

“We are start go to bali at 7.30a m”: Error Analysis on Students’ Recount Writing

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Abstract. Error Analysis (EA) represents the initial approach to investigating Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Corder, 1971). This study examines the errors in the recount texts written by English Department students of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro. This research used qualitative descriptive method to analyze the data. The data were analyzed by following Shertzer’s elements of grammar (1986). The findings show that several types of errors were found in the student’s recount writing assignment. These include errors in terms of grammatical structure and writing mechanics which cover the use of verb, punctuation, capital letter, comparative, spacing, article, slang, typo (spelling errors), and conjunction. The errors indicate that students still have problems in understanding and applying English tenses and pay little attention to writing mechanics in formal writing. Furthermore, this research suggests that it is essential that the teacher acknowledge the errors made by students and motivate them to engage more in grammar learning and formal/academic writing.

Keywords: error analysis, grammatical error, mechanics of writing, recount, writing

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In Indonesia, English language becomes one of the important skills to learn (Gultom, 2015). It has been thought from the lowest level of formal school (kindergarten level) until the highest formal school (university level). Therefore, every student who learns English is assumed to be able to master the language skills, especially students of English department. When speaking or writing in English, students should know that there are several important skills, for example listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, students need to be capable in applying the skills into various communication events that involve English.

Writing is one of the most important skills that students should master in educational fields. This skill has a complicated process (Fitriati, Solihah, & Tusino, 2018). Therefore, it is not easy for students to write a text using English because students need to involve some components such as grammatical structure, diction preference, coherence and cohesion (Cahyono, 2018). There are many kinds of text in English, one of them is recount text (Mendale, Komariah, & Fitriani, 2019). Recount is a text that retells events with purpose of entertaining and informing the reader (Gerot & Widnell, 1994; Asni & Susanti, 2018). It can be said that students can use recount text an option to improve their writing skills because writing a recount text enables students to learn and practice using tenses such as simple past tense and using conjunction.

In the English Department of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, recount text material is given in the third semester. The students study the pattern of recount text taught by the teacher and then they are required to write a recount text of their own. In the process of learning, it is common to find that some students make errors in their texts. For example, a student made a grammatical error in the use of simple past tense as shown in the sentence “We are start go to bali at 7.30a m from school.” This is in line with Manik & Suwastini (2020), who state that that grammatical errors still become the main problem in writing recount text. Moreover, the example also shows errors in the writing mechanics,

such as the writing of the name of “bali” island instead of “Bali”. However, it is normal for language learners to make some errors in their writing (Fitria T. N., 2020).

Error Analysis (EA) represents the initial approach to investigating Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Corder, 1971). It emphasizes an internal examination of learners' creative abilities in forming language hypotheses. Errors commonly made by second or foreign language learners constitute an inherent aspect of the language acquisition process (Fitria T. N., 2019). These errors, when identified and corrected by the teacher, contribute to the learners' skill development. Therefore, the occurrence of errors and their subsequent analysis proves beneficial for both students and educators, fostering a conducive learning environment.

This study thus focuses on analyzing errors that students have made in their recount writing. It is crucial to know what types of error that students make in writing recount text.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There are some previous studies conducted on errors in students' writing. Qamariah, Wahyuni, and Meliana (2020) did a research on students' grammatical errors in writing English text in the second grade students of SMK-SMTI Banda Aceh. They analyzed English worksheet of ten students in the second grade of SMK-SMTI Banda Aceh. Wardany, Humaera, and Syukri (2022) analyze errors in students' recount text. They took the data from recount text of 36 students in a school from Kendari. Meanwhile, Anggara and Haryudin (2020) analyzed the in students' recount text by considering the gender of the students. The study focused on how to improve students' understanding in general without knowing clearly what caused students' difficulties in simple past tense. They took the data from recount texts of 26 students (10 male students and 16 female students) in MTs Negeri 1 Cimahi. Geraldine's study (2018) focused on finding out the common errors on the use of conjunction in students' writing. It investigated the types of errors that occur most frequently in students' writing proposed by Ong (2011) in Taxonomy Cohesion, and categorizing the causes of errors using the theory proposed by Richard (1974). It analyzed students' recount writing assignment of tenth grades students in SMKN 41 Jakarta. This research is different from the previous studies above since it aims to look for students' English skills in recount writing especially in analyzing grammatical structure and writing mechanics. Moreover, this research uses data from students' recount writing of English Department students who are in the 3rd semester in Universitas Dian Nuswantoro.

In order to be able to write a good text, students must consider not only the grammar of the language but also mechanics of writing. Grammar deals with how the proper forms of words are combined to make sentences, while writing mechanics refers to elements such as spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Based on Shertzer (1986), the right structure of English language should consider the following elements.

1. Points of grammar, this includes formation of noun plurals, pronouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, subordinate clauses
2. Capitalization
3. Punctuation
4. Expressing numbers
5. Spelling and choosing words
6. Signs and symbols

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in the present research is descriptive qualitative method. Meanwhile, in collecting the data, a sample consisting of 5 recount texts were taken from the assignment in the Advanced Genre Based Writing course (3rd semester) in the English Department of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro. After collecting the data, the researchers identified the errors found in the students' recount writing. After that, the errors were analyzed and presented by offering the suggested target sentence and the explanation of the suggestion. Last, conclusion was drawn.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study focuses on the errors found in 5 recount texts written by 3rd semester students of English Department of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro. The classification of findings and discussion are explained below.

Table 1 Errors Found in the Students' Recount Texts

No	Types of Error		Quantity	Percentage (%)
1	Grammatical Structure	Verb	63	46.32%
		Conjunction	2	1.47%
		Adjectives & Adverbs	2	1.47%
		Subtotal	67	49.26%
2	Writing Mechanics	Punctuation	22	16.18%
		Capitalization	9	6.62%
		Spacing	31	22.79%
		Spelling	2	1.47%
		Slang	5	3.67%
		Subtotal	69	50.73
Total of Errors			136	100%

The result reveals 136 grammatical errors in the students recount texts. Based on Table 1, the students made more errors in the writing mechanics. Overall, the dominant error is shown in the use of Verb (46.32%), followed by Spacing (22.79%), Punctuation (16.18%), Capitalization (6.62%), Slang (3.67%), Spelling Error or Typo (1.47%), Conjunction (1.47%), Adjectives and Adverbs (1.47%). The following section discusses the examples of those findings followed by explanation and suggested correction.

Grammatical Structure Errors

1. Verb

There are 63 grammatical errors classified in the use of verb form. Here is one example of grammatical error in the use of verb.

Excerpt 1

We are start go to bali at 7.30a m from school. (AV2)

Suggestion : We **started** to go to Bali at 7.30 A.M. from school.

The excerpt from (A2) shows an error in the words “are start go to”. The word “start” is still in the form of infinitive. It should be changed into “started” to become simple past tense form since recount is a text that tells about past event. Moreover, the verb “start” should also be followed by infinitive marker “to”.

2. Adjective and Adverbs

The students also made errors in terms of using adjective and adverb, especially comparative form. Here is the example of error in the use of comparative.

Excerpt 2

...to travel as much I do. (SA1)

Suggestion : ...to travel as much **as** I do.

The excerpt with code (SA1) shows an error between the words “much” and “I”. The writer of the text wants to show comparison in the sentence. The writer should give additional comparative word “as” between the words “much” and “I”.

3. Conjunction

In this study, there are 2 errors classified in the use of conjunction. It can be seen in Excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3

My sister made plans for us when we were at Bali, going to beach clubs, visiting Nusa Penida, wearing Bali's kebaya to Tirta Gangga. (TA4)

Suggestion : My sister had made plans for us when we were in Bali, namely going to beach clubs, visiting Nusa Penida, and wearing Bali kebaya to Tirta Gangga.

The excerpt with code (TA4) shows an error about the missing conjunction in the student's recount writing. The writer wants to tell that her sister had made plans of the three activities. In order to create a parallel structure in the list of the activities, the conjunction “and” should be added.

Writing Mechanics Errors

1. Punctuation

There are 22 grammatical errors classified in the used of punctuation found in this research. Excerpt 2 shows an example of error in punctuation.

Excerpt 4

After that we decided to... (AP8)

Suggestion : After that, we decided to...

The excerpt with code (AP8) shows an error in the part “...that we...”. A comma “,” should be added to show that after part “After that” and separates the introductory phrase from the main clause. It also provides a clear flow of information.

2. Capital Letter

There are 9 errors classified in the use of punctuation. The example can be seen in Excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5

Although i have loved visiting these different countries... (SA5)

Suggestion : Although **I** have loved visiting these different countries...

The excerpt with code (SA5) shows an error in the word “i”. Based on the basic rules or the basic grammar in English, the word “i” that indicates subject should change into the capital letter form. The word “i” should change into “I” to become capital letter form.

3. Spacing

There are 31 errors classified in the use of spacing in the data. Excerpt 6 below is an example of the data.

Excerpt 6

I was kind of angry because myfriend just laugh at me. (AP14)

Suggestion : I was kind of angry because my friend just laughs at me.

The excerpt with code (AP14) shows an error about the use of spacing in the student’s recount writing. The writer should add a space between “my” and “friends” because it is a formal form. these two words are two separate words so a space should be added.

4. Slang

In this study, there are 5 errors classified in the use of slang. Here is one of the examples of grammatical error in the use of slang.

Excerpt 7

When first u see footpath... (SA13)

Suggestion : When first **you** see footpath...

The excerpt with code (SA13) shows an error about the use of slang word in the student’s text. The letter “u” indicates the word “you”. The abbreviation “u” shows the informal form. For formal writing, the writer should use word “you” instead of “u”.

5. Spelling/Typo

Typo refers to spelling error. In this study, there are 2 errors of typo. The example can be seen in Excerpt 8.

Excerpt 8

After 15 munites... (AP12)

Suggestion : After 15 **minutes** ...

The excerpt with code (AP12) shows an error of typo in the student's writing. In English, the word "munites" does not exist. The word "munites" should be written as "minutes" because the writer wants to show the duration of an activity.

Based on the data analysis, the researchers found that there are some errors on writing mechanics that are not listed in Shertzer's (1986) theory, such as spacing and slang words. Moreover, it can be indicated that there are three dominant errors that include errors in the grammatical structure and writing mechanics. These 3 errors are verb, punctuation, and spacing. Since error in using verb relate to the use of tenses, students might still lack of understanding in using English tenses. As the evaluation, the teacher should give more materials and practice on using simple past tense in recount text. Moreover, it is worth noting that errors in writing mechanics outnumbered grammatical errors. Errors in using punctuation and spacing relate to the use of formal form in writing. As the evaluation, students should practice more in reading and writing academic texts to give more understanding on the differences between formal and informal styles of writing. Students also need to be exposed more on formal written texts because a well written texts will communicate the message appropriately to the readers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and discussion above, it can be concluded that the students made not only grammatical but also mechanical errors in writing a recount text. Based on the analysis on the recount writing assignment of the third semester students of English Department of Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, students made more errors in mechanics of writing. The dominant grammatical errors deal with the use of verbs, while the mechanical errors deal with spacing. It can be concluded that the students still do not understand how to use the correct verb form of tense in English, and do not pay much attention on the writing mechanics. Therefore, this study suggests that it is essential for the teacher to acknowledge the errors made by students and motivate them to engage more in grammar learning and formal or academic writing.

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