GRAMMAR PROBLEMS FACED BY STUDENTS IN FREE WRITING

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore grammar problems faced by students in free writing. The participants of this study were students who stay in Pesantren mahasiswa internasional K.H Mas Mansyur Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta. They are bachelor's degree students from many study programs in Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta. The samples consisted of twenty one participants. They are English tutors in Pesma. The instruments used to gather data were observation, and students' assignment. This study used descriptive design by qualitative analysis. The study found that the grammar problems faced by students in free writing were the proper use of subject and predicate (33 %), the use of pronoun (15%), the use of 'to be' (is, am, are, was, were) (11%), to infinitive 10%, the use of punctuation and the written correct English word (7%), the use of plural (6%), the predicate (4%), the use part of speech (4%), the use of modality (4%), passive voice (2%), parallelism in grammar (2%), conjunction (1%) and Indonesian word (1%).

Keywords: grammar problem, free writing, students' assigment

Introduction

Mastering English English grammar is very important since grammar becomes the basic for students who study foreign language. Students with limited grammar will face problems to speak or write in English. They also get difficulties to master other language skills. The mastery of English grammar will support students a lot to master four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. Thus, learning grammar rules is important subject that should be mastered by language learners.

Grammar is very useful for oral communication, as it ensures that speaker and listeners use the same code (Linguapress, n.d). The use of correct grammar will help speaker to speak English clearer and better. The context of the conversation can be understood better and clearer when the speaker uses the correct grammar. On the other hand, grammar is also very important for the written communication and any other form of indirect communication thus depend on correct use of grammar or syntax, as well as of vocabulary and spelling, in order to ensure that messages are immediately comprehensible to the reader, and not meaningless or ambiguous (Linguapress, n.d). Mastering the essential rules of grammar is a vital skill that needs to be acquired by all learners of any language - whether it is be their native language or a foreign language (Linguapress, n.d).

There are several reasons why students should improve their understanding of the rules of grammar (Doe, 2011):

1. Without good grammar, clear communication is nearly impossible. Proper grammar keeps you from being misunderstood while expressing your thoughts and ideas.
2. Writing and speaking correctly gives you the appearance of credibility. If you are attempting to build a reputation as an expert in your profession, this is extremely important.
3. Other people consider good grammar to be a mark of intelligence and education. Don't allow strangers to form a negative impression of you based on your poor communication skills.

Free writing is one of the assignments that can be given to students to encourage

them to be able to express their ideas in written form. There is macro skill and micro skill for each language skills. Microskills for writing (Brown, H. (2001) are in the following:

- Produce an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns.
- Use acceptable grammatical systems.
- Use cohesive devices in written discourse.
- Use the rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse.
- Appropriately accomplish the communicative function of written texts according to form and purpose.
- Convey links and connections between events and communicate relations such as main idea, supporting details, new and given information, generalizations, and exemplification.
- Distinguish between literal and implied meanings.

Many university students still have low English grammar although they have studied English six years before entering university. This becomes of the reasons they still get difficulties to communicate in English ((Muamaroh, 2009; Sembiring, 2003). On the other hand they have to be able to communicate in English actively (oral and written) to apply a job at internatioal level or to follow international standadize test such as IELTS. Mastering grammar improved students' confidence in speaking English (Muamaroh, 2013). Students tend to be passive and they only talk when they are asked by their teachers (Noel, 2008, p. 80).

The concept of a teacher in many places, particularly in some rural areas, teachers are the only resource for explaining materials. Their teaching tends to be teacher-centered, placing them as the only person who is able to talk in the class while students just listen passively (Koesoema, 2009, p. 55). It is also true in the conversational class. Students are still passive. Some Indonesian students still have communicative problems

Method

The subjects were bachelor degree students from various study programs who stay in international Islamic boarding school KH Mas Mansyur UMS. The participants of this study were twenty one students. This study used a descriptive research design using qualitative analysis. The instruments used to gather data were observation, open questionnaire and interviews. Students were interviewed individually and randomly. The class observation done at several meetings to get more information. The open questionnaire and interview was carried out in Indonesia to get more detail data. All data obtained from participants were coded. In quoting interview and open questionnaire data, all details that might identify interviewees were replaced by expressions in brackets to ensure confidentiality; e.g. '(teacher's name omitted)'. The results of questionnaire, document, and class observation were analysed qualitatively to draw conclusions about the use of short stories in teaching vocabulary for students from various study programs.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the class observation, some students were more enthusiastic to follow the lesson. They look so glad to attend the class room actively. Furthermore, based on students' work, they were able to use the grammar in their written assignment. They still get difficulties in expressing their ideas in written form. There were eighty three data taken from all participants that can be classified based on thier error that they made as follows:

The proper use of subject and predicate

Most of students still got difficulties and made error in matching between subject and predicate. The reason is they might still be interfered by their Indonesian' stucture. Since there is no the change of verb in the structure of Indonesian's language. There is no difference whether the subject singular or plural. For example: *anak-anak pergi* ke sekolah and *Ali pergi* ke sekolah. Both sentences use the verb *pergi* although the

subject is different: *anak-anak* is plural and *Ali* is singular.   There were 28 data (33%) in this case. The most difficult that made by students the first is when the subject is the third person singular in particular she, he and it. They also were confused when they used the subject 'there'. The word 'there' can be followed by singular or plural based on words that follow it. Here are the examples taken from students' assignment.

1. *He eat* much and get gigantic
2. *He become* famous
3. *She want* to meet him
4. *She ask me* to do it
5. *He feel* lonely
6. *He want* to take a photo
7. *He have* friend
8. *The president of Indonesia come* to Borobudur temple
9. *She want* to show it for public
10. *The soil start* trembling
11. *Yourlife become* honorable if you have a moment with a president
12. When *he make* video's, when *he sing* he was for forget the lyric
13. *He always share* him video
14. The beatiful of *this area make* people forget
15. *She want* to discovered the song
16. *This temple have* own characteristic
17. Becase *he like* alone
18. *Indonesia like him* video
19. The name of my cat is Ren. *It have* soft fur and browny
20. *There are a waterfall that have* blue water
21. *He took and save the diamond*

Some of students also got difficulty when they made negative form using the subject she, he and it. They used do not instead of does not.

1. *She don't have* friend but cat
2. *He don't* want lose her

Some of students also faced difficulty when they use every and many. The word every refers to singular and many refers to plural, even they used every with plural word "people". The word every should be matched with singular person or thing such as every

person, every student, every book and so forth.

3. *Every people love* him
4. *Many people is like* video
5. If the other *animals wants to went* the temple
6. *Every people need* modern technology
7. The water *stream is shine* when there are a light

The use of Pronoun

Some students still faced difficulties when they have to use English pronoun. Since there are a lot of rule for this matter. There were 13 data in this case. The form of subject pronoun is totally different from the object pronoun and possesive pronounce such as in the following table:

No	Subject	Object	Possessive	
1	I	Me	My	Mine
2	You	You	Your	Yours
3	She	Her	Her	Hers
4	He	His	His	His
5	We	Us	Our	Ours
6	They	Them	Their	Theirs
7	It	It	Its	its

Based on the data, students were still confused to differentiate the use of pronoun for subject, object and possessive. They still faced problem to use subject pronoun such as the following example:

1. *Him become* more famous than pasien
2. *Him fight* to make more song to discovered by actor and actris Indonesia
3. *Me and my sister* really have a good time
4. I almost feel forget if *me puasa*
5. When I was 7 years old *I and also family* we go to temple in Yogyakarta.
6. *Me and my sister* really have a good time

Some students were also confused to use possessive pronoun in particular for the singular and plural subject.

1. *He always share him* video
2. *Indonesia like him* video
3. Suddenly he remembered *him camera* was brought *him friend* 3 days ago
4. *He tried to forget their* excitement
5. *All people* can see him performance
6. Smartphone is very important in *our life*

There was one an interesting data that a student used double pronoun: subject pronoun and possessive pronoun. She/he should used only one. Therefore the following example should be "I have friend whose name is Nisyia. Another construction can be I have a friend. Her name is Nisyia.

- *I have my friend* her name is Nisyia

The use of 'to be' (is, am, are, was, were)

Students had problems related to the use of 'to be' because in Indonesian grammar we do not have this matter. There were nine data in this matter. Morover, the use of 'to be' should be matched with the subject and should be matched whether to be for present or past such as in the following table.

No	subject	Present	Past
1	You	Are	Were
2	We	Are	Were
3	They	Are	Were
4	She	Is	Was
5	He	Is	Was
6	It	is	Was
7	I	Am	Was

Students were confused when they use tenses whether the tense is present simple or present continoues.

1. *I am forgot* about my agenda
2. The water stream *is shine* when *there are a light*
3. I am sorry *I am forget* if you want sit down
4. *He is love* music
5. Sometimes *I am not get up* early morning because I feel lazy

6. When he make video's, when he sing *he was for forget* the lyric

Some students were confused to use adjective. The use of adjective should be followed by 'to be'.

1. *He shock and so happy*
2. *He so shock* how can the diamond grow up be giant

The use of plural

Students faced difficulties in using plural sign. There were 5 data for this matter. Some students were confused that the use of many, some, few, other and number should be followed by plural.

1. Indonesia has *many temple*
2. There are *3 temple*
3. There are *two big temple* in Java
4. Smartphone or camera to take a picure or take moment yourself or with *other your friend*
5. Not only me who exited with this place but people from *other country* also

To infinitive

Some students got difficulties in using 'to invinitive". After "to invinitive' whould be followed by verb 1. There were eight data for this matter. Some students used verb in the past as the following examples:

1. Him fight to make more song *to discovered* by actor and actris Indonesia
2. My teacher asked me *to delivered* some speech
3. If the other *animals wants to went* the temple
4. *She want to discovered* the song

Some students do not use 'to infinitive' after want and feel. After the words want and feel, they should be followed by 'to infinitive'. Therefore the correct structure should be you want to sit down and I almost feel to forget.

1. I am sorry I am forget if *you want sit down*

2. I almost *feel forget* if me *puasa*

Some students do not use the verb after 'to infinitive". The sentences should be I want to go to Prambanan temple, and I want to go to the office

1. *I want to Prambanan* temple
2. *I want to the office* to take my book

There was interesting finding that students directly use 'to infinitive' as a predicate as the following data:

- *Smartphone or camera to take* a picure or take moment yourself or with other your friend

Another interesting data was student use verb "ing" after to infinitive as the following example

- *You will went to travelling*

The use of punctuation and spelling

To write a good paragraph, students should use the correct punctuation and the correct English words. There were six data in this matter. This might be because they did not check and recheck after they wrote a paragraph.

1. If *i* want to go one place, I was grimming on the air
2. The *beatiful* of this   area make people forget
3. The lion met his *brothes* or sisters
4. One think that I remember is *i* should to be success
5. Your *frend* is fierce white Anita
6. *Becase* he like alone

The predicate

Some students got difficulty to make English correct sentence. They made a sentence without predicate even some of them used double predicate. There were five data in this matter.

1. Everyday *he with* the giant
2. *I am are* honorable person
3. *Many people is like* video

The use part of speech

Some students were confused to diiferentiate between part of speech. The word Indonesia should be Indonesian., and Indonesian actris.

1. *Indonesia like* him video
2. My mother always covers the picture because *it can dirty*
3. Him fight to make more song to discovered by *actor and actris Indonesia*

Passive voice

Some students got difficulties in using passive voice. They did not use 'to be' before using past perticiple.

1. *The butterfly buried by the priest* near the palace
2. *Smartphone be builded* until now have many product

The use of modality

Some students faced problem in using modality. There were three data in this matter. They have to use verb 1 after modality (will, can, must). They may not use verb ing or verb for the past. Therefore the following sentences could be corrected become: the first should be :you can visit a temple, you can follow, and you will go.

1. *You can visiting* temple
2. *You can following* developed information with the smartphone
3. *You will went to travelling*

Conjunction

After certain conjunction, there should be subject. The correct ... becausse I never go out befire,

- I'm very exiting *because never go out before*

Indonesian word

When some students have difficulties to speak in English, they choose Indonesian word to replace the English word.

- I almost feel forget if me *puasa*

Parallelism In Writing

Some students were confused about paralel matter. The correct sentence for the following sentence should be "he took and saved the diamond".

- He *took and save* the diamond

In writing, *parallelism* refers to balance and equality. In order for the reader to understand what the writer means, the words must make sense in time and space. For example: I stopped working on my speech and went to the movies. (Grammarly, 2013)

Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that problems faced by students as in the following table.

No	The problems	The number	Percentage
1	The appropriate use of subject and predicate	28	33 %
2	The use of Pronoun	13	15%
3	The use of 'to be' (is, am, are, was, were)	9	11%
4	To infinitive	8	10%
5	The use of punctuation and spelling	6	7%
6	The use of plural	5	6%
7	The predicate	3	4%
8	The use part of speech	3	4%
8	The use of modality	3	4%
10	Passive voice	2	2%
11	Parallelism	2	2%
12	Conjunction	1	1%
13	Indonesian word	1	1%

		84	100%

Based on the data that students still have difficulties to write English correctly based on the English structure. There are many mistakes that made by Indonesian. This might be because they are affected by their Indonesian structure. They write English sentences using Indonesian structure.

The conclusion

Based on the class observation and students' assigment it can be concluded that some students still faced problems to write sentence correctly on the ir free writing. The study found that the grammar problems faced by students in free writing were the proper use of subject and predicate (33 %), the use of pronoun (15%), the use of 'to be' (is, am, are, was, were) (11%), to infinitive 10%, the use of punctuation and the written correct English word (7%), the use of plural (6%), the predicate (4%), the use part of speech (4%), the use of modality (4%), passive voice (2%), parallelism in grammar (2%), conjunction (1%) and Indonesian word (1%).

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