GRADUATE STUDENTS’ SYNTACTICAL ERRORS IN WRITING THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with the graduate students’ syntactical errors in writing thesis. This thesis describes the syntactical errors made by the graduate students of English Department and Applied Linguistics of the State University of Medan in writing thesis. One of the purposes of writing thesis is to know the types of syntactical error and the dominant types. This study uses a qualitative design in which the data are taken from the sentences of thesis. The data are collected and described using surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen. Then, the errors found are classified into syntactical errors based on Politzer and Romirez’ model as a guideline. The researcher applies randomly technique to get a representative sample, there are 6 theses as the sample. The findings of analysis show that the totals of syntactical errors are 387 sentences. The analysis found that there are four types of syntactical errors which used; they are Omision 156, Addition 46, Misformation 114 and Misordering 19. The most dominant type of syntactical errors made in graduate students’ thesis is omission.

Keywords: Syntactical Errors, Thesis.

* Graduate Status
** Lecturer Status
INTRODUCTION

There is a tendency, people make errors. It can occur in many different ways. For example, when they are talking or writing. In delivering speaking and writing, people use language as tool of communication. Writing is one of communication form using language. In writing, people could make errors in using structure of certain language because some factors. This is because every language has certain roles or structure as component.

In foreign language learning process, making errors cannot be avoided for the learners to acquire the target language. Learners faced new rules of the target language which has different rules with their native language roles. Like human learning, foreign language learning is inseparable from making errors. Making errors is the most natural thing in the world and it is evidently attached to the human being. It is usually be a necessary part of learning moreover in English learning process.

Focuses on learning packages aimed at students who are learning English as foreign language, these errors made can be caused by their carelessness about using a good structural or they are in a rush. This learning can be as evaluation of materials for learners, awareness of the needs of teachers in terms of teaching training (Taylor, 2002: 306).

As stated by Brown in Subagio (1999:5), human learning is fundamentally a process that involves the making of errors. A learner inevitably makes countless errors in learning the target language. It means that in learning the target language, making errors is natural characteristic even it can be one of the steps in learning process. English learners can
make errors in different ways. In written form some components of language are included such as syntax.

Syntax is the study of the rules, or "patterned relations”, which govern the way words, combine to form phrases and phrases combine to form sentences. It is one of the branches of linguistics studying about the rules or patterned relation that govern the way words combine to form phrases, or phrases combine to form sentences.

Syntactical error is a confusion in part of speech. It is any deviation from the rule system due to insufficient competence of the target language, particularly in syntax which involves phrase, clause and sentence. Some of the errors are difficult to categorize unambiguously, however an error in word meaning may be caused by ignorance of just one word, but it effects are sometimes global: that is the entire sentence may be affected in unpredictable ways (Ruth Sanders, 1987).

Based on classification of surface linguistic taxonomy, syntactical errors are divided into four, they are: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

Errors are defined as the flawed side of learners’ speech or writing, which deviates from some selected norm of mature language performance (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982:138). Error, it is often found in writing thesis as the final assignment for students’ college. Students’ mastery in Indonesia and English is not same proportion. It can be that Indonesian students who are learning English are affected by Indonesia ways of thinking. These errors can be recognized by syntactic means. These are perhaps here that the native-language modeling which is described by Catt (1988) might be effective.

The range of possibilities goes from several dozen rules to an extensive system of English grammar modeling. Brown (2000:217) defines an error as noticeable deviation
from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner.

Errors are ruled-governed; they systematic and show the lack of knowledge of learners. Errors have become a most commonly occurred when writing and speaking in English forms especially in writing.

Writing is considered as the most difficult skill for language learner because they need to have a certain amount of background knowledge about the topic that is going to be written. In writing, sentence by sentence joined together to get the purposes of that writing. Writing should be effectively organized and included aspect of writing such as content, word choice or vocabulary, grammar and coherent. In writing, there will be some errors in structure or grammar and they will be known clearly and easily because they will be seen by the readers directly. Errors can be understood by reading the materials that learn error analysis and clearly classifying the errors whether they are the types or from what sources the errors themselves occurred. Writing is as the reflection of the language users’ cultural background. When students are writing, they express what are on their minds and feel.

In learning English as a second or foreign language, it commonly happens that most Indonesian students face problems and they often make errors when writing action is asked for. The erroneous sentences of them are familiar with learners and their first language. As what Dulay (1982: 150) states that based on classification of surface strategy taxonomy, types of syntactical errors are divided into four types, they are omission, addition, misformation and misordering. If students make error in omission type that is she/ he omits a well form-utterance that must appear. If students make error in addition type that is she/ he adds a well form-utterance that must not appear.
students make error in misformation type that is she/ he uses a wrong form of a structure. If students make error in misordering type that is she/ he misplaces the position or ordering in sentences construction. From those errors, it may be caused by students’ carelessness when they are writing or in a rush so they do not keep in a good attention in structure.

For the learner, they tell that such a structure is not yet mastered. It is proved by the erroneous that is made by graduate students when they are writing their thesis. Thesis is considered as the final work which is as product of their writing skill as well as their skill in constructing sentence well but the fact shows that their thesis have errors in the sentence construction. For that, it is important to make the research about syntactical errors so the students or people know to improve their knowledge of mastering grammar and understanding in identifying and they know to avoid making the errors over and over in order to build a good writing.

**METHODOLOGY**

*Research Design*

This study were conducted by descriptive research. According to Bogdan and Tailor in Margono (1996:36) qualitative research is one research procedure that will produce descriptive data in form of written and spoken words from people or people’s behaviour that can be researched. This study intended to analyze graduate students’ syntactical errors in writing thesis. The data were described by following surface strategy taxonomy to explain the way surface structures were altered; whether necessary
elements were omitted; unnecessary elements were added, or elements were misformed or misordered.

Object
To get the result of the research, the data of this study were thesis of graduate students of Applied Linguistics and English Department in State University of Medan without determining the year of its thesis. And the data were in forms of sentences written by students. This study investigated the syntactical errors made by students in their writing based on the classification of surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen based on Politzer and Romirez theory as guideline.

Data Collection
The data were collected by doing documentary technique. And the source for collecting data was the writing form which was written by graduate students in their thesis. Those theses were from Applied Linguistics and English Department.

Technique for Analyzing Data
After the data were collected, the data were analyzed descriptively. The technique for analyzing data as the following:

1. collecting data,
2. choosing the current theses which discuss syntax in order to get up to date
3. reading the theses and identifying sentences having syntactic errors
4. classifying and describing the errors based on surface strategy taxonomy

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Qualitative Method

After collecting the data, the data were analyzed by descriptive qualitative in order to find out the syntactical errors that were made by students. The analysis of the errors would be shown from the analyzing the data from their writings in their thesis.

Omission

Omission error is characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. The sentence is characterized by the omitting of an important item. From the thesis of graduate students, this type is made by students when they are writing. It showed that graduate students is still careless in grammar moreover in omitting the item in constructing the sentences.

The sentences from those theses that showed the omission of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance are:

In Indonesia for instance, Bahasa Indonesia is her/his mother tongue but she/he also learn(s) and use(s) English as her/his second language.

Language also play(s) important role in developing culture and become(s) a key to analyze a particular society.
The words which are categorized as verbs do not agree with the following subjects because the omission of the third singular inflection (-s) in present tense showing agreement between subject and verb. In other words, singular subjects need singular verb in which singular verb marked by the addition (-s) after the underlined verbs.

Addition
Addition error is characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance. Addition errors usually occur in the later stages of L2 acquisition when the learner has already acquired some target language rules.

The negative impact that can happen from the newspaper is when the language used contains taboo words because the taboo words can causes bad taste or thought for the readers.

The underlined word is considered ungrammatical because the additions of ‘-s’ do not agree with the modal that is followed before verb. It should be in infinitive verb form.

The negative impact that can happen from the newspaper is when the language used contains taboo words because the taboo words can cause bad taste or thought for the readers.

From the example above, showed that the students made the error in addition type. There is the additional of unimportant item that must not appear in sentence construction.

Misformation
Misformation errors are characterized by the use of the wrong form of the structure.
The underlined word above is incorrect in agreement which involve the wrong use of ‘to be’. The writer use the plural form is misformed. To be ‘is’ should be changed into ‘are’. In graduate students’ thesis, it is found some errors in misformation types.

Walter and Charles (1961: 42) divided visual materials into two main groups.

Best (1980: 24) stated that the descriptive qualitative is the study to describe and to find the theory and sometimes the theory may change according to condition of the field.

Those sentences are statement from authors who state about statements on their books. The statements should be:

Walter and Charles (1961: 42) divide visual materials into two main groups.

Best (1980: 24) states that the descriptive qualitative is the study to describe and to find the theory and sometimes the theory may change according to condition of the field.

Within misformation, the errors found show that the students make errors in forming verb in a certain tense. The underlined words are incorrect because it used verb form of past tense instead of simple present tense. Simple present tense is used to show the statement which happen in present time. The verb in present tense showing singular subject is marked by adding the third singular inflection (-s). The sentences above, the inflection (-ed) should be substituted by the third singular inflection (-s).

**Misordering**

Misordering error is characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or a group of morphemes in an utterance. The error in misordering only happens in word order. From the sentences construction, it is found that there are few of errors in misordering. It indicates that errors of misordering are not so problematic anymore for the students.
and indicates that the students have already mastered English rules in how to place the words into the right position to construct a well-formed sentence.

In graduate students’ thesis accordance with the errors made in their writing, omission type of error is the most dominant made by graduate students when they are constructing the sentences. It is presented in the table.

**Number of graduate students’ syntactical errors in writing thesis.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Types of Syntactical Errors</th>
<th>Data 1</th>
<th>Data 2</th>
<th>Data 3</th>
<th>Data 4</th>
<th>Data 5</th>
<th>Data 6</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Misformation</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Misordering</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows the number of types of syntactical errors in graduate students’ thesis, thesis 1 omission 50, addition 18, misformation 29, and misordering 12. In thesis 2, there is found that omission 20, addition is none, misformation 29, and misordering 1. While in thesis 3, the number of omission is 20, addition 4, misformation 6, and misordering 1. In the thesis 4, omission is 16, addition 6, misformation 12, misordering 22. Omission in 5th thesis 27, addition 7, misformation 22, misordering 3. While the last thesis, omission 23, addition 11, misformation 37, misordering 1. The total number of syntactical errors in graduate students’ thesis is omission 156, addition 46, misformation 114, and misordering 19 with the most dominant type of syntactical error is omission.
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

After analyzing the sentences construction in graduate students’ thesis that describes the syntactical errors which are made in their writing, it can be concluded that based on the surface strategy taxonomy analysis, all types of syntactical errors are available on that thesis analysis. Students made errors in these sixth theses in their writing.

Within the errors of omission, the syntactic errors is mostly found. Omission of third singular inflection to show the agreement of subject and verb is often found in which they construct the sentence. Within misformation, the errors found show that the students often make errors in forming verb in a certain tense. As in present, when the sentences are in statement form, it is in present tense form, but it is found that the students used verb form of past tense instead of simple present tense. The verb in present tense showing singular subject is marked by adding the third singular inflection (-s). Besides the two types of errors found, error in addition is also found. From the analyzing, it is found that there is addition of an item that must not appear but it appear namely preposition. Some students made errors in putting the preposition in constructing the sentences especially in preposition phrase. On the contrary, errors of misordering. There are still found this type of error when students write their sentences but it is not so problematic for the students because there is just little of errors found. It indicates that the students have already mastered English rules in how to place the words into the right position to construct a well-formed sentence. Though the whole of errors type are found is small but it is significant so it can affect the next sentence constructions. So, in writing there are still errors made in grammatical or structural form.
Suggestions

In relation to the conclusions above, suggestions are first, for the readers, who are concerned to this study, to conduct in depth researches and to make a detailed analysis of syntactical errors in other object. Second for the students, who want to improve their ability in writing, they should know what aspect in grammar which is difficult for them, so they can they can know the using of syntactic in order to make a good writing. On the other hand, the students not only study by listening what lecturers explained in class, but also by reading additional books more and doing some practices themselves. And third for the proof readers, this study is referred to be a useful study for them to be willing to help the other researchers to correct the writing’s structures.

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