AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN THEIR DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

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Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari tahu i) jenis kesalahan yang siswa buat yang tergolong *surface strategy taxonomy* dan *communicative effect taxonomy* dalam menulis karangan deskriptif, serta ii) menyelidiki jenis kesalahan yang sering dan jarang muncul pada karangan siswa tersebut. Penelitian ini bersifat qualitatif. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 29 siswa kelas XI IPA1 dari SMA Yadika 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.

Abstract. This study aimed at finding out i) the types of error that learners committed in terms of surface strategy and communicative effect taxonomies in their descriptive writing; and ii) the types of errors the students most and least frequently used in their writing on the basis of both taxonomies. This study was a qualitative research. The subjects were 29 learners of class XI IPA 1 of SMA Yadika Bandar Lampung. The 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 the students committed, while misordering was the least frequent error type. In terms of communicative effect taxonomy, the most dominant error type was local errors; while the least frequent error type was global errors.

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

INTRODUCTION

Writing skill is complex and sometimes difficult to teach, not only requiring mastery of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also conceptual and judgmental elements. The learners, moreover, must also think of the topic that they are going to write. Heaton (1988: 135) Another definition comes from (Corder 1779) He says that writing is a skill to put the words into written form. It is also a creative process.

In the schools, particularly in Indonesia, English has become more important in many areas such as society, science, business, education, and technology. As a consequence, many people tend to master English, especially for Indonesian students who learn English as a foreign language. In other words, the learners have to master English as a target language, either in spoken or written forms. However, writing is difficult for some students Haldfield (1990). Since writing needs integrated mastery of comprehension of topics and mastery of (1) sentence structure and (2) grammar, it may be difficult for them. It is hard for the students to write a grammatical sentence.

The texts that can be used to train the students in order to improve their skill of writing and to minimize the grammatical errors is descriptive text, since the grammatical errors still found in students' writing. 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.

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 to 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 the 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 researcher, in reality, still found some grammatical errors when she was being a private teacher of students from SMA N 8 Bandar Lampung and SMA Yadika Bandar Lampung. As supported by Badudu (1985: 7) the learners always, in reality, confront problems every time they write in English form.

Therefore based on this fact the writer was interested to examine the students' grammatical errors in their descriptive writing in another school namely SMA Yadika Bandar Lampung. In this research the writer will analyze and then categorized the grammatical errors based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy and Communicative Effect Taxonomy. By analyzing and categorizing the grammatical errors the students and teacher will get the benefit to improve their ability in writing and the ability of teaching writing.

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, by Abdillah (2017) at the second-semester students of SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung. He analyzed the learners' errors in their descriptive writings in terms of surface strategy taxonomy and grammatical aspects of writing that is word order. The findings revealed that the students committed errors in all forms, i.e. omission, addition,

misformation, and misordering. The most persistent error type that prominently emerges in the learners' writings is misformation. Certainly, the least frequent error type appearing in their writings is misordering Besides, the learners committed the errors at all areas of word order aspects: (1) agreement of subject and predicate (2) agreement of pronoun and antecedent (3) linking and auxiliary verbs (4) adjectives and adverbs. It is now obvious that the learners mostly made errors at the subject and predicate area; likewise, they least committed errors at the pronoun and antecedent area.

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 Yadika Bandar Lampung in the academic year of 2017/2018. Class XI IPA 1 consisting of 29 students were selected as the sample. To gain the data, this study applied writing test, more specifically writing test of the descriptive model, which had been administered on January 24th, 2018. The students composed their descriptive writings with the topic 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 discover 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 the 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 293 items of errors in their compositions. The most persistent error type that prominently emerges in the learners' writings is misformation with 156 errors (53.2 %). It is then followed by omission type amounting to 87 errors (29.6 %), and thereafter, addition with 46 errors (15.6 %). Certainly, the least frequent error type appearing in their writings is misordering as many as 4 errors (1.3 %). 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	
		Omission	Addition	Misformation	Misordering		
1	Agreement of subject and predicate	46	17	92	1	156	53.2%
2	Agreement of pronoun and antecedent	14	2	26	0	42	14.3%
3	Linking and auxiliary verbs	10	2	2	0	14	4.7%
4	Adjectives and adverbs	17	25	36	3	81	27.6%
	Total of each error type	87	46	156	4		
	Percentage	29.6%	15.6%	53.2%	1.3%		
	Whole number	293					

Besides, the learners committed the errors in all areas of word order aspects: (1) agreement of subject and predicate occurring as many as 156 times (53.2 %), (2) agreement of pronoun and antecedent amounting to 42 times (14.3 %), (3) linking and auxiliary verbs in occurrence of 14 times (4.7 %), (4) adjectives and adverbs as many as 81 times (27.6 %). It is now obvious that the learners mostly made errors at the subject and predicate area; likewise, they least committed errors at the linking and auxiliary verb.

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	9	43	52	73.2%
2	Agreement of pronoun and antecedent	5	1	6	8.4%
3	Linking and auxiliary verbs	0	0	0	0%
4	Adjectives and adverbs	7	6	13	18.3%
	Total of each error type	21	50		
	Percentage	29.5%	70.4%		
	Whole number	71			

By Table 2 presented above, noticeably indicates that the learners, in terms of communicative effect taxonomy, committed 71 of errors in their compositions. It is evident that the most dominant error type conspicuously appearing in the learners' writings is local error as many as 50 errors (70.4 %). Meanwhile, the misdoings in form of global error committed by the learners in their descriptive writings amount to 21 errors (29.5 %).

Additionally, they made the errors in three areas of word order aspects: (1) agreement of subject and predicate in occurrence of 52 times (73.2 %), (2) agreement of pronoun and antecedent amounting to 6 times (8.4 %) and, (3) adjectives and adverbs occurring as many as 13 times (18.3 %). Afterward certainly, as could be seen from the rates, the learners mostly made errors at the subject and predicate area; likewise, they least committed errors at the linking and auxiliary verbs.

DISCUSSION

The results of this present study have evidently shown 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 to 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 156 errors (53.2 %), omission in number of 87 errors (29.6 %), addition with 46 errors (15.6 %), and, last, misordering amounting to 4 errors (1.3 %). 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 Abdillah (2017). He revealed that learners, in their descriptive text writings, committed errors in all forms of surface strategy taxonomy. Moreover, he also found that the most persistent error type in the learners' writings was misformation (54.6 %); while the least frequent error type was misordering (2.4 %). 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, discussions below discuss 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 wrong 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 language 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 aspects 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 as 156 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:

He always taught us.

The sentence is absolutely wrong. The verb *taught* should be grammatically altered into *teaches*. The cause of this alteration is the use of singluar pronoun *he* and the adverb *always*. Accordingly, the sentence should be rewritten as:

She always teaches us.

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- form utterance. Moreover, they mostly made omission errors in regard with agreement of subject and predicate as many as 46 times. It means that they frequently omitted either subject or predicate in their sentences, as could be noticed from the following example is taken from one of the learners erroneous sentences:

My mother very beautiful.

Prominently, the learner omitted linking verb *is* in the sentence. The sentence above needs linking verb "is" because the sentence does not have "main verb". Thus, following grammatical rules, the sentence should be revised as:

My mother is very beautiful.

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 29 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. 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. 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 in all areas of word order aspects, as they did in the previous errors.

However, the most frequent aspect dealing with addition errors that the learners made was adjective occurring as many as 25 times. To be more concrete, the example below is one of the learners erroneous sentences to show the case:

Salwa is like singing.

Indeed, the sentence above is ungrammatically constructed. The auxiliary verb *is* should not appear in the sentence for it as the sentence has a main verb *like* Hence, the sentence should be revised as:

Salwa likes singing.

Thus, it could be inferred that they had not comprehended in term of how to utter or write a sentence by using the main verb or auxiliary verb to make it correct.

Misordering

Based on the results of data analysis, there were only 3 of 29 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. This matter is one of the reasons why addition error is placed in the third rank as clearly shown in Table 4. Concerning why the learners made addition errors 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.

.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. Furthermore, 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 as 3 times. This case also became the reason why misordering was as the least frequent error type emerging in the learners' writings. To be clearer about misordering that the learners made, the example below shows the case:

He is a child very smart.

From the sentence above, it evidently indicates that the learner made various errors, especially in form of misordering. Phrase *very smart* should be set before word *child.* Thus, the correct sentence should be rewritten as:

He is a very smart child.

Based on the sentence above, it is evident 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 native language, i.e. Indonesian. This is also affirmed by Ellis (2002) that 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 reveal that the learners, in terms of communicative effect taxonomy, made errors in forms of global and local errors. Both error types, nonetheless, have different frequencies in accordance with their appearance in the learners' writings. In form of global error, the learners made errors as many as 21 items (29,5 %), while in local error form, they committed errors amounting to 50 items (70,4 %). It is obvious that the learners more dominantly made local errors than global errors in their descriptive writings

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 mostly committed local errors in their English writings. Additionally, based on the results of this study, as could be noticed in Appendix 4 Table 7, there are 20 learners made local error in their descriptive writings. This is actually one of the reasons why local error

becomes the most persistent error type in the learners' writings. Despite the learners made local errors, their sentences could be still understandable. It is because local error, as Dulay *et al* (1982) illustrates, 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 a serious problem because of considering the learners mostly made this typical error in their writings

In addition, the learners committed local errors only at three areas of word order aspects: (1) agreement of subject and predicate, (2) agreement of pronoun and antecedent, and (3) adjectives and adverbs. However, they mostly made local errors in relation to agreement of subject and predicate as many of 29 times. To convince this, the example below will clarify the case:

> *My younger brother have black hair.*

Seen clearly, the predicate *have* in the sentence disagrees with its subject, i.e. *younger brother*. As *younger brother* 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:

> *My younger brother has black hair.*

In view of this, it indicates that the learners frequently made minor error items, such as wrong inflection of verb or noun, misuse of an 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 could be clearly shown in Table 4, global error is placed in the last rank. It was since there are only 14 learners committed global errors in their descriptive compositions; and this, of course, was unlike local error that there are 20 learners made it in their 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.

The learners, moreover, made such typical errors, as shown previously in Table 2, in regard with three aspects of word order, those are: : (1) agreement of subject and predicate, (2) agreement of pronoun and antecedent, and (3) adjectives and adverbs. 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, 22 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:

> *His favorite food are all's it healthy*

Noticeably, the sentence above can cause a misinterpretation for readers since the learner fully incorrectly constructed the sentence. What becomes the most disruptive misdoing so such case could happen is wrong choice of word. The pronoun in the sentence should be *her* instead of *his* for the learner was describing his mother. Accordingly, the correct sentence should be revised as:

Her favorite food is all kind of vegetables, it is healthy.

In view of this, it turned out that the learners tended to use or choose inappropriate words to construct the sentences, specifically dealing with agreement of subject and predicate. 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. Most of the chosen students at second grade of SMA YADIKA Bandar Lampung committed grammatical errors dealing with some aspects of word order in terms of surface strategy taxonomy
2. 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. The learners also made all error types in terms of communicative effect taxonomy.

The results show that they more dominantly committed local error that global error in their descriptive compositions.
4. In general, the learners frequently make errors in their English writings dealing with an agreement of subject and predicate.

SUGGESTIONS

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

For English teachers
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 many 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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