

Common Mistakes of English Made by the Undergraduate Students at English Department Universitas NU Surabaya, Indonesia

Djuwari, Djuwari

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA), Indonesia

Mujad Didien Afandi

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA), Indonesia

Edi Pujo Basuki

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA), Indonesia

Tiyas Saputri

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA), Indonesia

Nailul Authar

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA), Indonesia

Novi Rahmania Aquariza

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA), Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Learning English as a second language (ESL) for the students of non-native speakers requires a lot of time and practice. They never use English in their daily lives. They use English when they are in the class of English. This study attempts to explore the common mistakes made by the students of English department at Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA) Indonesia. The data were taken from 12 papers as their assignments they submitted for the requirements of the passing grade. These ten papers were selected purposively that the students took the subject of Article and Journal Publication during one semester, semester 4. Each article was taken only one page of Introduction with the assumption that this section is written with their own original thought as the starting point in a paper writing. The data were classified into five categories such as (1) Passive be, (2) Agreement subject-Verbs, (3) Relative Clause, (4) Head-Modifier, and (5) Dangling. It was found that the mistakes that are dominantly made are Agreement Subject+ Verbs and Relative Clause. A recommendation can be done by emphasizing the practice on these two types of mistakes so that the students can master them better.

Keywords: EFL, common mistakes, linguistic Knowledge, logical connectors, cohesiveness, coherence.

1. Introduction

Learning English for the non-naïve speakers requires more time and practice for making the learners really master English, especially for writing skills. It needs not only the ability to speak but also the ability to write. Speaking is the oral communication while writing is the written communication. For the students at the English department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (Unusa), Indonesia, learning English is quite hard compared to those whose English is the second language. In Indonesia, students speak their regional language in their daily lives and speak Indonesian in their formal situation such as in schools, or in offices. In this condition, English is as a foreign language, in the sense that, the Indonesian students will never speak English if they do not have English classes. Therefore, they speak English when they learn it in school only.

Due to the condition above, mastering English for Indonesian students is not so easy that they still make mistakes in any occasion, especially in writing. Writing is the language skill that must be mastered by the students, especially those who are studying English as their major subject, like in English department at FKIP, Unusa, Indonesia. They have to write their thesis in English so that they are also demanded to have a writing skill. However, during the classes they

also have assignment in writing that they have to submit to their teachers. This is also part of their activities in learning process to get the writing skill.

Writing a thesis for the students at English department is also an obligatory. Before they have to graduate, they have to write the thesis as their final obligation to finish their study at this English department. Unfortunately, even though they have learned about 7 semesters before writing the thesis, they still have some common mistakes in their writing when they get assignments to submit to their teachers. They have some common mistakes that need attentions. This study is a case study done at English department at FKIP Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA) Indonesia. It can be stated that the students always make mistakes in their English writing of their written assignments they submitted to their teachers. This needs attention and therefore, a strategy should be undertaken to improve their English writing for their thesis as of their final requirements of their study before they graduate from Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama (UNUSA) Surabaya.

This study has the objectives to examine the students common mistakes made in the assignments during the class process of *Artikel dan Penerbitan Jurnal Ilmiah* (The subject for Writing Article for Scientific Journal Publication). It also attempts to provide strategy or suggestion for improving the students' writing skill.

2. Theoretical Framework

There are some previous studies concerning the mistakes in English made by the students, especially by the non-native English speakers. For example, Zhao et al (2018) analyzed using corpus-based strategy for the students of different students such as Korean and Spanish. They identified the students' spoken language for example the deletion of pronunciation that might be due to their native language. Therefore, this study was done on oral language but not written language. However, there is an indication that the learners' background such as their naïve language can also affect their English.

Another study was also done by Guo (2018) but it was related to both natives and non-natives they compared. The non-native, in writing, found trouble with the code. This deals with the words that are commonly expressed by the native speakers but they are difficult to express by the non-naïve speakers. Thus, it deals with the language code but not in grammatical mistakes. Unlike Zhao and Guo, another proponents that is Nuruzzaman et al (2018), in which, they studied the Saudi EFL students in writing English paragraphs. Based on their findings, it was found that there are four categories namely grammar, lexis, semantics and mechanics Grammar in writing is important for the students of undergraduates in English subject as their major.

Last but not least is the study by the researchers in Indonesia that is by Nurhidayat et al, (2021) recently. They used 10 respondents of undergraduate students of an institute at Bengkulu, Indonesia. The paragraphs they wrote were analyzed as the data analysis. They found that the students tend to use repetitive conjunctions or words they are familiar to. According to them, it is due to the complexity. Yet, conjunction is not complex. The complex aspect is the sentences but not the cohesive devices. From this, it can be restated that the students have difficulty in using the logical connectors and besides that, they tend to use the words which they are familiar to and grammar as well

Based on the previous studies above, it can be argued that academic writing for the students in English department is obligatory for they have to write their thesis in English. The definition of writing, therefore, needs to be discussed so that the process of writing can be clearly

understood by the learners of English language as a foreign language (EFL). More importantly, grammar knowledge or linguistic knowledge is also essential for the learners. The most important one is the knowledge of cohesiveness and coherences. Logical connectors for connecting sentences, clauses, phrases are also salient in academic writing. Topics related to the major subject the learners study in their college is also an important factor for making the learners able to write smoothly. However, the more seriously problem when the non-native speakers of English is linguistic knowledge

Definition of Writing

There are several different definitions of the word writing based on the perspective of each researcher. In relation to the definition of writing, Bozatzi, (2021). states that writing is a non-linear, exploratory, and generative process— autonomy and responsibility.

. In this process, there are several sub-processes such as planning, data collection, compilation, revision, rewriting and finally, there is an editing process. Another proponent is Graham (2022), describing that writing is in flux concerning the process of pre-writing, writing, revising, revising, and revising. This means that writing is not done at a glance and finished. Instead, it is the process from drafting until it is edited several times to make it more perfect. Based on the definition of writing above, it can be restated that writing is not a short plan but it includes the process of drafting or planning, the process of writing, and even editing and revising.

Factors in Writing

Writing deals with grammar skills and vocabulary building. The more the students have grammar skill and vocabulary collection in their mind, he more they can smoothly write their articles in English. Linguistic knowledge is an important factor for the learners to acquire in order they can write better. It is grammar of language they learn that is English (Trask, 2013). The learners have to learn the system of English language so that they can apply it in writing. Also as stated by George (1980), there are some aspects in grammar knowledge that must be mastered. They are noun phrase, Verb phrases, adjective phrase, and adverb phrase. Besides noun clauses, such kinds of phrases are essential knowledge for the learners to acquire. Therefore, linguistic knowledge is important and this can be expressed in terms phrases and clauses.

Logical Connectors

Logical connections are the linguistic devices or the so-called cohesiveness for making the sentences interrelated thus the ideas are coherent. Therefore cohesiveness that is expressed in terms of linguistic devises is essential in writing (Onn, 2018). Not only is the knowledge dealing with logical connection, the knowledge about cohesiveness and coherence also salient for the learners to be able to write academically (Djuwari, 2021). Therefore, the two knowledge about cohesiveness and coherence is such an essential knowledge that the novice writers, especially the learners of English of non-native speakers.

Cohesiveness and Coherence

It has been noted that the knowledge of linguistic devices is important. One, it is cohesiveness. This is related to the linguistic knowledge such as the logical connectors that are made use to connect sentences, clauses, phrases, to make them fluently and easily understood (Irvin, 2010).

The examples of this linguistic devices are such as and, but, however, although, not only but also, besides that, first of all, secondly, and finally etc. All of these devices are salient for the writers to use in connecting the sentences or ideas in the academic writing (Djuwari, 2021). Based on the importance of logical connectors and the knowledge about cohesiveness, it can be judged that when the learners have acquired the knowledge of cohesiveness, they are potentially able to write academic articles in a good way.

Expressing ideas using logical argument is considered vital in academic writing. It is the main characteristic features of academic writing (Poudel & Dhankuta, 2018). According to them, in academic writing, the writers should arrange the sentences carefully that they support the presentation of a viewpoint that is the argument. When the writers use logical connectors appropriately, their academic text is coherent and that is easily understood.

In the process of writing, students should be able to express all of their ideas effectively and accurately because as aligned with the essence of writing, it is to make the readers easy to understand the written text (McDonough & Crawford, 2020).

Besides the knowledge about cohesiveness and coherence, in writing, mostly the learners are able to write better when the topic is related to their subject of their major subject knowledge. Thus, content is also essential (McDonough & Crawford, 2020). Content can be the core subject the learners study in their college. In some cases, it is also called discourse community. This is related to the field of sciences or a group of profession with the same fields such as Biology, Education, Economics, Technology, and etc. (Djuwari, 2022). However, the knowledge of grammar is still potential for the learners to acquire of this knowledge is the prior knowledge before cohesiveness and coherence. Thus, cohesiveness, coherence, topic related, and linguistic knowledge are essential for writing skills.

Linguistic Knowledge

Linguistic knowledge refers to the grammar of the language and t=in this case is English. English grammar for the students of non-naïve speakers, especially Indonesian students is challenging (Djuwari, 2022). This deals with grammar from simple, compound, and even complex grammar. The learners should master all of this linguistic knowledge in order they can write English better. As the non-native speakers such knowledge is required by practicing in writing again and again. Their first language is also another factor hinders their knowledge of linguistics (Khrasen, in Liu, 2015). This is why the first language system can be the monitor and inhibit the English system acquisition.

Linguistics knowledge starts from simple grammar, compound grammar, and even complex grammar. Knowing these will make the learners able to write in English better. It also deals with such Subject-Agreement, Relative Clauses, Phrases, Clauses, and much linguistic knowledge for the learners (Celce-Murcia, 1985). These system of English language needs to be learned and mastered before the learners have to write in English.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research using genre analysis in which the documents in the form of the students' works they submitted to the teacher were used as the data for analysis. These sub-genres (students' works) as in Hayland (2010) and also by Swales (1990), as well as in Djuwari (20109) are commonly used as the data to be analyzed in this type of qualitative research.

The respondents (and their paper works) consist of 12 students' paper works submitted to the teacher as the assignments they had to accomplish as part of the passing grade. The data related to the common mistakes were summarized in tables based on the categories of the linguistic knowledge. Besides that, the common mistakes were also presented in terms of the types of Mistakes such as (1) Pasive be, (2) Agreement subject_ Verbs, (3) Relative Clause, (4) Head-Modifier), and (5) Dangling. These types were defined after they were explored. They were classified into these types. (McDonough & Crawford, 2020; Poudel & Dhankuta, 2018; Nuruzzaman et al, 2018; Nurhidayat et al., 2021), from these analysis, the summary was done and the dominant mistakes as the serious problem to be paid attention for further action.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings from the data explored are presented in Tables of the types of mistakes based on their classification such as (1) Pasive be, (2) Agreement subject_ Verbs, (3) Relative Clause, (4) Head-Modifier), and (5) Dangling. Then, these 12 tables of the 12 articles written by the 12 students are also summarized in one table that is in Table 13. The following are Table 1 to Table 12 with their types of mistakes the 10 students made.

Findings

There are 10 Tables that are the results of exploration in each article written by 10 students in the class of Research Article and Journal Publication during a semester, semester 4 of their study program.

Table 1: Article No: 1

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	type				
		Passive be	Agreement Subject + Verb	Relative Clause	Head-Modifier	dangling
1while the <u>student learn</u> to speak language,		x			
2assume that <u>listening automatically acquired</u>	x				
3while the <u>student learn</u> to speak language,		x			
4	<u>the teacher do not</u> only teach the content		x			
5	<u>Song have</u> been known by all people as media...		x			

Table 2: Artikel No 2

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	Type				
		Passive be	Agreement	Relative Clause	Head-Modifier	dangling
1	The <u>Objective my research are</u> :		x			
2	<u>And it also develop</u> speaking and		x	x		

	vocabulary skills					
3	<u>These point</u> show that learning		x			
4	<u>it never too early</u> to begin learning a languages.		x			

Table 3: Article No: 3

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	Type				
		Passive be	Agreement	Relative Clause	Head-Modifier	dangling
1	<u>Another study that finding</u> out the effectiveness of Chain Drill technique			x		
2	<u>Another study that finding</u> out Improving			x		
3	It was <u>drill technique has been</u> successful in improving			x		

Table 4: Article No: 4

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	Type				
		Passive be	Agreement	Relative Clause	Head-modifier	Dangling
1	<u>...improvement of vocabulary children...</u>				x	
2	So that children will more quickly remember a word well..					x
3	There were <u>some previous studies also explore</u> the eff			x		

Table 5: Article No: 5

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	Type				
		Passive be	Agreement	Relative Clause	Head-modifier	Dangling
1	While the quantitative is presented in the form of mean score.					x

Table 6: Article No: 6

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	Type					
		Passive be	Agreement	Relative Clause	Head-modifier	Pluralize	Dangling

1	therefore teachers must use <u>some different technology</u> in learning.					x	
2	teachers use supporting technology <u>that more sophisticated</u>			x			

Table 7 Article no: 7

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	Type					
		Passive be	Agreement	Relative Clause	Head-modifier	Pluralize	Dangling
1	The researcher analyzed <u>the data that taken from interview</u>			x			
2	The respondents also answered <u>the questionnaire that distributed to them</u>			x			

Table 8: Article No: 8

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	Type					
		Passive be	Agreement	Relative Clause	Head-modifier	Pluralize	Dangling
1	the researcher summarizes <u>some findings from the other researchers have conducted previous research</u>			x			

Table 9: Article no 9

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	Type					
		Passive be	Agreement	Relative Clause	Head-modifier	Pluralize	Dangling
1	<u>the meaning in the songs are not derived from the words written</u>		x				
2	But there are <u>also</u>			x			

	<u>problems</u> <u>might</u> <u>happen</u> to students						
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Table 10: Article no: 10

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	Type					
		Passive be	Agreement	Relative Clause	Head-modifier	Pluralize	Dangling
1	Then these <u>community</u> that <u>using</u> the <u>application</u>			x			
2	<u>These point</u> show that learning other					x	

Table 11: Article no: 11

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	Type					
		Passive be	Agreement	Relative Clause	Head-modifier	Pluralize	Dangling
1	<u>That social media</u> turns out to be an interesting <u>learning method</u> .						x
2	<u>Because</u> from <u>his</u> <u>platform</u> .						x

Table 12: Article No: 12

NO	MISTAKES BEING MADE	Type					
		Passive be	Agreement	Relative Clause	Head-modifier	Pluralize	Dangling
1	<u>The pandemic era</u> has <u>became</u> a factor from digitalization..		x				
2	<u>Very clear</u> that the <u>technologies</u> of <u>international economic</u> has <u>change</u> .			x			
3	This research aims to know <u>the motivation</u> <u>students</u>				x		
4	<u>The developer</u> <u>prove</u> that technologies are important in these days.		x				

All of the patterns of grammars found in Table 13 indicate that the mistakes can be summarized into more explicitly in terms of the types as it is referred to the classification in in Anderson (2018) and also in Boswell (2018), and in Celce-Murcia (1985). In summary, the findings of the common mistakes made by the students are as the following:

1. The example of Passive be “...assume that listening automatically acquired “ It should be “...assume that listening is automatically acquired”
2. The example of agreement Subject + Verb is “...while the student learn to speak language.” I should be “...while the student learns to speak language,” using “-s” for verb” learn”
3. The example of Head-Modifier is, “...improvement of vocabulary children,” it should be, “...improvement of children’s vocabulary.” For possessive adjective.
4. The example of Relative Clause is “There were some previous studies also explore the effect of”. It should be “There were some previous studies that also explore the effect of.
5. The example of Dangling is “So that children will more quickly remember a word well.” It should be preceded by the main clause. (For more comprehensive, see also in Celce-Murcia, 1985)

Table 13: Summary of the Mistakes of 12 Research Articles

ARTICLE NO	TYPE OF MISTAKES					
	Passive be	Agreement Subject + Verb	Relative Clause	Head-Modifier	Pluralize	Dangling
1	1	4				
2		4	1			
3			3			
4			1	1		1
5						1
6			1		1	
7			2			
8			2			
9		1	1			
10			1		1	
11						2
12		1	1	1	1	
TOTAL	1	10	13	2	4	4

In summary, the findings of the common mistakes made by the students are as the following:

Discussion

As has been summarized based on the exploration and analysis of the data from 12 papers, it shows that the common mistakes made by the non-native speakers of English (students of

English Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. FKIP, Unusa has their typical characteristics. Most of the students have made mistakes dominantly the mistakes deal with “Agreement Subject and Verbs” and the other most dominant is “Relative Clauses.”

The rest are concerned with minor mistakes though they still need improvement for them. Why did they make mistakes dominantly in agreement of Subject + Verbs and Relative Clauses is the very clear analysis. It is obviously true that their first language that is Indonesia is strikingly different from English. In Indonesia language as the first language, there is no agreement between subject and the verbs. There is now singular subject with the verbs such as with –s- or –es. Therefore, this is the clear problem that the teachers should understand. This is what is called the hindrance of English system or grammar acquisition by the non-native speakers, especially Indonesian students. Their English grammar acquisition is monitored by their first language (Krashen in Liu 2015). Yet this linguistic knowledge is important (Celce-Murcia, 1985).

Another dominant mistake is Relative Clauses. This is important for the learners to have a good knowledge about Relative Clauses. This knowledge is good to combine sentences, from simple into compound, or from compound into complex sentences. This is essential linguistic knowledge (Trask, 2013).

The more important finding is about the mistakes related to pluralize and Dangling. The linguistic knowledge of Pluralize is not there in Indonesian Language, Therefore, it hard for the students to master it. The monitor hypothesis also applies that the students find it difficult because they are affected by their first language system (Krashen in Liu 2015). Another one is Dangling. Dangling can be in the form of subordinate clauses or it can also be in the form or adverbs of time, places, and the like while they still need the main clause. In other words, the sentences are not complete due to being absence of the main clauses. All of these grammars can be found in Anderson (2018) and also in Boswell (2018). In this knowledge of linguistics, there is no difference between Indonesian and English; both are also the same in terms of dependent clause and main clauses. The problem can be to the knowledge about cohesiveness and coherence (Djuwari 2022; Djuwari 2021).

In summary of the findings and the discussion above, it can be inferred that the common mistakes made by the non-native speakers of English, the students at English department, FKIP, Unusa, Surabaya, Indonesia are due to the differences of language system between Indonesian language and English.

5. Conclusion

Now that the findings and the discussion have been the proven evidence, it shows the clear facts related to the common mistakes. First of all, the non-native speakers of English— the students of English department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, UNUSA, Indonesia have found it difficult to master the linguistic knowledge of English. It is obviously that they have common mistakes dominantly dealing with Agreement-Subject-Verbs and Relative Clauses. These two linguistic mistakes are the system that is absent in their first language that is Indonesian language.

Another problem that needs attention is Dangling. This deals with cohesiveness and coherence so that it may not be difficult to make them master this linguistic knowledge. However, the two dominant mistakes (Agreement Subject-Verbs and Relative Causes) are essential to be paid attention. They need more practice of acquiring this linguistic knowledge.

This study has its limitations for the data were limited only to the students that were taking the subject of Scientific Writing. The classes were always small consisting of between 10 to 18 students. Therefore, for further research, the researchers can do the similar study but IN other countries of non-native English speakers, with more students for the data sources.

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