

## AN ANALYSIS OF COMMON STUDENTS' ERROR IN THE ENGLISH WRITING

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out the common error in English writing at the second semester students of English department at Universitas Islam Kadiri. There are many kinds of error that can be made by the students so the researcher limited this research only on the grammatical error. The findings indicates that there are seven category of grammatical error made by the students. They are Passive voice, Verb Tense and Form, Subject-Verb Agreement, Word Order, Prepositions, Articles, and Auxiliaries.

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Keywords: *error analysis, grammar, writing*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is the most difficult skill even in the first language. It is even more complicated to write in a foreign language. Reminds that writing in a foreign language needs a good grammatical ability in order to be comprehensible besides other writing's rules. Writing in a foreign language often presents the greatest challenge to the students at all stages, especially essay writing because in this activity, writing is usually extended and therefore it becomes more demanding than in the case of writing a short paragraph. Therefore, composing essay in writing activity takes a lot of time. For foreign language learner, the difficulty in writing doesn't only lie in creating and organizing ideas but also translating the ideas into readable writing. Richards and Renandya (2002: 303) explain:

There is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text. The skills involved in writing are highly complex. L2 writers have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skill of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on

The explanation above is supported by the writer's observation trough the writing class of the second semester in Universitas Islam Kadiri. Writing in general and essays in particular form problems to the second grade students of UNISKA Kediri. In many cases, the majority of these students are still translating words, phrases, and sentences from Bahasa to English with often very strange results. The challenge for the composition lecturer is to find methods to activate in a meaningful way the passive knowledge that the students possess in terms of the writing skill, as well as to help the students become more proficient while working to eliminate some of their common errors. A better understanding of the L1 influence in the process of EFL writing will help lecturer know students' difficulties in learning English. It will also aid in the adoption of appropriate teaching strategies to help beginning EFL students learn English writing skills better. As Richards & Renandya (2002:303) claim; "there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these notions into legible text".

Talking about errors, it is better to make a distinction between mistakes and errors. According to Brown mistake

refers to "a failure to utilize a known system correctly" whereas errors concern "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner" (1994: 205). Two things need to be stated here are; Firstly, mistakes do not require special treatment assuming they are recognized. Secondly, error here just refers to the structures. Both Corder (1967, 1971) and James (1998) reveal a criterion that helps us to do; "A mistake can be self-corrected, but an error cannot". Errors are systematic, it is likely happen regularly and not recognized by the learner. Hence, only the lecturer or researcher would locate them, the learner would not (Gass & Selinker, 1994). Norrish (1983) made a clear distinction between error and mistake. He stated that errors are "systematic deviation when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong." He added that when a learner of English as a second or a foreign language makes an error systematically, it is because he has not learnt the correct form. Norrish defined mistakes as an inconsistent deviation. When a learner has been taught a certain correct form, and they uses one form sometimes and another at other times quite inconsistently, the inconsistent deviation is called a mistake.

Many educators and theorists in the field of error analysis, have focused on the importance of second language learners' errors. Corder (1967) indicates that errors are significant in three different ways, they are; First to the lecturer, in that they tell them how far towards the goal the learners have advanced and consequently, what remains for them to learn. Second, they provide to the researchers evidence of how language is learnt or acquired. Thirdly, they are indispensable to the learners themselves. It caused of we can regard the making of errors as a device the learners use in order to learn. Research has provided empirical evidence pointing to emphasis on learners' errors as an effective means of improving

grammatical accuracy (White et al, 1991; Carroll and Swain, 1993). Indeed, as Carter (1997:35) notes, knowing more about how grammar works is to understand more about how grammar is used and misused. There is a need for students to recognize the significance of errors which occur in their writing, to fully grasp, and to understand the nature of the errors made. This requires English language lecturer to be better equipped, more sensitive and aware of the difficulties students face with regard to grammar. In other words, it is a way the learners have for testing their hypotheses about the nature of the language they are learn.

Based on the explanation above, the writer interest to conduct a research in analyzing students' error in their English writing and finding out the sources of errors. The writer decided to undertake a study which explores errors that students have done in English writing. This issue would be discussed in the paper entitled "**An Analysis of Students' Error in English Writing**". This research is conducted by using a case study in the second semester students of English department at Universitas Islam Kadiri.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used qualitative research because this study is related to analyze words. Best (1981) stated that qualitative studies are those in which the description of observation is not ordinarily expressed in quantitative terms. It is held at Universitas Islam Kadiri. The subject of this research was the second grande students of English department especially A class that consist of 19 students.

This study used document as the instrument. The document was the students' writing. At the beginning, the researcher collect the students' writing then analyzed it based on some procedures. Then, the tresearcher was identify the errors. Identification of errors means that the researcher identifies the

common error on English writing made by students. There are many kinds of error that can be made by the students, so this reserach is limited to the grammatical error only.

**III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

As mentioned before, the aim of this study is to analyse the common error in English writing. The results of this study

have shown that the second semester students of English department at Universitas Islam Kadiri make a lot of different types of writing errors in general and grammatical errors in particular. In the following section, the percentage of students' grammatical errors were collected for the purpose of analysis.

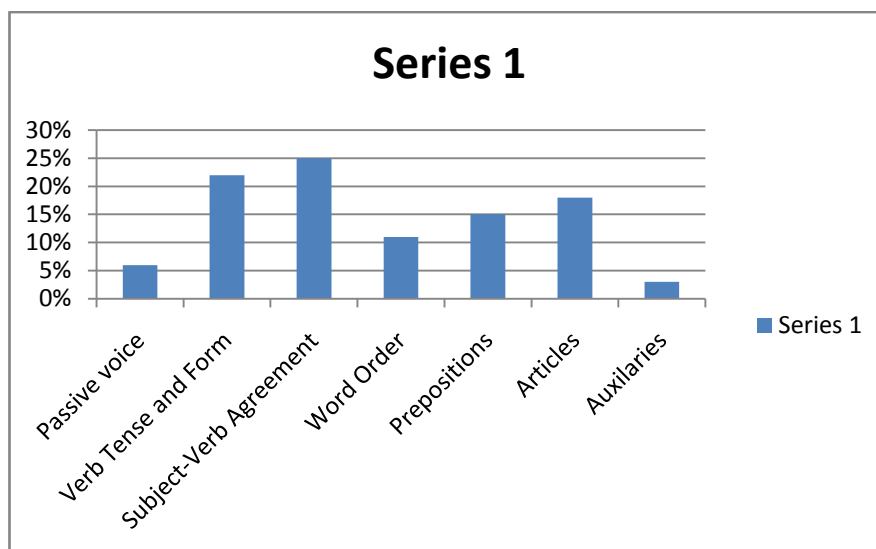
Table1:  
Total of Interlingual and Intralingual Grammar Errors

No	Errors	Percentage
1	Passive voice	6%
2	Verb Tense and Form	22%
3	Subject-Verb Agreement	25%
4	Word Order	11%
5	Prepositions	15%
6	Articles	18%
7	Auxiliaries	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b>

These errors were tabulated according to the times of frequency and percentage. The types of grammatical errors that were analysed for this study were limited to 8 types. There were 6% errors of passive

voice, 22% errors of Verb Tense and Form, 25% errors of Subject-Verb Agreement, 11% errors of Word Order, 15% errors of Prepositions, 18% errors of Articles, and 3% errors of Auxiliaries.

Figure 1: Total of Interlingual and Intralingual Grammar Errors



Based on these findings we can said that the most writing error found in the students' English writing at the second semester students of English department at Universitas Islam Kadiri is Subject-Verb agreement. The learner, in this case, tries to 'derive the rules behind the data to which he/she has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor to the target language' (Richards: 1971).' Such errors may be caused by the influence of one target language item upon another. Brown (1994: 225) cites research suggesting that the early stages of language learning are characterized by a predominance of interference (interlingual transfer), but once learners have begun to acquire parts of a new system, more and more intralingual transfer – generalization within the target language – is manifested.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

The study aimed at identifying the type of common errors especially in grammatical context made in the second

semester students of English department at Universitas Islam Kadiri. As a result, a number of different grammatical errors were found in their English writing. These were limited to seven major errors: passive voice, verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, and auxiliaries. The way they composed their English writing clearly shows their weak of the basic tenses of English grammar. It is the responsibility of both syllabus designers and English lecturer to cater for the students' writing skills.

However, EFL lecturers and researchers cannot ignore error analysis as an important tool by which they can learn more about the writing processes involved in the learning of a foreign language. Learners of English need to be taught about the applied of English grammar. This can be done by guiding learners to look critically and analytically at English texts written by native speakers of English which is supports their own writing. Simultaneously, the learners will improve their English language proficiency by following these strategies.

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