. The following is one of the learners erroneous sentences as an example to show the case:

She always wear a veil.

The sentence is absolutely wrong. The verb *wear* should be grammatically altered into *wears*. The cause of this alteration is the use of singluar pronoun *she*. Accordingly, the sentence should be rewritten as:

She always wears a veil.

In view of this, it obviously shows that the cause of the learners making misformations was they did really not comprehend yet about the transformation of particular verbs caused by using singular pronoun as subject, or by using certain tense in a sentence. In order words, they were not familiar with the sentence structures in English rules. This also supports Indarti's statement (1998) that the students are not familiar with English structure such as the form of verb, since they do not find such rules in Indonesian.

Omission

Despite all the learners, based on the results, made omission errors in their descriptive writings, yet the number was not as many as had by misformation. They made omission errors since they did not know there were certain other words or components that must appear in their sentences. As Dulay *et al* (1982) describe that omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance.

In addition, the learners committed omission errors at all areas of word order aspects, as they did misformations. Nonetheless, they mostly made omission errors in regard with linking and auxiliary verbs as many as 67 times. It means that they often omitted either linking or auxiliary verbs in their sentences, as could be noticed from the

following example taken one from the learners erroneous sentences:

My mother angry because I mischievous.

Prominently, the learner omitted linking verb *is* and *am* in the sentence which function to, in this case, couple the subject *My mother* and the adjective *angry*; as well as pronoun *I* and adjective *mischievous*. Thus, following grammatical rules, the sentence should be revised as:

My mother is angry because I am mischievous.

In view of this, it reveals that the factor of the learners committing omission errors was most of them ignored the use of linking and auxiliary verbs in constructing sentences. It was since they had not understood about the rule of using *to be* to (1) link two nouns or pronouns or a noun and an adjective; or to (2) assist the main verb in a sentence. In short, they did not yet truly comprehend Englis grammar. This is actually in line with Sari's findings (2014) which revealed that most of the students made errors since they poorly lacked English grammar comprehension.

Addition

The results of data analysis showed that among 24 learners, there were only 17 making addition errors in their descriptive compositions. This matter is one of the reasons why addition error is placed in the third rank. In the matter of why the learners made addition errors, it was since they used or inserted few needless words in their sentences. As

confirmed by Dulay *et al* (1982), addition error is characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed sentence.

Besides, the learners committed addition errors only at three areas of word order aspects: (1) agreement of subject and predicate, (2) linking and auxiliary verbs, (3) adjectives and adverbs. Nevertheless, the most frequent aspect dealing with addition errors that the learners made was adverbs, more specifically adverbs of place, amounting to 31 times. To be more concrete, the example below is one of the learners erroneous sentences to show the case:

Beside of my house there is a garage.

Indeed, the sentence above is ungrammatically constructed. The word *of* should not appear in the sentence for it is completely useless. Hence, the sentence should be revised as:

Beside my house there is a garage.

In view of this, it seems that the cause of the learners made addition errors was since they might guess there was a certain word or a few of words that should appear in their sentences, whereas the words were fully needless, such as additing "*of* " in the sentence above. Thus, it could be inferred that they had not comprehended in term of how to utter or write an adverb of place by using appropriate preposition to make it correct.

Misordering

As already evidenced in the research

results, misordering was in the last rank. It means that the learners infrequently committed misordering in their descriptive compositions. Based on the results of data analysis, there were only 8 of 24 learners that made this typical error. This evidence is as one of the factors confirming that misordering was the least frequent error type the learners made in their descriptive writings.

As a matter of fact, misordering happened since the learners placed or ordered a few words incorrectly in their sentences. As described by Dulay *et al* (1982), misordering is characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or a group of morphemes in an utterance. Moreover, they made misorderings only at two areas of word order aspects: (1) agreement of subject and predicate; and (2) adjectives and adverbs. However, they dominantly made misorderings, but not in huge number, dealing with adjectives and adverbs as many of 10 times. This case also became the reason why misordering was as the least frequent errot type emerging in the learners' writings. To know like what the misordering the learners made, the example below shows the case:

He has black hair and curly.

Seeing the sentence, it obviously indicates that the inappropriately ordered a phrase as the object: *black hair and curly.* As *hair* is the main noun, hence, it must be placed at the last order of the phrase; while *black* and *curly*, as modifiers of the main noun, are set before *hair*. Accordingly, following the grammatical rules, the sentence should be revised as:

He has black curly hair.

In view of this, it is obvious that the learners had not understood how to order several words properly to become a correct sentence. Consequently, it could be inferred that the most significant cause of this case was the learners were still extremely influenced by the rules of their mother tongue, i.e. Indonesian. This is also affirmed by Ellis (2002) that the second language learners may be confused to recognize the use of the second language because of their first language's influences.

Learners' Errors in Terms of Communicative Effect Taxonomy

The research findings, on the other hand, also revealed that the learners, in terms of communicative effect taxonomy, committed all error types, i.e. global and local errors. Both of error types, nonetheless, had different frequencies in accordance with their appearance in the learners' writings. In form of global error, the learners made errors as many of 63 items (28 %), while in local error form, they committed errors in number of 162 items (72 %). It is so obvious that the learners more dominantly made local errors than global errors in their descriptive compositions.

Moreover, these findings turned out to support some preceding related studies, such as a study carried out by Widiatmoko (2011). He also found that the learners, in their narrative compositions, more frequently made local errors (88.8 %) than global errors (11.2 %). On eventually, this evidence obviously indicated that learners, in general, tend to frequently

commit local error and infrequently make global error when they write in English form.

In the attempt to know why the learners frequently committed local errors and infrequently made global errors in their descriptive writings, the illustrations below will clearly clarify the cases:

Local Error

According to the research results, the highest rate belongs to local error. It means that the learners so mostly committed local errors in their writings. Additionally, based on the results of the data analysis, all the learners made local error in their descriptive writings. This is actually one of the reasons why local error became the most persistent error type in the learners' writings.

Despite the learners made local errors, however, their sentences could be still understandable. It is because local error, as Dulay *et al* (1982) illustrate, tends to only influence a single element or constituent in a single sentence; hence it does, significantly, not affect the structure and the meaning of the whole sentence. It means that the local errors the learners made were not too disruptive for their sentences, yet this case is still serious problem because of considering the learners so mostly made this typcal error in their writings.

In addition, the learners' locar errors deal completely with all aspects of word order, as shown earlier in Table 2. This evidence is, too, as a part of the reasons why local error became the most frequent error type the

learners made in their descriptive writings. However, they mostly made local errors in relation to agreement of subject and predicate as many of 100 times. To convince this, one of the learners incorrect sentences below will clarify the case.

He never have a girlfriend.

It is clear that the predicate *have* in the sentence disagrees with its subject, i.e. *he.* As *he* is in the third person, so the verb should be singular in number and altered to be *has.* Accordingly, the incorrect sentence should be revised as:

He never has a girlfriend.

In view of this, it indicates that the learners so often made minor error items, such as wrong inflection of verb or noun, misuse of article and auxiliary verb that, certainly, did not affect the structure and meaning of the whole sentences in their writings. This is also in line with Liasari's study (2017) which found that the students, in general, made errors in their report text concerning the use of noun and verb inflections, and auxiliary verbs.

Global Error

As having been showed in the research results, global error is placed in the last rank. It was since not all the learners committed global error in their descriptive compositions. There were evidently 14 of 24 learners, based on the data analysis results, that made this typical error. This is actually one of the causes that determined global error as the least frequent error type the learners committed in their descriptive writings.

The learners committing global errors definitely made their sentences misunderstood or misinterpreted, or even not understandable at all. As Dulay *et al* (1982) have pointed out that the existence of global error is most able to affect overall sentence organization then significantly hinder communication. Moreover, they made such typical errors, as shown earlier, in regard with all aspects of word order. Nonetheless, they most frequently committed the errors in relation to agreement of subject and predicate which amounted to, but not as many as global errors they made, 38 times; and this is virtually another cause that global error became the least frequent error type the learners made. To know like what the global error the learners made, the example below shows the case:

Her name ana and cimey.

Noticeably, the sentence above can arise a misinterpretation for readers since the learner fully incorrectly constructed the sentence. What becomes the most disruptive error so such case could happen is wrong choice of word. The pronoun in the sentence should be *their* instead of *her* for there are two names written, *Ana* and *Cimey*. Accordingly, the correct sentence should be rewritten as:

Their names are Ana and Cimey.

In view of this, it is so obvious that the learners tended to have possibility to use or choose inappropriate words to construct the sentences, specifically dealing with subject and predicate agreement. It is in line with Hamzah's findings (2012) which revealed that the most severe errors, made by the students in their writing tasks, occurred because of wrong word choice.

CONCLUSIONS

In line with the discussion of the research findings, some conclusions are drawn as follows:

1. Learners, particularly in Indonesia, who are learning English as a foreign or target language tend to commit errors when they express or communicate in written form.
2. Writing in English form, the learners tend to make all error types in terms either or both of surface strategy taxonomy covering omission, addition, misformation, misordering; and communicative effect taxonomy including global and local errors.
3. In terms of surface strategy taxonomy, the learners, in their English writings, most frequently commit misformations and least often make misorderings; while in terms of communicative effect taxonomy, they more dominantly commit local errors than global errors in their writings.
4. In general, the learners frequently make errors in their English writings dealing with agreement of subject and predicate.

SUGGESTIONS

In reference to the conclusions above, this research proposes some worthwhile suggestions as follows:

For english teachers

As learners tend to always commit grammatical errors when writing in English form, therefore, English teachers should attempt intensely to teach the learners how to write in English form effectively. Most importantly, the teachers should regularly give them much exercises or homeworks related to the grammar, especially in regard with agreement of subject and predicate, until they comprehend the rules of the grammar, then finally can minimize to make errors, particularly the error types that frequently emerge, such as misformation and local errors.

For further researches

Since this research just used learners' written productions to investigate errors found in there, further researchers are, hence, suggested to carry out another related study, such as on learners' oral productions. Besides, the study only focused mainly on two error taxonomies, i.e. surface strategy and communicative effect taxonomies; thus, future researches are fully recommended to take concerns on two other taxonomies, i.e. linguistic category and comparative analysis taxonomies, to investigate learners errors. Moreover, as the subjects of this research were the students of upper secondary school, accordingly, students in lower secondary school or even university might be proper subjects for other researches in investigating errors they commit.

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