STUDENTS' LANGUAGE PRODUCTION IN ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui jenis struktur kalimat yang digunakan oleh para mahasiswa didalam Ontell, dan kesalahan struktur kalimat yang sering dilakukan oleh mahasiswa. Subjek penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester ketiga Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Ada 26 siswa yang secara aktif terlibat dalam forum diskusi. Dalam studi ini, peneliti menggunakan metode deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui posting siswa di forum diskusi. Ada 648 total kalimat yang dihasilkan oleh para siswa secara keseluruhan. Data menunjukkan bahwa pada kenyataannya, siswa dapat menghasilkan berbagai jenis struktur kalimat. Mayoritas kalimat-kalimat yang dihasilkan oleh siswa adalah kalimat sederhana dan kalimat kompleks dengan masing-masing persentase 34,72% dan 42,28%. Selain itu, data menunjukkan bahwa masalah terbesar dengan struktur kalimat adalah kalimat "run-on". Dalam banyak kasus, siswa cenderung melakukan kesalahan dalam meletakkan tanda baca untuk menghubungkan antara dua klausa. Persentase kesalahan pada kalimat "run-on" ini adalah 60,51% dari total kesalahan.

Kata kunci: Forum Diskusi Online, Struktur Kalimat

Abstract: This research aims to find out the types of sentence structures used by the students in their language production in Ontell, and sentence structure errors commonly made by the students. The subjects of this research were third semester students of English Education Study Program. There were 26 students who actively involved in the discussion forum. The data were derived through students' postings in discussion forum. There were 648 total sentences produced by the overall students. The data revealed that in fact the students produced various types of sentence structures. The majority of sentences posted by the students were simple sentence and complex sentence with 34,72% and 42,28% respectively. Furthermore, the data showed that the biggest problem with sentence structures was run-on sentence. In many cases, students tended to misplace punctuation between two independent clauses. This contributed 60,51% of total errors.

Keywords: Online Discussion Forum, Sentence Structure

Over the past few years, Internet has become one of the needs for many people. Earlier Internet is used to collect information only but as time and technology changing fast, lots of new trends is coming. Nowadays, large number of people use Internet in numerous fields and domainds, and its use give a great potential for educational uses. Recent innovations such as blogs, wikis, online discussion are by now familiar to language teachers. Online discussion tools have been taken up eagerly by the foreign language teaching in which language students were linked to the discussion forum for promoting communicative competence. Online Discussion Forum (ODF) has emerged as one of great platforms for learning. It may become one of the greatest environment to engage students outside the classroom. ODF is an e-learning platform that allows students to post messages, interact and receive feedback from other students and instructor, and foster deeper understanding toward the subject under study.

The nature of ODF is to promote equal opportunity in communication, so every student may feel free to talk. According to Redmon and Burger (2004, 157-166) that for students, the online environment is less intimidating, less prc to be dominated by a single participant and less bounded by convention. Also, participation in online discussion forums provides opportunities for responsibility and active learning as well as encourages reflection, analysis and higher order thinking.

Furthermore, online discussion forum also provides students with the flexibility of time and place. It gives the students longer processing time in receiving and producing the target language. In line with this, De Wever, Schellens, & Valcke, 2005 also stated that students will have more time to reflect, think and search extra information before contributing to discussion. It gives also much more opportunities to communicate and interact with peers because they post opinions and ideas toward the topic being discussed intensively. They can easily retrieve and review their postings anytime as they give ideas or opinion toward previous postings. They are not bounded with time and space; therefore, they are expected to build up communicative skill as they produce and post a proper language production. In line with the facts above, online discussion forum clearly helps students a lot to practice more on their language production.

Language production refers to the process involved in creating and expressing meaning through language. There are two types of production of English in terms of skills; written production and speech production. In this study, the researcher focuses on the written production in which students posted in the discussion forum. Garrett, as cited in Bock & Levelt (1994, p. 133-177) stated that models of sentence production generally assume that two distinct sets of processes are involved in generating syntactic structure. Therefore, there is a strong relationship among online discussion forum, language production, and the sentence structure. Since students communicate with others using written production through the forum, there is a need of understanding and using correct sentence structure as well.

To sum up, an online discussion typically lasts longer and gives students more time to think about what they are going to contribute. In other word, students are expected to be able to produce the target language properly because they are given chance to fix their message before they post to the discussion thread. Sharma and Barret (2007) explain that asynchronous communication in online discussion forums are useful, as students have time to compose their message, which may encourage attention to accuracy as well as 'deeper', more considered thinking than in synchronous exchanges. With this in mind, this may well offer students a chance to develop their language abilities.

Students in EFL context, in fact, face many difficulties or problems when producing the target language. In this study, it happened also in discussion forum of TL-ICT 1 class in which students' language production are all posted in English sentences. Treiman, et al 2003 says that in language production, people are faced with the converse problem. They must map from a conceptual structure to words and their elements because it is not simply sets of words but have syntactic structure. Weigle, 2002 sounded the same, that in academic contexts, the quality of first-language papers is usually assessed by evaluating the accuracy of the content, the originality and development of thoughts and ideas, and the soundness of the writer's logic. When dealing with English as a second or foreign language, language elements (e.g., morphological, lexical, or syntactic accuracy) play an important role. Language elements are not only used to measure quality at a point in time, but also can be used as signs of language development over time. Thus, students must have a good communicative competence toward the knowledge of grammar, so that students are not only be able to master the topics being learned but also can use the target language properly.

Recent research has consistently documented how the knowledge is constructed and achieved deeper understanding through interaction in online discussion based on its contents (Gunawardena, et al 1997; Garrison, et al 2001; Koh, et al 2010). Attention has recently turned, however, the focus of this growing research is on student's production in online discussion forum. The researcher is interested in exploring how online discussion forum have impacted students' language production especially in their sentence structure. In online discussion forum of TL-ICT 1 class, discussions are clearly structured by the lecturer as the instructor, who specifies the aspects of the topic and question to be focused. Thus, students produced a great variety sentences as they try to be actively involved in the discussions. Therefore, analyzing students' language production within discussion forum becomes the major interest because discussion forum not only construct the students' knowledge as they exchange ideas and opinions each others, but also build up a rich communicative skill through the forum.

In this research, the researcher focuses upon four types of sentence structures, those are simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentence. Students in TL-ICT 1 class used various types of those structures in their postings while giving comments and opinions. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that errors toward those sentence structures may occur due to some problems. Therefore, further analysis is about finding out the sentence structure errors which

commonly made by students in the discussion forum.

METHOD

A method of this research is descriptive study. Descriptive study is a research where the purpose is to describe a phenomenon. Gall et., al (2003) states that descriptive method is a research which has intent to study phenomena as they exist in one point in time. It deals with describing the present actual condition of subjects or objects of research, i.e, person, groups, institutions, societies, etc. A descriptive study collects the data in order to answer questions about a current status of the subject or the topic of study then describe the data. In this research entitled "An Analysis on Students' Language Production in Online Discussion Forum", the writers are curious in seeking the condition of students' language production which occurs in online discussion forum specifically on its grammatical component. Thus, descriptive study is a valuable way of looking at the phenomenon being researched.

The participants were the third semester students of English Education Study Program academic year 2011/2012. The complete students' postings transcriptions were obtained from Ontell. Four episodes or topics were taken as sample with 99 total number of postings from 26 students.

The writer focused on finding out the level of sentence structures which mostly produced by the students and also common sentence structure errors mostly found in students' language production. Throughout the writer's analysis toward the data, the writer listed the errors found in students' language production in Ontell. The errors are toward the word choice or diction, stingy sentences, gerund, run-on sentences, modals, sentence fragments, redudancy of words, subject-verb agreement, punctuations, verb tenses, and misplaced modifier. Nevertheless, the writer only focuses only on five types of errors, for those errors related to structure of sentences. They are subject-verb agreement, run-on sentences, stringy sentences, sentence fragments and misplaced modifier.

In order to make this research became more obvious, the steps of data analysis were needed. Due to that fact, the writer followed some the steps below:

a. *Classify the postings*
   In this step, the writer classified the postings based on four episodes; they are discussion, e-learning, computer typology and experience.

b. *Sort the postings*
   The writer checked the sample thoroughly and began sorting the postings. There were nearly 400 postings, but only the sentences which are originally produced by the students were taken as sample.

c. *Categorize the level of sentence structure*
   In this stage, the writer continoues categorized the level of sentence structure used by the students in their language production. The categories include simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence and compound-complex sentences. The result was determined by the number of sentence structures used. The types of sentence structures which contribute the biggest percentage are considered as the most frequently used by the students in their

language production.

d. *Determining sentence structure errors which are commonly found in students' language production.*

The writer classified the error into five types, including subject-verb agreement, run-on sentences, stringy sentences, sentence fragments and misplaced modifiers. At last, the percentage is used also to determine sentence structure errors which are commonly made by students. Hence, at the end of the study, the writer can see the quality of students' language production which occurs in online discussion forum.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In analyzing the types of sentences used by the students in their language production in Ontell, the writer identified the sentences based on four types of sentence structures such as simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence and compound-complex sentence. Since the type of sentence structure used by the students in their language production have been analyzed, a variety of sentence types was identified. The result of the study shows that students do not only produce certain type of sentence structure, yet they construct various types of sentences in order to deliver their ideas to peers in Ontell.

1. *Simple Sentence*

There were 225 simple sentences found in students' language production or 34,72% of total sentences. In this particular type of sentence, in fact, students produced variety of simple sentence, which has been discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. These examples of simple sentence produced by the students in Ontell could be seen as below:

<u>In good site,</u> <u>technology</u> <u>has changed</u> <u>my learning style.</u>
    Adv   S   V   O
          (Source: Student #09; Receive : Thu Dec 13, 2012 11:11)

<u>In ONtell group</u> <u>I</u> <u>can</u> <u>ask and response</u> <u>about the other opinion</u> <u>more</u>
    Adv   S M   CpV   O
<u>flexible</u>.
 Adv
         (Source: Student #04; Receive : Thu Nov 08, 2012 8:59)

<u>We</u> <u>can</u> <u>increase</u> <u>our ability and skill</u> <u>in English.</u>
 S   M   V   O   Adv/PP
        (Source: Student #03; Receive : Sun Oct 07, 2012 5:00)

*note :
S   : Subject   43
V   : Verb
M   : Modals
O   : Object
CpV   : Compound Verb
Adv   : Adverb

From the preceeding examples, Student #09 produced a common pattern of simple sentence, that is subject preceeded by predicate and object. Student #02

produced simple sentence with compound verb; whereas, Student #03 successfully produced simple sentence with compound object.

2. *Compound Sentence*

In this type of sentence structure, the writer found that there were 71 compound sentences used by the students or 10,95% of the overall sentences. In producing compound sentence, students used variety of connector to link independent clause. Here are the examples of the sentences:It can be seen from Student #01 and #09 who used coordinative conjunction to link independent clause in their sentences. On the other hand, Student #21 used conjuctive adverb in her/his compound sentence.

We can get many information and knowledge there without going to
                                    IC
library *or* find other sources to learning.
   CC   IC
                    (Source: Student #03; Receive : Fri Nove 09,2012 8:24
)

The blog just copy the information from a website, *and* combine it
                        IC   CC
with other websites without write original sources.
                        IC
                    (Source: Student #09; Receive : Fri Nov 09, 2012 12:58)

So far the way it has encouraged my personal learning is it allows me
                                    IC
to have a greater access *and* a greater choice of knowledge resources
                        CC   IC
thus it has been one of my learning resources.
CA   IC
                    (Source: Student #21; Receive : Fri Nov 09, 2012 3:12)

*note :
IC   : Independent Clause
CC   : Coordinating Conjunction
CA   : Conjunctive Adverb

3. *Complex Sentence*

The analysis result showed that 274 sentences felt into this types of sentence. In other words, there are 42,28% complex sentences produced by the students from the total sentences. The data revealed that students used different types of clauses in complex sentences. Student #01 used noun clause as dependent clause in that sentence; Student #09 and #21 mixed together the use of noun clause, adverbial clause, and adjective clause as dependent clause. The examples of complex sentence used by the students are shown in the following.

Okay X, I think I can understand what do you want to explain.
            IC   DC/NC
                    (Source: Student #01; Receive : Fri Nov 02, 2012 8:41)

I think , e-learning(technology,electronic) has many advantages that
   IC   DC/NC

encourage me to can make myself adapt with globalization.
                             DC/AC

As I remembered , when I was Junior High School and Senior High
   DC/AVC   DC/AVC

School in my village , the use of electronic/technology is still limited.
                             IC

I could not use everytime I want it , because I did not have personal
             IC   DC/AVC

computer yet. I just use computer when I study TIK (Teknologi
                       IC

Informasi dan Komunikasi) in my school.
             DC/AVC

(Source: Student #09; Receive : Fri Nov 09, 2012 12:58)

I think I don't really agree with X's opinion that e-learning can be a
  IC   DC/NC   DC/AC

learning opportunity for everyone who wants to learn. To me having
                      DC/AC   IC

just the willingness to learn is not enough if they don't have any access
                           DC/AVC

to internet.
     (Source: Student #21; Receive : Tue Oct 16, 2012 1:39)

4. Compound-complex Sentence

There were 81 compound-complex sentences used by the students in their language production in Ontell. It means that compound-complex sentences took 12,5% of overall sentences. The examples are as follows:

When other people outside their community found information from
                         DC/AVC

there , they might not get the same experience and they shares it
            IC   IC

together and that also can add more information and experience for
                      IC

them.
     (Source: student #14; Receive : Wed Oct 03, 2012 1:32)

Actually, I like Politic and Law so much, and I can't get it on my
             IC   IC

campus, so that I can learn more through internet about these two
                        DC/AVC

kinds of subject and it will deepen my knowledge.
                  IC

(Source: Student #16; Receive : Fri Nov 02, 2012 2:39)

*note :
IC : Independent Clause
DC : Dependent Clause
AC : Adjective Clause
AVC : Adverbial Clause

Above all, the type of sentence structures mostly used by the students can be seen in table below.

Table 2   Numerical Summary of Types of Sentence Structure Used by The Students in Ontell

Category	SS	CP	CX	CPCX	TOTAL
Total (number)	225	71	**274**	81	648
Total (%)	34,72%	10,95%	**42,28%**	12,5%	

In view of the problem raised in this study; the writer should, consequently, identify the sentence structure errors commonly found in students' language production. Under this circumtance, we can easily recognize the tendency of sentence errors made by students in Ontell. Hence, it will open up their eyes because the fact that they need to improve their proficiency and competence in their language production, in this regard, English. The analysis of sentence structure errors classified into five categories such as subject-verb agreement, run-on sentences, stringy sentences, sentence fragments, and misplaced modifier.

1. Subject-verb Agreement

The first category of errors, that is subject-verb agreement errors, it is distinctly real that the students overgeneralized the rules of L1 to the target language because there is no certain rules in subject-verb agreement in Bahasa. After doing the analysis, the writer found that the errors toward subject-verb agreement made by the students is 18,46% of 195 errors. The example of subject-verb agreement errors in students' language production can be seen as follows:

Incorrect: First, <u>it help</u> me to find the material for my assignment easily.

(Source: Student #08; Receive : Thu Nov 08, 2012 8:37)

From the sentence above, both subject and verb are not in agreement. *It* refers to singular precedeed by V+$_{s/es}$. Therefore, the correct form should be: *First, <u>it helps</u> me to find the material for my assignment easily.*

Incorrect: <u>Internet access are</u> everywhere, just download the material you needed and read.

(Source: Student #10; Receive : Thu Nov 08, 2012 11:32)

From this example, both subject and verb are not in agreement. *Internet*

access refers to singular precedeed by is. The correct form should be:
Internet access is everywhere, just download the material you needed and read.

> Incorrect: In my opinion, E-learning means community knowledge is like a group of people who got the same interest in something and <u>they shares</u> it in their community.
>
> (Source: Student #14; Receive : Wed Oct 03, 2012 1:32)

In this example, both subject and verb are not in agreement. *They* refers to plural precedeed by V_1 in Present Tense. Therefore, the correct form should be:
In my opinion, E-learning means community knowledge is like a group of people who got the same interest in something and <u>they share</u> it in their community.
*Note
<u>   </u>   : showed in which subject-verb agreement occured

2. *Run-on Sentences*

The finding toward run-on sentences that made by the students is 60,51% of total errors, or in other words, there were 118 run-on sentences found in students' language production. The run-on sentences had the highest percentage among the other errors. The writer assumes that the occurence of errors toward run-on sentences is caused by the students' tendency to misplace punctuation between two independent clauses (IC). Moreover, the writer realized that due to the complex process of writing in a foreign language, students often find it difficult to develop all aspects of the rules simultaneously. EFL students especially those who are Indonesian are not quite familiar in using semicolon in their writing. The writer also assumes that run-on sentences appeared in students' writing in Ontell because they are in a hurry to get their thoughts down on postings.

> I'm not sure I can say "yes" for this question because I think games only can be used as a warming up or tools to test our understanding in a lesson <u>but</u> they are not appropriate for elaborating a lesson. And one more thing, ehmmm, there lots of web sites that provide us with various learning ways to improve our English <u>for example</u> you can learn grammar from www.azargrammar.com <u>so</u> you can improve your ability in writing sentences.
>
> (Source: Student #21; Receive : Fri Nov 09, 2012 4:47)

From this example, the run-on sentence occured because students #21 did not put either a comma before coordinative conjunction or a semicolon before conjunctive adverb and a comma after. The sentence above can be corrected:

> *I'm not sure I can say "yes" for this question because I think games only can be used as a warming up or tools to test our understanding in a lesson<u>, but</u> they are not appropriate for elaborating a lesson. And one more thing, ehmmm, there lots of web sites that provide us with various learning ways to improve our English<u>; for example,</u> you can learn grammar from <u>www.azargrammar.com,</u> so you can improve your ability in writing sentences.*

For example, I can learn anything I want and get a lot of information about education through internet that can improve my skill , I can join the website which provides a wealth of learning materials especially English language materials such as www.coursera.org and www.babble.com.
(Source: Student #02; Receive : Tue Dec 11, 2012 8:44)

In this example, run-on sentence is caused by joining independent clause (IC) only by a comma and did not put a comma before coordinative conjunction. Therefore, to make it correct, can be done by using coordinator or use a semicolon.

For example, I can learn anything I want, and get a lot of information about education through internet. Since I can join the website which provides a wealth of learning materials especially English language materials such as www.coursera.org and www.babble.com;therefore, it can improve my skill.

For example, I can learn anything I want and get a lot of information about education through internet that can improve my skill; I can join the website which provides a wealth of learning materials especially English language materials such as www.coursera.org and www.babble.com

*Note:

___   : indicated in which run-on occured

3. Stringy Sentence

Stringy sentences occured in students' language production in Ontell because students tended to string many ideas together with *and*. Stringy sentences ramble on and on just like the way students write or speak going on and on without an end.

E-learning (internet) encourage me to get a lot of information about the lesson or not, and I was able to complete the task easily by searching for information on the Internet, and it makes me lazy so I always rely on the internet.
(From student #03; Receive : Thu Nov 08, 2012 10:03)

In addition to combining some sentences, students can make their writing more effective by revising the stringy sentences to make them shorter and clearer. There are three ways in revising the stringy sentences as has been mentioned in Chapter 2:
a. Break down a long, stringy sentence into smaller sentences by removing conjunctions and
replacing them with periods.
E-learning (internet) encourages me to get a lot of information about the

lesson or not, and I was able to complete the task easily by searching for information on the Internet. It makes me lazy so I always rely on the internet.

b. Replace conjunctions with semi-colons. A semi-colon functions similarly to a period, except that it joins sentences instead of separating them.
E-learning (internet) encourages me to get a lot of information about the lesson or not, and I was able to complete the task easily by searching for information on the Internet; it makes me lazy so I always rely on the internet.

c. Use a subordinating conjunction (a conjunction that begins a dependent clause)
E-learning (internet) encourages me to get a lot of information about the lesson or not, and I was able to complete the task easily by searching for information on the Internet; therefore, it makes me lazy so I always rely on the internet.

4. *Sentence Fragment*

Sentence fragment had only about 13,12% which indicated that most of students' in Ontell posted complete ideas in their language production. The writer assumes that students' had a good proficieny in producing sentences that expresses complete thoughts.

> However, the information that I get still doubtful. <u>Sometimes,</u>
> <u>if I visit a blog</u>. The blog just copy the information from a
> website, and combine it with other websites without write
> original sources.
> (From student #09; Receive : Fri Nov 09, 2012 12:58)

In this example, students #09 put a period directly after dependent clause (DC)/adverbial clause and claimed it as sentence. However, the dependent clause did not express a complete thought. To revise this sentence, it can be done either remove the connecting word or add another clause, often by changing punctuation in order to construct a complete complex sentence.

> *However, the information that I get still doubtful. Sometimes, if I visit a blog, it just copy the information from a website, and combine it with other websites without write original sources.*

A sentence can also be a fragment if it does not contain a subject and/or a verb (incomplete sentences). It can be revised by rewriting each sentence fragment, adding a subject or a predicate or both to form a complete sentence.

> For example, sometimes i just copy paste to complete my
> task.<u> tend</u> to be lazy to find the source from the book.
> (From student #13; Receive : Thu Nov 08, 2012 6:48)

> *For example, sometimes I just copy paste to complete my task. I tend to be lazy to find the source from the book.*

> But we need to realize that this is E-learning <u>we not</u> only
> searching for the answer of what we need but we learn about

everything that we need to learn.
(From student #24; Receive : Fri Nov 09, 2012 10:07)

But we need to realize that this is E-learning we do not only searching for the answer of what we need but we learn about everything that we need to learn.

Table 2   **Numerical Summary of Sentence Structure Errors made by Students in Their Language Production**

Category	SVA	ROS	STS	SF	MM	TOTAL
Total (number)	36	**118**	9	29	3	195
Total (%)	18,46%	**60,51%**	4,61%	14,87%	1,54%	

CONCLUSION

This study was done to find out the type of sentence structure mostly used by the students and also the sentence structure errors which commolny found in students' language production in online discussion forum, named ONTell, which was provided as the learning platform for students of English Education Study Program of FKIP Untan to support their language learning. To sum up, the data showed that type of sentence structures which mostly used by the students in their language production were complex and simple sentence. Based on the data analyzed, students' produced simple sentences much more when they give short comments and opinions to their peers. On the other hand, complex sentence successfully produced more in case of exchanging information, as well as sharing experience to others. However, none of their language production were free from errors, and it showed that in fact, students still had problem in acquiring the target language. The writer assumes that the students' incompetence to understand the rules of foreign language, in this regard, English let them down to produce the accurate sentences. Students made the errors because of both the interlingual interference and intralingual overgeneralization of students' L1. It is inevitable that their L1 may distract them to write sentences in English accurately since they still rely on Indonesian point of view in transfering their ideas. In other word, the students are distracted by interlingual overgeneralization.From all the example of each category, it is cleary seen the fact that variety of errors occured within students' language production. The explanation above is the starting point to find out sentence errors which commonly found in students' language production in Ontell.

Consequently, the use of the discussion forum may become a great platform or environment for students' to enhance their language learning, especially in practicing the language itself. This is proved by the total number of sentences collected by the writer in her analysis, which are 648 sentences.

Considering the result of analysis done by the writer finding out the types of sentence structure used by the students' in Ontell, it led to the conclusion that practicing the language out of the subject hours is much better in order to develop proficiency and competence toward the target language.

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