

An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Writing Made by Sixth Semester Students at English Education Program of Batanghari University Academic Year 2016/2017

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Abstract

This research is purposed to analyze the grammatical errors in writing made by sixth semester students at English education program of Batanghari University academic year 2016/2017. The method of this research is descriptive qualitative. The sample of this research is sixth semester students at English education program of Batanghari University and choosing them by using random sampling technique. The instrument of the research is test, the test is conducted two times at A and B class. Based on the result, sixth semester students often make grammatical errors in their writing, the errors are analyzed based on four categories, there are Fragment, Run-Ons, Problems with Subject-Verb Agreement, and Verb Problems. Then the researcher calculates the total errors made by sixth semester students by using the formula in order to find out the most common grammatical error. It is found that the most grammatical error made by students is Fragment which is 32,95% , and the smallest percentage of errors made by students is Verb problems which is 19,31%. Based on the finding above, the researcher can conclude that sixth semester students need to study about grammar deeper in order to avoid misunderstanding in their writing.

Keywords: Grammatical errors, Writing

Introduction

As an international language, English has an important role as a crucial media of communication among people in the world for business, science, economy, technology, etc. Realizing the importance of English as a foreign language in Indonesia makes English as one of compulsory subjects which taught from the primary school up to university level and indicates that English is necessarily needed by the students.

In learning a language, there is a set of rules to be followed which is called *grammar*. Batko (2004:24) states Grammar refers to the fundamental principles and structure of the language, including clear and correct sentence construction and the proper forms of words. Grammar sets up the language, so that the meaning of a sentence can be clear and easy to understand.

In using a foreign language, students also cannot deny that they will

make errors which might enrich students' knowledge about language that they are learning. Gustilo and Magno (2012) state that making errors is one of the most unavoidable things in the world. In language acquisition, learning, and teaching, error has been referred to and has been defined in many ways. From this perspective, errors are a natural and necessary feature of language development, whether it be a first or a subsequent language. Errors are often seen in a written form because the writer must choose words carefully and the writer can not deny that they will make errors during their process of writing.

In the process of teaching and learning English, writing ability is well known as the difficult and complicated language skill to be learned almost by the students in every level of education. According to Strongman (2013), writing is about communicating with words, and academic writing is about choosing words carefully to communicate complex ideas to a range of readers and audiences.

In this research the researcher focuses on analyzing grammatical errors in writing made by sixth semester students at English education program of Batanghari University of Jambi. The researcher chooses them as object of the research because they often make grammatical errors in writing and they have already taken writing subject in the previous semesters which is very important to understand as a good preparation before they start to write a thesis. Therefore, based on this problem, the researcher would like to conduct a research entitled: **AN ANALYSIS OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING MADE BY SIXTH SEMESTER STUDENTS AT**

ENGLISH EDUCATION PROGRAM OF BATANGHARI UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC YEAR 2016/2017.

It is essential to limit the research in order to avoid misunderstanding in interpreting the problem. In this context, the grammatical errors are limited on 1. Fragments, 2. Run-ons, 3. Problems with subject-verb agreement, 4. Problems with verb form and tense in writing.

Based on the statement in the background described above, it's necessary to analyze the common grammatical errors made by sixth semester students of Batanghari University in writing. What are the grammatical errors made by sixth semester students in writing ?

Grammar

According to Sonmez and Griffiths (2015), Grammar is a term so frequently used in language teaching and learning contexts that it is easy to overlook the question of what we actually mean by the term. Traditionally, grammar has started at the sub-word level and considered how words are formed (morphology). For instance the negative prefix "in-" + the adjective "frequent" + the adverb suffix "-ly" = "infrequently" or "not very often". Words are then categorized into parts of speech (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, determiners, interjections) and then combined into sentences with subjects, objects, etc. (syntax). However, not everyone considers that these three basic concepts cover all that we mean by the term grammar.

Brown (2004:40), Grammar bears to language several different relations, and acquires from each a nature leading to a different definition. First, It is to language, as knowledge is to the thing known; and as doctrine, to the truths it inculcates. In these relations, grammar is a science. It is the first of what have been called the seven sciences, or liberal branches of knowledge; namely, grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Secondly, It is as skill, to the thing to be done; and as power, to the instruments it employs. In these relations, grammar is an art; and as such, has long been defined, "*ars rectè scribendi, rectèque loquendi*" the art of writing and speaking correctly. Thirdly, It is as navigation, to the ocean, which nautic skill alone enables men to traverse. In this relation, theory and practice combine, and grammar becomes, like navigation, a practical science. Fourthly, It is as a chart, to a coast which we would visit. In this relation, our grammar is a text-book, which we take as a guide, or use as a help to our own observation. Fifthly, It is as a single voyage, to the open sea, the highway of nations. Such is our meaning, when we speak of the grammar of a particular text or passage.

Furthermore, grammar is a fundamental part in learning and teaching a language which should be mastered by everyone with a view to make them easy in communicating. Grammar can also be regarded as a necessary "master" skill that enables competence to develop in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. When grammar is incorrect or misunderstood in any of these areas, communication may be disrupted.

Grammatical Errors

Anker (2009) emphasizes the four grammar errors that people most often notice. These four errors may make your meaning harder to understand, and they give readers a bad impression of you. Those errors are fragments, run-ons, problems with subject-verb agreement, problems with verb form and tense. In the examples throughout this section the subject is underlined once and the verb is underlined twice.

1. Fragments

A sentence is a group of words that has a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought, independent of other sentences. A fragment is a group of words that is missing a subject or a verb or that does not express a complete thought.

1.1 Fragment that starts with dependent words

A dependent word is the first word in a dependent clause, which does not express a complete thought even though it has a subject and a verb. Whenever a dependent word starts what you think is a sentence, look for a subject, a verb, and, especially, a complete thought. Some dependent words are subordinating conjunctions (after, because, before, since, until, and so on). Some dependent words are relative pronouns (who, whose, which). When a word group starts with who, whose, or which, it is not a complete sentence unless it is a question.

1.2 Fragments that start with *-ing* verb forms

An *-ing* verb form (also called a gerund) is the form of a verb that ends in *-ing*: walking, writing, swimming. Unless it has a helping verb (was

walking, was writing, was swimming), it can't be a complete verb in a sentence. Sometimes an -ing verb form is used as a subject at the beginning of a complete sentence.

1.3 Fragments that start with to and a verb

An infinitive is the word to plus a verb — to hire, to eat, to study. These phrases are all called infinitive forms. Although they contain verbs, infinitive forms function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. If a word group begins with to and a verb, it must have another verb or it is not a complete sentence.

1.4 Fragments that start with examples or explanations

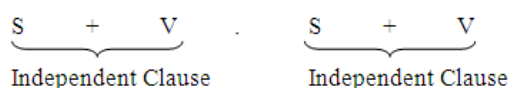
As you edit your writing, pay special attention to groups of words that are examples or explanations of information you presented in the previous sentences. These word groups may be fragments.

2. Run-Ons

A run-on is two sentences (each containing a subject and a verb and expressing a complete thought) that are joined incorrectly and written as one sentence. There are two kinds of run-ons — fused sentences and comma splices. A fused sentence is two complete sentences joined without any punctuation.

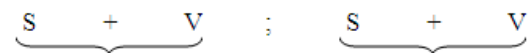
2.1 Add a period

You can correct a run-on by adding a period to make two separate sentences.



2.2 Add a semicolon

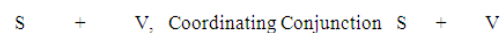
A second way to correct a run-on is to join the two independent clauses into one sentence by adding a semicolon (;). Use a semicolon only when the two independent clauses express closely related ideas that make sense in a single combined sentence.



2.3 Add a comma and coordinating conjunction

A third way to correct a run-on is to add a comma and a coordinating conjunction: a link that joins independent clauses to form one sentence. Some people remember the seven coordinating conjunctions (and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet) by using the memory device of fanboys, for , and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

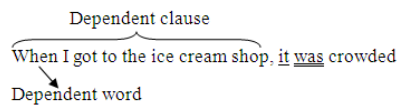
To correct a fused sentence, add both a comma and a coordinating conjunction. A comma splice already has a comma, so just add a coordinating conjunction that makes sense in the sentence.



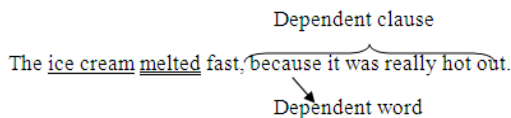
2.4 Add a dependent word

The fourth way to correct a run-on is to make one of the complete sentences a dependent clause by adding a dependent word (a subordinating conjunction or a relative pronoun), such as after, because, before, even though, if, though, unless, or when. Choose the dependent word that best expresses the relationship between the two clauses. Use a dependent word when the clause it begins is less

important than or explains the other clause. Fused sentence (corrected):



Comma splices (corrected):



3. Problems with Subject-Verb Agreement

In any sentence, the subject and the verb must match — or agree — in number. If the subject is singular (one person, place, or thing), then the verb must also be singular. If the subject is plural (more than one), the verb must also be plural.

1. The verb is a form of Be, Have, or Do

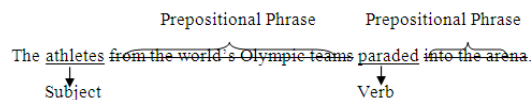
The verbs be, have, and do do not follow the regular patterns for forming singular and plural forms; they are irregular verbs. These verbs cause problems for people who use only one form of the verb in casual conversation: You is the richest (incorrect). He is the richest (correct).

2. Words come between the Subject and the Verb

When the subject and the verb aren't right next to each other, it can be difficult to make sure that they agree. Most often, what comes between the subject and the verb is either a prepositional phrase or a dependent clause.

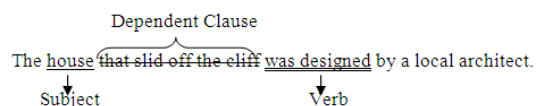
a. Prepositional Phrase between the Subject and the Verb

A prepositional phrase starts with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun: The line for the movie went around the corner. Remember, the subject of a sentence is never in a prepositional phrase. When you are looking for the subject, you can cross out any prepositional phrases. This strategy should help you find the real subject and decide whether it agrees with the verb.



b. Dependent Clause between the Subject and the Verb

A dependent clause has a subject and a verb, but it does not express a complete thought. When a dependent clause comes between the subject and the verb, it usually starts with the word who, whose, whom, that, or which. The subject of a sentence is never in the dependent clause. When you are looking for the subject, you can cross out any dependent clauses.

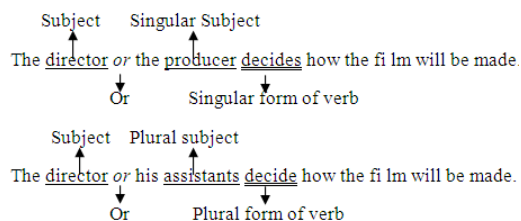


c. The Sentence Has a Compound Subject

A compound subject consists of two (or more) subjects connected by and, or, or nor (as in neither/nor expressions). If two subjects are joined by and, they combine to become a plural subject, and the verb must take a plural form as well.

If two subjects are connected by or or nor, they are considered separate, and

the verb should agree with the subject closest to it.



d. The Subject is an Indefinite Pronoun

Indefinite pronouns, which refer to unspecified people or objects, are often singular, although there are exceptions. When you find an indefinite pronoun in your writing, use the table on the next page to help you determine the correct verb form, singular or plural. If the pronoun may be singular or plural, you'll need to check whether the word it refers to is singular or plural to determine what verb form to use.

Everyone loves vacations.

[Everyone is always singular, so it takes the singular verb loves.]

Some of the wreckage was recovered after the crash.

[In this case, some is singular, referring to wreckage, so it takes the singular verb was recovered.]

e. The Verb Comes before the Subject

In most sentences, the subject comes before the verb. Two kinds of sentences reverse that order — questions and sentences that begin with here or there. In these two types of sentences, you need to check carefully for errors in subject-verb agreement.

When a sentence begins with here or there, the subject always follows the verb. Turn the sentence around to find the subject and verb.

Here are the hot dog rolls. The hot dog rolls are here.

There is a fly in my soup. A fly is in my soup.

Verbs Problems

Verb tense tells when the action of a sentence occurs — in the present, in the past, or in the future. Verbs change their form and use the helping verbs have or be to indicate different tenses. Following are some common errors in using simple tenses.

These grammatical errors most often notice and make meaning harder to understand as well. Thus, the students should be able to understand these common errors in learning grammar in order to avoid misunderstanding in interpreting the meaning by the readers.

Research Methodology

In this research the researcher uses a qualitative method. Creswell (1994:145) states qualitative research is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words of pictures. Descriptive qualitative method is applied by giving a description of the result of errors in writing made by sixth semester students at English education program of Batanghari University of Jambi Academic Year 2016/2017.

Findings

The results of the analysis are grouped in the type of error based on the written test given to the sixth semester students which can be seen in the table below :

Table 1
Type Errors in Argumentative Essay

No	Students Code	Error Classification				Total
		Fragment	Run-Ons	Subject with Verb	Verb Form and Tense	
1	A	4	3	3	3	13
2	B	6	6	4	7	23
3	C	6	3	1	1	11
4	D	3	2	1	0	6
5	E	5	5	0	1	11
6	F	4	4	5	1	14
7	G	2	4	2	2	10
8	H	3	7	2	1	13
9	I	3	2	0	1	6
10	J	5	4	6	3	18
11	K	2	1	3	4	10
12	L	4	4	0	6	14
13	M	9	2	3	4	18
14	N	3	5	5	2	15
15	O	3	0	2	1	6

5						
16	P	5	4	5	2	16
17	Q	2	3	5	1	11
18	R	7	3	2	5	17
19	S	6	2	5	2	15
20	T	5	3	5	4	17
TOTAL		87	67	59	51	264

Source: Results of the error analysis is based on the type of errors

Describing the errors in Students' writing

The next step describes the error into four types fragment, run-ons, problem with subject-verb agreement, and problem with verb-form tense. The types of errors can be seen in table below:

Table 2
Type of Errors Analysis

Grammatical Errors	Type of Errors				Total
	Fragment	Run-ons	Subject-verb agreement	Verb-form tense	
Grammatical errors made in argumentative essay	87	67	59	51	264

Source: Anker "Real Essays With Reading" (2009)

Table 3

Total percentages types of errors made by the students in test

No	Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage
1.	Fragment	87	32,95%
2.	Run-Ons	67	25,37%
3.	Problems with Subject-verb Agree	59	22,34%

	ment		
4.	Problems with Verb-form Tense	51	19,31%

Source: Results of research

Discussions

Errors that often appear are grouped by the types of error that the reference analysis. Based on the results of the analysis were discussed earlier, there are some errors often appear from the above table that a lot of errors. There are 4 errors students do, such as fragment, run-ons, problems with subject-verb agreement, problems with verb-form and tense.

a) Fragment

Fragment is a group of words that is missing a subject or a verb or that does not express a complete thought. This research describes errors in writing, as below:

Cheating had already known in our lives, Like a culture. (Item number 1)

[Does the second word group have a subject ? No. A Verb ? No. It is a fragment. It would be a good sentence if a "Like" word didn't use a capital letter at the beginning of word, such as Cheating had already known in our lives, like a culture.]

really not benefit if always cheating...(Item number 2)

[This word group doesn't have a subject and a verb at all, and then it doesn't express a complete thought. It is a fragment.]

Finally cheating not really bad.(Item number 16)

[*Finally* is a time signal that starts at first and *cheating* is a subject, although it has a subject, but it doesn't have a comma before *cheating* in order to separate between time signal and a subject. In addition, it doesn't have a verb, so it is a fragment because it doesn't express a complete thought. Corrected : Finally, cheating is not really bad.]

b) Run-Ons

A run-on is two sentences (each containing subject and a verb and expressing a complete thought) that are joined incorrectly and written as one sentence. This research describes errors in writing, as below:

Cheating makes us not to be smart person, it just make us...(Item number 1)

[There are two independent clauses in one sentence but the writer didn't write a coordinating conjunction between two independent clause. Corrected : cheating makes us not to be smart person, but it just makes us...]

Students lazy to find out something by themself. It paralyze them in a nice way.(Item number 3)

[There are two independent clauses, but it is a run on because the first sentence is related to the second sentence to correct a run-on is to change full stop between two independent clauses into a comma and add a coordinating conjunction, such as *students lazy to find out something by themselves*, and *it paralyzes them in a nice way*.

You do not need high score but you are cheating.(Item number 8)

[There is two complete sentences joined without any punctuation. It is a fused sentence. The writer must add a comma after *score* to make a correct sentence, like *You do not need high score, but you cheat.*]

c) Problems with Subject-verb agreement

In any sentence, the subject and the verb must match – or agree – in number. If the subject is singular (one person, place, or thing), then the verb must also be singular. If the subject is plural (more than one), the verb must also be plural. Errors of this researcher was described by giving the students error in writing, as below:

It just make(s) us.(Item number 1)

[The subject, *It*, is singular – just one thing – so the verb must take the singular form: *makes*.]

it's ~~make~~ useless.(Item number 2)

[The subject is *it* and the verb is *make*, but it doesn't make sense because the writer wanted to write about an adjective phrase]

There (are) so many students.(Item number 2)

[The verb comes before the subject, but we can see the subject, *students*, is plural – more than one student – so the verb must take the plural form: *are*.]

d) Problems with Verb-form and tense

They (are) enjoying their examination.(Item number 1)

[The sentence uses simple present tense about action that is ongoing. The subject is *they* and followed by the main verb *enjoy*.]

I am (did) not deny when I (was) junior high school.(Item number 2)

[The action began and ended at a specific time in the past after the subject I at the first group word must be followed by did because the main verb at the first group word is deny. The second group word must add be (was) because at the end of the group word is a noun.]

students (are) cheating to get fast answer.(Item number 6)

[The sentence uses present continuous tense about action that is happening. The subject is *students* and followed by the main verb is *cheating*, so the writer have to write *be (are)* before the main verb + *ing*.]

Conclusions

1. The results of this research have provided information about what kind of grammatical errors made in writing by the sixth semester students at English education department of Batanghari University academic year 2016/2017.
2. There are some common errors made by the students in the essay as fragment, run-ons, problems with subject-verb agreement, problems with verb-form and tense.
3. In some of these errors are grouped into the types of errors, such as fragment, run-ons, problems with subject-verb agreement, problems with verb-form and tense. Most types of errors students made are fragment. It can show the total errors made by the students are 87 errors, and the percentage is about 32,95%.

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