AN ANALYSIS OF SYNTACTIC ERRORS MADE BY THE SECOND GRADE STUDENTS OF SMK PGRI PEKANBARU IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract: This study is aimed to analyze what syntactic errors made by the second grade students of SMK PGRI Pekanbaru in writing descriptive text. The populations were all of the second grade students of the school in the 2018/2019 academic year. The numbers of the samples were 30 students chosen by using cluster random sampling technique. The data were collected by using written test. The data were analyzed by applying the rules of Corder (1974 in Barkhuizen, 2005) which consisted of five steps; 1) collection of sample of learner language; 2) identification of errors; 3) description of errors; 4) explanation of errors; and 5) error evaluation. Eight syntactic errors were found as the result of data analysis. They are: pronouns (25.9%), subject-verb agreements (22.7%), verb tenses and forms (14.5%), word orders (9%), articles (8.6%), prepositions (7.1%), plural nouns (6.7%), and passive voices (5.5%). The most frequent error made by the students were pronouns with a total of 66 errors (25.9%) and the least frequent error were passive voices with a total of 14 errors (5.5%). Based on the findings, there are three suggestions; 1) the students are suggested to be more concerned with the mentioned syntax items; 2) the teachers are required to give more attention regarding the students' ability, to explain the lesson by using simple language, and to use various teaching methods in order to improve students writing abilities; and 3) future study is asked to conduct a research on the analysis of syntactic errors and the cause of the errors due to the limitation the of scope of this study.

Key Words: Syntactic Error, Descriptive Text, and Writing Ability

ANALISIS KESALAHAN TATA BAHASA OLEH SISWA KELAS KEDUA SMK PGRI PEKANBARU DALAM MENULIS TEKS DESKRIPTIF

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa kesalahan tata bahasa yang dilakukan oleh siswa kelas kedua SMK PGRI Pekanbaru dalam menulis teks deskriptif. Populasi penelitian ini adalah semua siswa kelas kedua di sekolah tersebut pada tahun ajaran 2018/2019. Jumlah sampel adalah 30 siswa yang dipilih dengan teknik *cluster random sampling*. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan tes tertulis. Data dianalisa dengan menggunakan aturan Corder (1974 dalam Barkhuizen, 2005) yang terdiri dari lima langkah, yakni: 1) pengumpulan sampel dari pelajar; 2) identifikasi kesalahan; 3) deskripsi kesalahan; 4) penjelasan kesalahan; dan 5) evaluasi kesalahan. Delapan kesalahan tata bahasa ditemukan sebagai hasil dari analisa data, yakni kata ganti (25.9%), kesesuaian subjek-kata kerja (22.7%), bentuk dan kata kerja (14.5%), susunan kata (9%), artikel (8.6%), kata depan (7.1%), kata benda jamak (6.7%), dan kalimat pasif (5.5%). Kesalahan yang paling sering terjadi adalah kata ganti dengan total 66 kesalahan (25.9%) dan kesalahan yang paling jarang terjadi adalah kalimat pasif dengan total 14 kesalahan (5.5%). Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, ada tiga saran, yakni; 1) siswa disarankan untuk lebih memperhatikan hal-hal terkait tata bahasa tersebut; 2) guru diharuskan untuk memberi perhatian lebih terhadap kemampuan siswa, untuk menjelaskan dengan bahasa yang sederhana, untuk menggunakan metode pembelajaran yang beragam untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa; dan 3) penelitian di waktu mendatang diminta untuk melakukan penelitian terhadap kesalahan tata bahasa dan sebab kesalahan tersebut karena terbatasnya cakupan penelitian ini.

Kata Kunci: Kesalahan Tata Bahasa, Teks Deskriptif, dan Kemampuan Menulis.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of four skills in learning English. Writing is known as the most difficult skill than the other skills, especially for foreign learners. 'Writing is difficult to learn because authors should utilize a process that includes planning, organizing, and revising to present meaning in words form' (Palmer, Hafiner, & Sharp, 1994). In addition, writing skill requires capabilities more than other language skills, it needs a special preparation and it is true that writing is commonly a difficult activity for most people, both in mother tongue and in foreign language (Nunan, 1991).

Because of its complexity, most learners face some problems in writing. There are some problems in writing, they are psychological problems, linguistic problems, and cognitive problems (Byrne, 1993). Psychological problems refer to writing as a single activity without the possibility of interaction or the benefit of feedback. According to the problem, writing is an individual process which is done by a writer personally that in conducting the process the writer requires to explore, to oppose, and to make connections between the ideas by themselves. (Fatemi, 2008). It means that the writer does not get direct feedback from the readers about their writing.

Another problem in writing is linguistic problems. It is related to the coherence and the choices of sentence structure in order that the text can be produced and be interpreted by the readers. According to Byrne (1993), writing is different from speaking. He added that writing does not have spontaneous revision such as repetition and backtrack to make people understand. In oral communication, incomplete and even ungrammatical sentences that we say usually pass unnoticed. But in writing, we have to be very careful with the structures of the sentences to avoid confusion of the readers. From the explanation, it can be assumed that giving the ideas in written form needs perfection in terms of structure and word order.

The last problem is cognitive problems. It refers to the assumption that writing is learnt through a process of instruction. Unlike speaking, writing needs much conscious effort, thought, and hard work. The difficulty of writing is how to generate task-relevant ideas, phrase sentences with correct grammar, use correct punctuations, and choose the proper words and tone (Deane, Odendahl, Quinlan, Fowles, Welsh, &Bivens-Tatum, 2008). There are some cognitive problems which are faced by the students, they are punctuation problems, capitalization problems, spelling problems, content problems, and organization problems (Alfaki, 2015).

In English language writing context, the written message is understood if the sentences are constructed according to the rules of syntax. Syntax is the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages (Chomsky, 2002). It is one of the branches of linguistics studying about the rules or patterned relation that govern the way words combine to form phrases, or phrases combine to form sentences. Therefore, any disagreement with the syntactic rules is called syntactic errors. In writing, syntax complexity is defined as the ability to produce writings that present the ideas and the large chunks of information blended together with the use of subordinate and embedded subordinate clauses (Susana, 2007). Syntax complexity is one of the most difficult elements for learners in writing.

Syntax, one of the branches in linguistics, deals with the sentence structure of English in a systematic and scientific way (Sekhar, 2016). The study of English syntax is the study of rules which generate an infinite number of grammatical sentences. Syntax is a major component of English grammar. In fact, syntax gives power to words

to carry the meaning in the form of sentences. Syntax is remarkably flexible in English and one can learn how to use sentences grammatically and analyze the sentences. Syntax deals with the structure of sentences. As words are important for a language, sentences are also important. Sentence structure is vital in writing. Even a word is not properly used in a sentence, the whole sentence will be wrong. The use of phrases and clauses, subject and verb agreement and the use of parts of speech etc. must be systematic i.e. grammatically correct. Syntax makes learners understand and use sentences grammatically.

According to the 2013 Curriculum (K13) and the syllabus, vocational high school students in the 2018/2019 academic year learn three genres of texts. They are descriptive text, recount text, and narrative text. Descriptive text was chosen to be analyzed. The students learnt about the definition, language feature, social function and generic structure of descriptive text. In learning descriptive text, the students also learnt about syntax item such as grammar, word order, pronoun, appropriate tense etc. in writing descriptive text. According to the interview with the English teachers of SMK PGRI Pekanbaru, the students seemed to be passive during the teaching-learning process. They did not really pay attention while the teacher gives explanation about the leaning material, especially descriptive text.

The students' passiveness and lack of attention might be the cause of students' errors in writing that are related to syntax e.g. grammar, even though they have learned grammar rules but seldom put that knowledge to practical use (Wachs, 1993). It is also may be caused by the difference between their mother tongue and the target language. This make the learners face difficulty to express themselves in a clear, correct and comprehensible manner of writing. Those language features that are similar to the (learner's) native language will be simple for him, and those areas that are different will be difficult (Lado, 1957).

Second grade students were chosen because they were not focused on national exam yet like the third grade students did or focus on the adjustment of the school situation like the first grade students did. In addition, errors made in English made by foreign language students are unavoidable. Therefore, an analysis of the syntactic errors made by the second grade students of SMK PGRI Pekanbaru in writing descriptive text is needed.

Based on the background of the research, the problem of this research is formulated as follows: What syntactic errors do the second grade students of SMK PGRI Pekanbaru make in writing descriptive text?

The objective of the research is to analyze what syntactic errors are made by the second grade students of SMK PGRI Pekanbaru in writing descriptive text.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The populations of this research were264 second grade students of SMK PGRI Pekanbaru which is grouped in 9 classes. The population of this research can be seen as follows:

Table 1. Population of the Research

No	Class	Number of Students
1	Office Administration 1	30
2	Office Administration 2	30
3	Accounting 1	32
4	Accounting 2	30
5	Computer Network Engineering 1	26
6	Computer Network Engineering 2	28
7	Software Engineering 1	30
8	Travel and Tourism Industry	30
9	Business Management	28
	TOTAL	264

In order to determine the sample, cluster random sampling was used in this study. According to Sugiyono (2013), cluster random sampling is the sampling method where different groups within a population are used as a sample. In other word, the total population is divided into group (clusters) and simple random sample of group is selected.This probability sampling was used to give the same opportunity to the population to be a member of sample.

One class was chosen to be the sample by using lotteries. Nine small pieces of rolled paper were provided, which one of them was written a word "sample" and the others are blank. The chairperson of each class was asked to take the lotteries. After doing sampling technique, classAdministrasiPerkantoran 1 was out as sample of this research which consisted of 30 students.

A written test was used as the research instrument. The students wrote descriptive text based on one of three topics given. The topics are: 1) My Idol, 2) Pekanbaru, The City I Live In, and 3) My Favorite Teacher in SMK PGRI. The students wrote the descriptive text in 90 minutes in the classroom.

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed by the rules of Corder (1974 in Barkhuizen, 2005) that proposes five steps in conducting error analysis. The steps were:
1. Collection of sample of learner language. In this step, the data were controlled by narrowly specifying the sample that intends to collect.

2. Identification of errors. This step involves a comparison between the sentences made by sample and the sentences are supposed to be in good grammatical pattern in the same context. Then the researcher could identify which part of sample sentences is different from reconstruction version. In identifying the errors, the data will be presented in percentage, according to Hatch and Farhady (1982), to obtain the percentage, we can divide the F of the level that we want to check by the sum of frequencies (N) and multiply by 100%. It is formulated as follow:

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

In this study, F is the number of syntactic errors that will be counted and N is the total number of errors.

3. Description of errors. This step usually employs either linguistic taxonomy or surface structure taxonomy to describe the differences between sample's sentences and native speakers' sentences.

4. Explanation of errors. This step involves determining their sources in order to account for why they are made. Obviously, learners make errors due to the difficulties in accessing their second language knowledge in communication.

5. Error evaluation. This step is supplementary stage in error analysis. It involves determining the gravity of different errors with a view to describe which one should receive instruction.

Research Finding

As mentioned in previous chapter, error is an instance of language that deviates from standard of English grammar. In this study, eight syntactic errors were found. They were passive voice, verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, word order, preposition, article, plurality and pronoun. All syntactic errors were found in the descriptive text written by samples. After the research was conducted, numerous data were found to be presented. The distribution syntactic errors in writing descriptive text were shown in the following table.

Table 2. The Result of Syntactic Errors in Writing Descriptive Text

NO	TYPE OF ERROR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF STUDENTSMAKING ERRORS
1	Pronouns	66	25.9%	18
2	Subject-Verb Agreements	58	22.7%	20
3	Verb Tenses and Forms	37	14.5%	13
4	Word Orders	23	9%	13
5	Articles	22	8.6%	12
6	Prepositions	18	7.1%	12
7	Plural Nouns	17	6.7%	13
8	Passive Voices	14	5.5%	11
	TOTAL	255	100%	

Table 2 shows the result of the syntactic errors made in writing descriptive text. 30 students of this study made 255errors in writing the text; 66 errors (25.9%) in pronouns, 58 errors (22.7%) in subject-verb agreement, 37 errors (14.5%) in verb tenses and forms, 23 errors (9%) in word orders, 22 errors (8.6%) in articles, 18 errors (7.1%) in prepositions, 17 errors (6.7%) in plural nouns, and 14 errors (5.5%) in passive voices.

It can be indicated that in term of pronoun, the students might be confused between using masculine and feminine, and subject and object pronoun. They frequently use 'her' as the subject pronoun or 'him' for possessive pronoun. This makes pronoun has the highest number of error that students made. Moreover, in Subject-Verb Agreement, students made errors in using the correct subject, verb, and also to be. In terms of Verb Tense and Form, the students tend to use the past form of verb and to be when it should be the base form.The use of verb tense in the writings showed that the participants might found a difficulty in using the tense and the form of verbs. This may happen because the learners do not fully comprehend a distinction in the target language(Richards, 1971), so they keep using the past form of to be or verb. In term of Word Order, the students' errors are the phrases that might indicate that they sometimes got influence by Indonesian language order. As mentioned in page 20, this may be caused by interlingual transfer, where the students get influenced by their mother tongue. In terms of Article, the students still confused in using articles *a*and*an*.This explains the students' incomplete understanding of the rule. In the provided examples, the student added *a* instead of *an* before a word that begins with a vowel or vice versa. Concerning the deletion of the definite and indefinite articles, some students may not know when to use them and when not. This failure to learn and understand the use of the articles explains the students' excessive use of these articles in other situations. It is quite clear that there is a problem with the students' linguistic competence in this regard.

Furthermore, the students prominently use inappropriate choice of Preposition.The errors may be due to the lack of comprehension about preposition of time and place. In terms of Plurality, the participant forgot to add –s¬ in plural thing. They also wrote the plural form of person and woman for singular subject and object pronoun. The last is the term of Passive Voice. Surprisingly, passive voice has the lowest number of errors that the students made. The result shows that the second grade students of SMK PGRI Pekanbaru might be confused in using passive voice. It can be seen through the sentences they created in their writing. This might happen because the student confuses between active voice and passive voice. This might be due to the lack of sufficient training and drills on this rule which lead to overgeneralization of the rule.

As the errors analysis has been done by the researcher, hopefully it can be contributed the students itself to correct themselves. It essential to realize that as stated by Gass and Selinker (2008) an error are systematic likely happen regularly and not recognized by the students. Moreover, the students have to write in English which is as their foreign language. They need to memorize and practice to use the rules of the language so that the errors are unavoidable. In writing skill, the students may lack of practice so that they cannot locate their errors directly and need others to find them. In this part, teacher can assist students in order to correct the writing work.

Furthermore, in learning certain language, it is essential to use the correct grammatical rules in order to convey meaning well. As Carter (1997) stated that knowing more about how grammar works is to understand more about how grammar is used and misused.   Through this error analysis study, the students can recognize the

significant errors which appear in their writing and understand the nature of errors made. The difficulties of students regarding to English grammatical can be learnt as well by the teachers or even lecturer in order to find the method to teach those items.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

To answer the research question, the writings of second grade students of SMK PGRI Pekanbaru were analyzed. Some errors were found and categorized in their writings. The finding showed that 30 students made a total of 255 errors which contained 66 errors (25.9%) in pronouns, 58 errors (22.7%) in subject-verb agreement, 37 errors (14.5%) in verb tenses and forms, 23 errors (9%) in word orders, 22 errors (8.6%) in articles, 18 errors (7.1%) in prepositions, 17 errors (6.7%) in plural nouns, and 14 errors (5.5%) in passive voices. Briefly, the highest numbers of error werepronouns, subject-verb agreement, and verb tenses and forms.

Since the result of the study describes the percentage of error made by the second grade students, the students were suggested to be more concerned toward mentionedsyntax items. They can improve those structure items in writing through practicing.

In teaching English related to its grammar, teachers are required to give more attention regarding the students' ability. The teachers are also suggested explain the lesson by using simple language, so that the students can minimize the possibility of making errors.

Recommendations

Teachers are suggested to use various teaching methods in order to improve students writing abilities. They are also required to use peer review which enables the students to learn by correcting their friends' writing and gives direct feedback to the students. The teachers can also use face to face conference to diagnose and suggest the solution to the students.

Future study is asked to conduct a research on the analysis of syntactic errors and the cause of the errors due to the limitation of the scope of this study.

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