

**An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Students' Writing of Economic Students at Universitas Pandanaran Semarang**

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**Abstract**

This study aimed to find out the grammatical errors made by the students in essay writing. English as a foreign language that the students learn on campus is needed to improve their skills to face their future. Therefore, writing is one of the English skills that they must master. However, writing is not easy for them to learn because they have to master grammar as one variable in writing. Therefore, a lecturer has to know the weakness, especially in the students' grammar, so that s/he can know how to teach the students. The subject of this study were 32 students of Economic Faculty in the first semester at Universitas Pandanaran. The method of this study was descriptive qualitative. The result was concluded that the most errors did by the students are spelling and punctuation with the percentage 42.4%, then followed by word order with the error rate of 15.4%. The third error with a percentage of 13.3% is the use of the article. Then 11.2% errors of sentence pattern, preposition with error rate 5.6%, plurality 4%, verb tense and form 3.3%, pronoun 2.8%, and the last is the subject-verb agreement with the rate of error is 2%.

**Keywords: analysis, grammatical error, writing**

**Abstrak**

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kesalahan tata bahasa yang dilakukan oleh mahasiswa dalam menulis esai. Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing yang dipelajari mahasiswa di kampus sangat dibutuhkan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan mereka dalam menghadapi masa depan. Menulis adalah salah satu keterampilan bahasa Inggris yang harus dikuasai oleh mereka. Namun, menulis bukanlah hal yang mudah bagi mereka untuk dipelajari karena mereka harus menguasai tata bahasa sebagai salah satu variabel dalam menulis. Oleh karena itu, sebagai seorang dosen harus mengetahui kelemahan-kelemahan khususnya pada tata bahasa mahasiswanya agar dapat mengetahui bagaimana cara mengajar mahasiswanya. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 32 mahasiswa Fakultas Ekonomi semester I Universitas Pandanaran. Metode penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Dari hasil penelitian disimpulkan bahwa kesalahan yang paling banyak dilakukan siswa adalah ejaan dan tanda baca dengan persentase 42,4%, kemudian disusul dengan urutan kata dengan tingkat kesalahan 15,4%. Kesalahan ketiga dengan persentase 13,3% adalah penggunaan artikel. Kemudian 11,2% kesalahan pola kalimat, preposisi dengan tingkat kesalahan 5,6%, pluralitas 4%, verb tense dan bentuk 3,3%, pronoun 2,8%, dan yang terakhir adalah subject-verb agreement dengan tingkat kesalahan 2%.

**Kata kunci: analisis, kesalahan grammar, tulisan**

## **INTRODUCTION**

English is one of the languages that is commonly used nowadays, including in Indonesia. In this global era, a student should master this language as one of their skills to face the world, especially for their work world later. There are four skills of English to be mastered, speaking, listening, writing, and reading. According to (Sadiku, 2015) a teacher must teach the students the four English skills, reading, speaking, listening, and writing to achieve their communicative competence. Each skill needs an effort for the student to master, whereas English is a foreign language. Therefore, as teachers, we should know how to find the best way to teach them to improve their abilities in each skill.

One of the best ways to teach the student using the proper technique is to find out what students lack. Writing is one of the English skills that is difficult to be mastered. Writing is a productive skill. It needs the students to explore many structures of words that build into sentences. It does not look the same as speaking, listening, or reading that does not explicitly know grammar. In writing, students face the sentence structure, or it is usually called grammar. This part is also the point where the writers can deliver their message well or not.

In students writing, it is often found error. According to (Ellis, 2008), an error happens when it lacks knowledge from the correct rule. In contrast, mistakes happen when it is failed to show competence. It happens because students do not realize the correct grammar when they write. Students write in Bahasa, while the grammar structure in English and Bahasa does not have the same rule.

As stated by James E. Purpura (Sholihin & Haris, 2020) grammar is a rule that is used to form sentences in the language. According to (Thornbury, 1999), grammar is the study of structures formed in language's sentences. From these two statements, it can be concluded that grammar is essential to learn because writing needs to form sentences well to know the point quickly and not misunderstand it.

According to (Jabeen et al., 2015), students who make errors in their writing can be essential for them to learn a foreign language. Through grammatical error analysis conducted by the lecturer, students can know how to create their writing better. As a study conducted by (Yusni Sinaga, 2020), error analysis was used to find students' difficulties to help students produce good writing later. It is also

stated by (Romadhon et al., 2020) that through error analysis, lecturers can notice what their students need to improve their writing, especially their ability to use correct grammar.

Based on (Corder, 1981), the taxonomy of error including tense, passive verbs, subject-verb agreement, word order, preposition, article, plurality, and auxiliaries. These errors that Corder stated showed by students in their writing.

An essay is one kind of genre text that should be learned by students of the first semester in Economic Faculty at Universitas Pandanaran when they get English Course. An essay needs to be learned because it pushes the students to think critically and pour their idea into a high level through good writing. According to (Bailey, 2011) an essay is the most writing task in any discipline that often discusses abstract or theoretical things. In (Sholihin & Haris, 2020) Stella Cottrell also states that the essay used descriptive, argumentative, and evaluative, which involved critical and analytical thinking of the writer. Therefore, it can be concluded that students of higher study need to master this kind of genre to develop their ability in their thinking and English.

There are some studies about grammatical errors analysis. The first one was (Martiarini & Candra, 2019), who investigated their students' grammatical errors in their recount text writing. They found that almost all the students made three mistakes: the use of verbs, the use of to be, and pronoun use. Based on the result, the researcher then gave some advice for the teacher that the teacher should give more attention to the students about their weakness in writing and gives more practice, not only theories. The second study was conducted by (Romadhon et al., 2020), who analysed the Accounting Program students. Their study found that the most errors that the students made in their writing of descriptive text were the use of the pronoun. The third, the research conducted by (Yusni Sinaga, 2020), found that the students' highest errors in writing narrative text were the use of verb tense. Thus, the researcher concluded that the students made the errors because they did not master grammar well and were confused using the verbs.

Based on the three studies above, this research aims to analyse the grammatical errors in students writing of Economic Students at Universitas Pandanaran.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was a descriptive qualitative study. Based on (Creswell, 2014), a descriptive qualitative study describes the researcher's interest in the process and understanding of words or pictures. It is in line with this study because the researcher will describe the grammatical errors in students' writing. The subject of this study was students of Economic Faculty in the first semester at Universitas Pandanaran. There were 32 students. The researcher collected the data through the essay that the students wrote and submitted as the lecturer's assignment. Then the data were analysed by identifying the students' mistakes by underlining the words or sentences that were incorrect. Next was classifying the mistakes.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the data analysed, it was found that 552 the students' errors in using grammar. There are nine grammatical errors, articles, verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, plurality, pronoun, spelling and punctuation, sentence pattern, word order, and preposition. The most errors made by the students are spelling and punctuation with the percentage 42.4%, then followed by word order with an error rate of 15.4%. The third error with a percentage of 13.3% is the use of the article. Then 11.2% errors of sentence pattern, preposition with error rate 5.6%, plurality 4%, verb tense and form 3.3%, pronoun 2.8%, and the last is the subject-verb agreement with the rate of error is 2%. The data are shown in table 1 below.

**Table 1. Total of Grammatical Errors**

| <b>No</b> | <b>Grammatical Errors</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1         | Articles                  | 73               | 13.3                  |
| 2         | Verb Tense and Form       | 18               | 3.3                   |
| 3         | Subject-verb Agreement    | 11               | 2                     |
| 4         | Plurality                 | 22               | 4                     |
| 5         | Pronoun                   | 16               | 2.8                   |
| 6         | Spelling and Punctuation  | 234              | 42.4                  |
| 7         | Sentence Pattern          | 62               | 11.2                  |
| 8         | Word Order                | 85               | 15.4                  |
| 9         | Preposition               | 31               | 5.6                   |
|           | <b>Total</b>              | <b>552</b>       | <b>100</b>            |

Based on table 1 above, the explanation will be described as follows:

1. Articles

Articles in a sentence are essential to specify a noun as specific or unspecific. It is used before a noun or noun phrase. When the writer does not use the article correctly, it will be confusing the reader because the use of the article can clarify the meaning of the noun or the noun phrase in the sentence. In this study, the researcher found 73 errors or 13.3% that the students did in their writing. The examples of errors and the corrections are shown in table 2 below:

**Table 2. Article**

| Students | Errors Sentence                                 | Correction  |
|----------|---|---|
| S1       | ... that we make from <i>trash</i> ...          | ...that we make from <i>the trash</i> ...           |
| S8       | Waste is <i>an unwanted</i> waste.              | Waste is <i>unwanted</i> waste.                     |
| S15      | we should know <i>problem</i> with a solve      | we should know <i>the problem</i> with a solve      |
| S21      | Many countries have banned <i>excessive</i> use | Many countries have banned <i>the excessive</i> use |

Based on the finding above, some students did not realize their fault. Therefore, it must be explained how important to put the article before a noun to define that the word is a noun.

## 2. Verb Tense Form

The use of verb tense is to define the time in which something happened. According to (Nanning, Saepudin, 2020), in their study for using the correct verb tense, it depends on the time which something did. This study found that students were challenging to apply the correct verb tense in their writing. The examples are shown as follows:

**Table 3. Verb Tense Form**

| Students | Errors Sentence                             | Correction                                     |
|----------|---|--|
| S1       | ....we can get is <i>increase</i> our...    | ...we can get is <i>to increase</i> our...     |
| S3       | ...step that can be <i>impact</i> ...       | ...step that can be <i>impacted</i> ...        |
| S15      | ...the store <i>is care</i> about health... | ...mean the store <i>cares</i> about health... |
| S18      | ...so they can be <i>use</i> repeatedly..   | ...so they can be <i>used</i> repeatedly...    |

## 3. Subject-Verb Agreement

In a sentence, it should be an agreement between the subject and the verb. It agrees in the tense and number. In this study, the most fault the students did was the agreement of number. It can be seen as follows:

**Table 4. Subject-verb Agreement**

| Students | Errors Sentence                                  | Correction  |
|----------|--|---|
| S11      | ...pieces that <i>harms</i> the soil...          | ...pieces that <i>harm</i> the soil...            |
| S16      | Plastic <i>have</i> many benefits                | Plastic <i>has</i> many benefits                  |
| S25      | It is high time .... And <i>avoid</i> things ... | It is high time ... and <i>avoids</i> things .... |
| S29      | ... plants <i>has</i> been replaced...           | ... plants <i>have</i> been replaced...           |

#### 4. Plurality

Based on the analysis, the researcher found 22 errors or 4% errors of plurality in students' writing. Plurality is defined as a large of numbers. The students were still confused in realizing either the noun is singular or plural. They only wrote the word by adding the -s/es without checking it was singular or plural. The examples of the finding were shown as follows:

**Table 5. Plurality**

| Students | Errors Sentence                                  | Correction   |
|----------|--|--|
| S2       | ...rare animal <i>hunt</i> and...                | ...rare animal <i>hunts</i> and...                 |
| S4       | ..the entry of <i>supermarket</i> in big cities. | ...the entry of <i>supermarkets</i> in big cities. |
| S10      | ...plastic bags, pot <i>plant</i> , and...       | ...plastic bags, pot <i>plants</i> , and...        |
| S11      | ...different points of <i>views</i> on our...    | ...different points of <i>view</i> on our...       |

#### 5. Pronoun

A pronoun is used to change nouns when talking about someone. Thus, avoiding the redundancy of name, so it needs to change the name which is used as a pronoun. The students' fault below shows that the students do not realize when they need to change the noun into a pronoun.

**Table 6. Pronoun**

| Students | Errors Sentence  | Correction   |
|----------|--|--|
| S16      | ... that many people use <i>them</i> .                   | ... that many people use.                                  |
| S17      | Plastic bags ..... and difficult to manage <i>it</i> .   | Plastic bags ..... and difficult to manage <i>them</i> .   |
| S11      | ...or other durable cloths, which means <i>it</i> can... | ...or other durable cloths, which means <i>they</i> can... |
| S21      | ...say your previous <i>our</i> gratitude...             | ...say your previous gratitude...                          |

#### 6. Spelling and Punctuation

Based on the result, spelling and punctuation are the most errors of the students' writing. There were 42.2% or 234 errors. It occurred because the students did not know the words' form correctly and did not realize when they should use punctuation afterward. Below are several examples that the researcher found in students' writing:

**Table 7. Spelling and Punctuation**

| Students | Errors Sentence                            | Correction                                  |
|----------|--|---|
| S1       | ...as fertilizer <i>while</i> inorganic... | ...as fertilizer, <i>while</i> inorganic... |
| S2       | ...that has <i>defated</i> the grace...    | ...that has <i>defeated</i> the grace...    |
| S3       | When did the last time, you ...            | When did the last time you ...              |
| S4       | ...to the <i>Pophet</i> Muhammad.          | ..to the <i>Prophet</i> Muhammad.           |

#### 7. Sentence Pattern

In writing a sentence, it should arrange the words correctly. In addition, the pattern should be grammatically correct to form a meaningful sentence. However, students in this study did not make the arrangement correctly. There were 62 errors or 11.2% who made the errors. The examples can be seen in the table below.

**Table 8. Sentence Pattern**

| Students | Errors Sentence  | Correction                                      |
|----------|--|---|
| S4       | Plastic bag <i>can also be a cause of</i> flooding ...   | Plastic bags <i>can also cause</i> flooding ... |
| S11      | ...time to thank <i>each and every</i> one...            | ...time to thank <i>to every</i> one...         |
| S15      | we can <i>handle it with</i> burn or, just throw away... | <i>we can burn or just throw</i> away...        |
| S20      | A study <i>showing</i> that ...                          | A study <i>is showing</i> that ...              |

#### 8. Word Order

The standard of the word in English consists of subject and verb. As a writer, we should know word choice because it will impact the meaning of the sentence. Based on the finding, several students did not realize this rule. It can be seen in the table below.

**Table 9. Word Order**

| Students | Errors Sentence                                | Correction   |
|----------|--|--|
| S3       | .... last time, you <i>wear</i> a plastic...   | .... last time, you <i>use</i> a plastic...        |
| S8       | So, we should <i>always remember</i> that ...  | So, we should <i>never forget</i> that ...         |
| S9       | ...the use of plastic is not so <i>large</i> . | ...the use of plastic is not so <i>extensive</i> . |
| S10      | ...reduce <i>especially</i> by changing...     | ...reduce <i>significantly</i> by changing...      |

#### 9. Preposition

Some students in this study were challenging to use prepositions correctly. In a sentence, a preposition is used to connect an object to another word. There were 31 errors or 5.6% errors in students' writing.

**Table 10. Preposition**

| Students | Errors Sentence                        | Correction                                |
|----------|--|---|
| S15      | ...rubbish is <i>in</i> the rate...    | ...rubbish is <i>at</i> the rate...       |
| S16      | ...rubbish <i>with</i> the organic...  | ...rubbish <i>from</i> the organic...     |
| S23      | ...dangerous if inhaled <i>human</i> . | ...dangerous if inhaled <i>in human</i> . |
| S24      | ...are called <i>as</i> 3R.            | ...are called <i>3R</i> .                 |

## CONCLUSION

According to the result that the researcher found above, many students make errors in their essay writing. The most errors are spelling and punctuation

(42.4%), the second place is errors of word order (15.4%), then the error in using articles (13.3%), next is sentence pattern which is 11.2%, the fault of using preposition (5.6%), plurality (4%), verb tense (3.3%), pronoun (2.8%) and the last is the use of subject and verb agreement, there are 2% of students do those errors. After getting this result, the lecture should know how to improve the students to avoid making errors in their writing. English cannot be taught instantly, so it needs the lecturer's effort to help them increase their ability in writing well.

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