

AN ANALYSIS ON THE SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT ERROR IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

Leonita Maria Efipantias Manihuruk

English Lecturer of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangiantar

ABSTRACT

This research aim to analyze the types of common of errors made by the students at the third semester students of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangiantar in subject verb agreement in writing descriptive text. This research used descriptive qualitative research. The subject of this research are 30 students of the third semester students of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangiantar, group PIA1. The object of this research is students' error. The instrument of collecting data used writing descriptive text test. The data were analyzed by classifying the types of errors made by the students from students' paper, after that analyzing the common types of error made by the students. Finally, the research result showed that there are 128 errors made by group PIA1 students in writing descriptive text. Misformation error is types of errors which indicate the common error made by students. The number of misformation error are 58 and percentage is 45.4%, followed by omission error has 44 with percentage 34.4%, the third is misordering error which has 18 with percentage 14.1%, the fourth is addition error has 8 with percentage 6.1%. It can be concluded that the common type of students' subject verb agreement errors made by the students in writing descriptive text is on misformation error.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Subject Verb Agreement, Descriptive Text

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four skills that is very important in English to be learned and trained. English writing is a subject that learns about how to express feeling, opinion, idea and information in written form. When the students make a sentence which must have a subject and a verb, then must express a complete though, the subject of the sentence must agree with the verb in order to a correct sentence. If the students cannot distinguish what the pair of singular subject is and what the pair of plural object is, the problem is called subject verb agreement (SVA).

Subject verb agreement is sometime called Concord. It shows how the predicate agrees with its subject. However, the subject form has a more important role than verb or predicate. In other words, the predicate form is usually influenced by the subject as, in English, for example the addition of the suffix /-s/ to the verb to form a present positive sentence when the subject is the singular third person. A singular subject requires a singular verb: The *cat eats* fish. (singular subject + singular verb). A plural subject requires a singular verb: The *cats eat* fish. (plural subject + plural verb).

Descriptive text is a text that describe or explain person, thing and

place. Descriptive text has three parts. There is social function, significant lexicogrammatical and generic structure.

The writer's experience when taught the third semester students of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangisantar, the writer found the problem when the students can't to place the subject and predicate. So, the writer thought to analyze the subject verb agreement error based on the writing descriptive text.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Error Analysis

James in Sawalmeh (2013:3) argues that error analysis is one of the most influential theories of second language acquisition. Error is a natural for students when learning about English as a foreign language. The students get some new rules of language such as vocabulary, grammatical pattern and pronunciation or many more which are different from their first language.

According to Dulay et al (1982:146-163) there are most useful and commonly used bases for the descriptive classification of errors.

1. Linguistics Category

These linguistic category taxonomies classify errors according to either or both the language component and the particular linguistic constituent the error affects. Language components include phonology (pronunciation), syntax and morphology (grammar), semantics and lexicon (meaning and vocabulary), and discourse (style). Constituents include the elements that comprise each language component.

2. Surface Strategy

A surface strategy taxonomy highlights the ways surface structures are altered: Learners may *omit* necessary items or *add* unnecessary ones; they may *misform* items or *misorder* them.

1) Omission

Omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item must appear in a well-formed utterance. In the other words, the omission error happens when one or more elements of a sentence are omitted.

For example: *My mother beautiful*

Should be: *My mother is beautiful*

In the sentence above, the word verb (to be) "is" is omitted.

2) Error of addition

Addition errors are the opposite of omissions. They are characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance. It means that some elements are presented should not be added there.

For example: *She was wrote a letter*

Should be: *She wrote a letter*

We cannot use the auxiliary "was" in the initial of the sentence because the auxiliary "was" is unnecessary.

There are three types of addition errors:

(1) Double Markings

Many addition errors are more accurately described as the failure to delete certain items which are required in some linguistic constructions, but not in others.

For example: *He doesn't knows my name*

Should be: *He doesn't know my name*

(2) Regularizations

A rule typically applies to a class of linguistic items, such as the

class of main verbs or the class of nouns. In most language, however, some members of a class are exceptions to the rule. For example, the verb *eat* does not become *eated*, but *ate*; the noun *sheep* is also *sheep* in the plural, not *sheeps*.

(3) Simple Addition

Errors are the “grab bag” subcategory of addition. If an addition error is neither a double marking nor regularization, it is called a simple addition.

3. Misformation

Misformation errors are characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. While in omission errors the item is not supplied at all, in misformation errors the learner supplies something, although it is incorrect. For example: The dog *eated* the chicken. A past tense marker was supplied by the learner; it was just not the right one.

4. Misordering

Misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance.

For example: *What you are thinking about?*

Should be: *What are you thinking about?*

2.1.1 Sources of Error

According to Brown (2007:263) states that there are some factors that learners often make when learn foreign the language, such as:

1. Interlingual Transfer

The beginning stages of learning a second language are especially inerrable to interlingual transfer from the native language, or inference. These kinds of errors are influenced by the native languages which interfere with target language learning (Heydari, 2012:1585).

2. Intralingual Transfer

These types of errors are caused by the target language itself like: false analogy, misanalysis (learners form a wrong hypothesis), incomplete rule application, exploiting redundancy (this error occurs by carrying considerable redundancy. This is shown throughout the system in the form of unnecessary morphology and double signaling) (Heydari, 2012:1585).

2.2 Writing

According to Byrne (2002:1) writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols, just as speech is more than the production of sounds. Moreover, Weigle (2002:5) writing is seen not just as a standardized system of communication but also as an essential tool for learning.

According to Langan (2009:17), there are some processes that can be the following steps:

1. Prewriting

If you are like many people, you may have trouble getting started writing. A mental block may develop when you sit down before a blank sheet of paper or a blank screen. You may not be able to think of an interesting topic or a point to make about your topic.

2. Writing the first draft

When you write a first draft, be prepared to put in additional thoughts and detail that did not emerge during prewriting. And don't worry if you hit a snag. Just leave a blank space or add a comment such as “Do later” and press on to finish the paper.

3. Revising

Revising is as much a stage in the writing process as prewriting, outlining, and doing the first draft. Revising means that you rewrite a paragraph or paper, building upon

what has already been done in order to make it stronger.

4. Editing and Proofreading

Editing and proofreading also benefit richly from word processing. Instead of crossing or whiting out mistake, or rewriting an entire paper to correct numerous errors, you can make all necessary changes within the most recent draft.

2.3 Paragraph

Boardman (2008:3-9) the paragraph is the basic unit of academic writing in English. Students who want to study in a college or university need to learn how to write a paragraph because all other types of academic writing, such as, essays, reports, compositions, and research papers, are based on the paragraph.

Basic academic writing in English is linear in structure, that is, it has a beginning, middle, and an end, and it continues directly from one part to the next. The contents of a paragraph are as follows:

1. The topic sentence

A topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph because it contains the main idea of the paragraph.

2. The body

Supporting sentence explain the topic sentence.

3. The concluding sentence

The concluding sentence of a paragraph is generally needed in a stand-alone paragraph.

2.4 Descriptive Text

According to Knapp and Watkins (2005:97) describing is one of the fundamental functions of any language system and one of the first skills emergent language-users learn to control.

According to Gerot and Wignell (1994:208-209) state that description is a text containing three parts component that should be understood as the following:

1. Social Function

Social function of descriptive writing is to describe a particular person, place or thing.

2. Generic Structure

The generic structures of descriptive text are:

1) Identification: identifies phenomenon to be described.

2) Description: describe parts, qualities, and characteristics.

3) Significant

Lexicogrammatical Features

a. Focus on specific participants.

b. Use of attribute and identifying processes.

c. Frequent use of epithets and classifiers in normal group.

d. Use of simple present.

2.5 Subject -Verb Agreement

Subject verb agreement is sometime called Concord. According to Quirk et al (1985:755) the most important type of concord in English is concord of 3rd person number between subject and verb. The normally observed rule is very simple:

1. a singular subject requires a singular verb

2. a plural subject requires a plural verb one thing.

In general there some roles generally about subject verb-agreement that 20 of Subject Verb Agreement.

1. Subject and verbs must agree in number. This is the cornerstone rule that forms the background of the concept.

- The **dog growls** when he is angry. The **dogs growl** when they are angry.
2. Don't get confused by the words that come between the subject and verb; they do not affect agreement.
The **dog**, who is chewing on my jeans, **is** usually very good.
 3. Prepositional phrases between the subject and verb usually do not affect agreement.
The **colors** of the rainbow **are** beautiful.
 4. When sentences start with "there" or "here" the subject will always be placed after the verb, so care needs to be taken to identify it correctly.
There **is** a problem with the balance sheet. Here **are** the papers you requested.
 5. Subjects don't always come before verbs in questions. Make sure you accurately identify the subject before deciding on the proper verb form to use.
Does **Lefty** usually **eat** grass?
Where **are** the **pieces** of this puzzle?
 6. If two subjects are joined by **and**, they typically require a plural verb form.
The cow and the pig **are jumping** over the moon.
 7. The verb is singular if the two subjects separated by **and** refer to the same person or thing.
Red beans and rice is my mom's favorite dish.
 8. If one of the words **each**, **every**, or **no** comes before the subject, the verb is singular.
No **smoking or drinking** is allowed. Every **man and woman is** required to check in.
 9. If the subjects are both singular and are connected by the words **or**, **nor**, **neither/nor**, **either/or**, and **not only/but also** the verb is singular.
Jessica or Christian is to blame for the accident.
 10. The only time when the object of the preposition factors into the decision of plural or singular verb forms is when noun and pronoun subjects like **some**, **half**, **none**, **more**, **all**, etc. are followed by a prepositional phrase. In these sentences, the object of the preposition determines the form of the verb.
All of the **chicken** is gone. All of the **chickens** are gone.
 11. The singular verb form is usually used for units of measurement or time.
Four **quarts of oil was** required to get the car running.
 12. If the subjects are both plural and are connected by the words **or**, **nor**, **neither/nor**, **either/or**, and **not only/but also**, the verb is plural.
Dogs and cats are both available at the pound.
 13. If one subject is singular and one plural and the words are connected by the words **or**, **nor**, **neither/nor**, **either/or**, and **not only/but also**, you use the verb form of the subject that is nearest the verb.
Either the **bears** or the **lion has** escaped from the zoo. Neither the **lion** nor the **bearshave** escaped from the zoo.
 14. Indefinite pronouns typically take singular verbs.
Everybody wants to be loved.
 15. Except for the pronouns (**few**, **many**, **several**, **both**, **all**, **some**) that always take the plural form.
Few were left alive after the flood.

16. If two infinitives are separated by *and* they take the plural form of the verb.

To walk and to chew gum requires great skill.

17. When gerunds are used as the subject of a sentence, they take the singular verb form of the verb; but, when they are linked by *and*, they take the plural form.

Standing in the water *was* a bad idea. *Swimming* in the ocean

and *playing drums are* my hobbies.

18. Collective nouns like herd, senate, class, crowd, etc. usually take a singular verb form.

The *herd* is stampeding.

19. Titles of books, movies, novels, etc. are treated as singular and take a singular verb.

The Burbs is a movie starring Tom Hanks.

20. Final Rule – Remember, only the subject affects the verb!

2. Classifying the students' errors based on the types of errors namely, error of omission, error of addition, error of misformation and error of misordering.

3. Finding the dominant types of errors did by the students by using the following formula based on Sudijono (2014:43):

$$X = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

X = The Percentage types of error

F= Frequency types of error

N = Total Number of error

100% = Standard Percentage

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The writer used a descriptive qualitative research design. The goal was to describe the types of subject-verb agreement errors on students' writing descriptive text at the third semester students of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar. Then, the writer chose significant lexicogrammatical features on the research. The variable of this writer is subject-verb agreement errors.

Subjects in this research were 30 students of the third semester students of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, group PIA1. The writer chose them because she wanted to analyze their error in subject verb agreement from descriptive text.

Object on the research was students' error. It was found from task of the students at the third semester students of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar. Then, the writer classified the errors. There were most useful and commonly use bases for descriptive classification of errors. They are linguistic category, surface category, comparative taxonomy, and communicative effect taxonomy. Here, the writer chose the surface category taxonomy, such as omission, addition, misformation and misordering.

Writing test was instrument of collecting data in this research.

The data of this research was analyzed by using descriptive qualitative technique. The techniques of analyzing the data were:

1. Identifying the data in the students' paper.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

After analyzing the data, the writer has finding. They are:

1. The types of error

There are four types of error, they are:

1. Error of Omission
2. Error of Addition
3. Error of Misformation
4. Error of Misordering

2. What are the dominant types of error

Four types of error, the writer found the highest number of errors was misformation with the percentage 45.4%. It was common errors of writing descriptive text made by the third semester students of University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Error of Omission

The findings also showed that omission of s/-es as plural marker had been the big contributor in making the error of omission. In simple from the most frequent to the rare, any possible properties of grammar found that related to this omission error were omission of 3rd person singular verb, singular verb, and auxiliary verb.

4.2.2 Error of Addition

The error of addition happens because the students add word in sentence where should not be added there. The aspect of error in addition error which was found in the students writing was plural marker.

4.2.3 Error of Misformation

Misformation errors are characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure.. For example: The dog eated the chicken. The correct is “The dog ate the chicken”. The aspects of grammar error in misformation error found in the students’ writing were tense, auxiliary verb, and determiner.

4.2.4 Error of Misordering

Misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. The aspects of grammar error in misordering error found in the students’ writing were noun phrase.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The number of omission errors are 44 and the percentage is 34.4%, number of addition errors are 8 and the percentage is 6.1%, number of misformation errors are 58 and percentage is 45.4% and the last number is errors of misordering is 18 with percentage 14.1%. From the percentage, the dominant error type which has been made by the students is misformation errors, where the number of it errors are 58 and the percentage is 45.4%.

5.2 Suggestions

- The teachers must be creative in the class to build the comfortable to the students when studying and use a new teaching technique in order to make better result of the teaching and learning process especially in writing descriptive text using subject verb agreement.
- The students can increase the knowledge about it.
- The other researchers who are interested in doing research can be used as guidance for doing research about subject verb agreement.

REFERENCES

- Boardman, C, and Prydenberg, J.(2008).*Writing to Communicative*. Third Edition, United State of America.
- Brown, D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, Fifth Edition, San Fransisco: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Byrne, D. (2002). *Teaching Writing Skills*. Singapore: Longman Group Ltd.
- Corder, S.P.(1982).*Error Analysis and Interlang uage*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Frank, Marcella.(1972). *Modern English: A Practical Reference Guide*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. Inc
- Grenville, A. (2001). *Writing from Start to Finish: A six-Step Guide*. Sidney: Griffin Press.
- Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach Writing*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited.
- Heydari, P. (2012). Error Analysis: Sources of L2 Learners’ Error: *Theory and Practice in Language Study*, 2(8), 1585
- Hussain, Hanif, Asif, and Rehman. (2013). *An Error Analysis of L2 Writing at Higher Secondary Level in Multan*,

- Pakistan: Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business, 4(3), 829
- Inriani, C. (2016). Thesis: *An Error Analysis of Subject Verb Concord in writing descriptive text at the tenth grade*. Medan.
- James, C. (1998). *Error Language Learning and Use*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Kroeger, P.R. (2005). *Analysing Grammar: An Introduction* New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Langan, J. (2009). *Exploring Writing: Sentences and Paragraph Second Edition*, New York: Atlantic Cape Community College
- Murshidi. (2014). *Subject-Verb Agreement Grammatical Errors and Punctuation Errors in Submissions of Male UAE University Students: European Journal of Business and Innovation Research*, 2(5), 44
- Niazi. (2014). *Subject-Verb Agreement in English and Pashto Languages: Ministry of Higher Education Kabul Education University Faculty of Language and Literature*.
- Pardiyono. (2007). *Pasti Bisa: Teaching Genre-Based Writing*. Yogyakarta: Andi.
- Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik. (1985). *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.
- Sawalmeh, M.H. (2013). Error Analysis of Written English Essays: The case of Students of The Preparatory Year Program in Saudi Arabia: *English for specific purposes works*, 14(2), 3
- Wahyudi, M. (2012). *Error analysis on subject-verb agreement: the case of a university student in Indonesia* Research on Humanities and Social Sciences 2(4), 20
- Watkins, and Knapp (2005). *Genre, Text, Grammar: Technologies for Teaching and Assessing writing*. Australia: University of New South Wales Press Ltd
- Weighle, S.C (2002). *Assessing Writing*, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press