



Article History:

Submitted:

20-09-2020

Accepted:

21-09-2020

Published:

21-09-2020

EXPLORING EFL LEARNERS' GRAMMATICAL ERROR IN PARAGRAPH WRITING

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URL: <https://doi.org/10.32682/jeell.v7i1.1566>

DOI: doi.org/10.32682/jeell.v7i1.1566

Abstract

Writing is the most difficult skill in English, so most English as a foreign language (EFL) learners tend to make errors in writing. In assisting the learners to successfully acquire writing skill, the analysis of errors and the understanding of their sources are necessary. This study attempts to explore the types of grammatical errors occurred in the paragraph writing of EFL learners based on the linguistics taxonomy. It also investigates the most grammatical error that presents in their writing. Twenty-eight of paragraph writing composed by EFL learners were collected and analysed. Result showed that there were six types of grammatical error found in EFL learners' worksheet of paragraph writing and indefinite article incorrect an used for a was found to be the dominant of errors.

Keyword: *EFL Learners', Grammatical Error, Paragraph Writing*

Abstrak

Menulis merupakan ketrampilan yang paling sulit dalam Bahasa Inggris, sehingga sebagian besar pebelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa asing cenderung membuat kesalahan dalam Bahasa Inggris. Dalam membantu peserta didik agar berhasil memperoleh keterampilan menulis, diperlukan analisis kesalahan dan pemahaman mereka. Penelitian ini mencoba untuk mengeksplorasi jenis-jenis kesalahan tata bahasa yang terjadi pada penulisan paragraf oleh peserta didik EFL berdasarkan taksonomi linguistik. Penelitian ini juga untuk mengetahui kesalahan tata bahasa yang paling banyak dilakukan oleh pebelajar



dalam tulisan mereka. Dua puluh delapan paragraf yang ditulis oleh pebelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing dikumpulkan dan dianalisis. Hasil dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat enam jenis kesalahan tata bahasa yang ditemukan pada lembar kerja pebelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing dan indefinit artikel an digunakan untuk a merupakan kesalahan yang dominan.

Kata kunci: Pebelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing, Kesalahan Tata Bahasa, Menulis Paragraf.

Introduction

Grammatical accuracy is an important aspect of language learning since it can create confidence in learners for making communication through the foreign or second language (Nickel, 2002). The importance of grammar learning and improvement in promoting the language learning has already been investigated in various studies. Making grammatical mistakes is more common for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners due to different sentence structure in Indonesian and English. Writing has been claimed to be the most challenging task for EFL learners by scholars (Banaruee, 2016; Ricards & Renandya, 2002). Skills involved in writing are highly complex (Ricards & Renandya, 2002). This complexity becomes still more noticeable when the learners' proficiency is not high (Banaruee, 2016). An important point in writing concern errors and whether they should be corrected or tolerated.

Mastering English writing skill is a very difficult task for the learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Most EFL learners tend to committed errors in writing regardless of a long period of English study (Wee at all, 2009). In fact, errors are considered as the important mark of the language development in language learning. Corder (1967) the errors made by the EFL learners are significant because they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language. James (1998) agreed with this idea by addressing that "the learners' errors are a register of their current perspective on the target language"

This study is intended to investigated the types of grammatical error made by EFL learners as the result of learners' in paragraph writing class. Furthermore, this study aims to explore the dominan error of EFL learners' in

paragraph writing. Scholars such as Norris and Ortega (2006) believe that the best way to learn English is to focus on the grammar and lexis. Fluency in grammar can lead the language learners to high levels of linguistic accuracy and performance. Research in the past decades indicated that lack of interest toward grammar is the result of its dull lessons presentations which make learners uninterested in learning (Wang, 2010).

Dealing with grammatical errors in L2 writing, some scholars (Bruton, 2009; Ferris, 2004; Truscott, 1999) have argued about the role of corrective feedback given by the instructors. Truscott (1999) believes that in order to improve the learners’s error regarding the L2 grammar, teachers’s feedback is not much positively influential, and it can even be negative in that process. On the otherhand some scholars’ studies focusing on more specific types of errors in L2 writing have revealed much richer findings (Crompton, 2005; Hsin, 2003; Huang, 2001; Liu & Yang, 2006; Su, 2002). For instance, Su (2002) analyzed errors of three high frequency verbs (*buy*, *wait* and *learn*) in the interlanguage of Chinese EFL learners based on “the Chinese Learners’ English Corpus”. The study classified the errors into six categories: omission, addition, misinformation, mis-ordering, false friend and ambiguity. Explaining these errors from an inter-lingual and intra-lingual view, the researcher suggested that Chinese EFL learners should learn to accept the target language details unconditionally and learn to use an English-English dictionary. Therefore, it is suggested that the learners’ awareness about the typical and commonly occurred errors in the students’ writing prior to the writing session in order to avoid such mistakes to be made again. Another popular practice for improving the learners’ awareness of the grammatical errors is self-editing in which the learners try to identify and correct their own grammatical errors.

Politzer & Ramirez (1973) classify of grammatical error in two aspects which is morphology and syntax. Morphological aspect involves a failure to comply with the norm in supplying any part of word classes and morphological error is an error when forming or applying the morphological aspect of grammar. Morphological error is covering of:

a. Indefinite article incorrect

An article is a word used to modify a noun, such as object, place, idea, or person. This error is consisting of:

1) a used for an before vowels

Examples:

a) a unusual problem (Incorrect)

b) an unusual problem (Correct)

The incorrect example above can be considered as a grammatical error because the article should be used above is an instead of a. Article an is used before singular or countable nouns which begin with vowel sounds and this error can be called as an indefinite article incorrect.

2) an used for a

Examples:

a) I am an teacher (Incorrect)

b) I am a teacher (Correct)

The incorrect example above can be considered as a grammatical error because the article should be used above is a instead of an. Article a is used before singular or countable nouns which begin with consonant sounds and this error can be called as an indefinite article incorrect.

b. Possessive case incorrect

1) omission of 's

Examples:

a) This is Mary book. (Incorrect)

b) This is *Mary's* book. (Correct)

Omission means that the absence of some grammatical item should appear in the sentence. From the example above it can be concluded that the error of possessive case incorrect is happening because the absence of some grammatical item, in this case, the missing of an apostrophe ('s). The Possessive case is used to show that something belongs to someone or to express a relationship between two or more people.

c. Third person singular incorrect

The term of third person refers to someone else and third person singular is including of he, she, it, him, her, his, hers, and its. In the English grammar, the third person singular verb is ending with the suffix -s or es which added to the base form of a verb.

1) Failure to attach -s

Examples:

a) She makes us pay the tax and give us nothing as exchange. (Incorrect)

b) She makes us pay the tax and gives us nothing as exchange. (Correct)

The first example above can be called as third person singular incorrect because the failure to attach suffix s to the sentence. The word give in the example above refers to the of third person which refers to she.

2) Wrong attachment of –s

Examples:

a) He waits and *watchs*. (Incorrect)

b) He waits and *watches*. (Correct)

The above example can be called as the wrong attachment of –s because verb ending in ch form the third-person singular by adding es instead of s. The word watchs in the sentence refers to the third person singular of he.

d. Comparative adjective/adverb incorrect

This type of error is consisting of the error in the use of more + er. *More* is the comparative form of *many* and *much* and it can be used in various ways such as in adverb, pronoun or after number or expressions of quantity. In the other hand, *more* cannot be use together with suffix an (-er) or (-est). The example below is including in the type of grammatical error of comparative adjective/adverb incorrect because the sentence should be *she got up higher*.

Example: She got up *more* higher

Research Methods

To conduct this study, the researchers use content analysis approach. The EFL learners' subjects was recruited from second year's students of English Department STKIP PGRI Jombang, it is referring to college students in the second semester in the total of 28 students whose major is Javaness Language. The study took place in the EFL learners' regular paragraph writing class and this research was started on May up to July 2020. EFL learners' worksheet on paragraph writing as the source of data and focused on descriptive writing. To answer the research questions, the researchers collected all the worksheet produced by the EFL learners'. Research instrument used in this study consist of the written descriptive text from the learners. The nature of topic given was descriptive which allowed the learners to write freely. In data collection procedures, the learners were asked to construct writing paragraph approximately 300 up to 500 words within a period of one hour. The data from written works were gathered and analysed. Error detection was the first stage of the analysis (James, 1998). The errors in written descriptive text were detected

by the researchers. Each individual worked independently to determine types of errors, and categorised the errors into classifications.

Result

The types of grammatical error of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Paragraph Writing.

1. Indefinite article incorrect

a. a used for an before vowels

- 1). **Louvre has over a million pieces of art, but at the moment, only 35,000 are on display, spread over a area of 60,000 square meters.**

The used of article **a** before the word **area** in the sentence above is a grammatical error because the word **area** in this sentence is vowel sound and the article used before singular or countable nouns which begin with vowel sound should use **an** instead of **a**. The correct sentence should be "Louvre has over a million pieces of art, but at the moment, only 35,000 are on display, spread over **an** area of 60,000 square meters."

- 2). **It the day we went home and that was a awesome holiday and we really enjoy it.**

The used of article **a** before word **awesome** in this sentence is a grammatical error which happen because the article which should be used before singular, countable nouns which begin with vowel sounds is article **an**. The correct sentence should be "It the day we went home and that was **an** awesome holiday and we really enjoy it."

- 3). **She has a idol of Neymar Jr and James Rodriguez because they are best of the football players.**

The used of article **a** before word **idol** in this sentence is a grammatical error which happen because the article which should be used before singular, countable nouns which begin with vowel sounds is article **an**. The correct sentence should be "She has **an** idol of Neymar Jr and James Rodriguez because they are best of the football players."

b. an used for a

- 1). **This flower also has a large circular mouth, and if we look in, it will look like an plate with many thorns at the bottom.**

The used of article **an** in this sentence is a grammatical error because article **an** is used before singular or countable

nouns which begin with vowel sounds. In this sentence the word **plate** is not begin with a vowel sounds so the correct article which should be used is **a**. The correct sentence should be “This flower also has a large circular mouth, and if we look in, it will look like a plate with many thorns at the bottom.”

- 2). **On August 18, 1945, Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (PPKI) made an decision, ratified and established Undang-Undang Dasar (UUD) as the basis of the Republic of Indonesia, hereinafter known as UUD 45.**

In this sentence the word **decision** is not begin with a vowel sounds and article **an** should be used before singular or countable nouns which begin with vowel sounds. The correct article which should be used is **a**. The correct sentence should be “On August 18, 1945, Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (PPKI) made a decision, ratified and established Undang-Undang Dasar (UUD) as the basis of the Republic of Indonesia, hereinafter known as UUD 45.”

- 3). **It is the first swimming pool in Jombang which is equipped with an slide like as waterpark in the big city.**

The use of article **an** in this sentence is a grammatical error which happen because the article **an** is only used before singular or countable nouns which begin with vowel sounds. The word **slide** in this sentence is begin with consonant sounds **s** so the use of article should be **a** instead **an**. The correct sentence should be “It is the first swimming pool in Jombang which is equipped with a slide like as waterpark in the big city.”

2. Omission of ‘S

- a. **That place is one of the city biggest tourist attractions.**

The word **city** is showing a possession against **that place** which is the biggest tourist attractions in the city. However, in this sentence, the word **city** is missing grammatical item ‘s and the omission of ‘s also changes the meaning of the sentence. The meaning of this sentence refers to “**That place is the biggest tourist attractions in the city**” and because the omission of ‘s in the word **city** the meaning of this sentence changes and refers to “**That place is one of the tourist attractions in the biggest city**”. The correct

sentence should be “That place is one of the *city’s* biggest tourist attractions.”

b. The most famous work that displays in the Louvre is *Leonardo da Vinci*, Mona Lisa, who enchants hordes of visitors.

The sentence above is also possessive case incorrect because the omission of ‘s. In this sentence, *Leonardo da Vinci* is the possessors of ***the most famous work that displays in the Louvre*** but in this sentence there are missing an apostrophe (’s) to shows ownership which should be added to *Leonardo da Vinci’s*. The correct sentence should be “The most famous work that displays in the Louvre is *Leonardo da Vinci’s*, Mona Lisa, who enchants hordes of visitors.”

c. However, before having a vocation on the beach we stayed first at *Nisa* house in Gudo, Jombang.

This sentence is a possessive case which shows ownership however there is omission of ‘s in this sentence which make this sentence to become an error. The word *Nisa* is the possessor of ***house in Gudo, Jombang*** and to show the ownership we have to add an apostrophe ‘s to the word *Nisa* and then turn it into *Nisa’s*. The correct sentence should be “However, before having a vocation on the beach we stayed first at *Nisa’s* house in Gudo, Jombang.”

3. Third person singular

a. Failure to attach – S

1). He *read* the text of the proclamation located at a grant house.

The word ***read*** in this sentence is refers to the third-person point of ***he***. The failure to attach suffix **s** into the word ***read*** in this sentence cause a grammatical error because the third-person singular verb ending with the suffix **s** or **es** which added to the base form of a verb. The correct sentence should be “He ***reads*** the text of the proclamation located at a grant house.”

2). It *walk* without making sound.

The term of ***it*** in this sentence is referring to the third person point of view and the rule of third person singular is we have to use suffix **s** or **es** that's conventionally added to the base form of a verb. ***Walk*** in this sentence should have suffix **s** which refers to ***it***. The correct sentence should be “It ***walks*** without making sound.”

3). She *look* after all of her family members, especially me.

The word ***look*** in this sentence is refers to the third-person point of view ***she***. The failure to attach suffix **s** into the word ***look*** in

this sentence cause a grammatical error in the used of third-person singular. The correct sentence should be “She *looks* after all of her family members, especially me.”

b. Wrong attachment of – S

- 1). **Even though my father was a mathematics teacher, I still did not like mathematics no matter how hard he *trys* to teach me.**

In this sentence, the word *trys* is ending with consonant *y* which cannot be added with suffix *s* and It's wrong to attach suffix *s* into this sentence. To form the third-person singular which ending with consonant *y* we have to change the *y* to *i* and adding suffix *-es*. We have to used *tries* instead of *trys* to avoid the grammatical error. The correct sentence should be “Even though my father was a mathematics teacher, I still did not like mathematics no matter how hard he *tries* to teach me.”

- 2). **She *watches* the way they play football and try to mimic it to improve her skills.**

The wrong attachment of *s* in the word *watch* is a grammatical error. In English grammar, the third-person singular verb ending in *ch* form the third-person singular by adding *-es* to base form of verb and we have to said *watches* instead of *watch* when performing a third person singular. The correct sentence should be “She *watches* the way they play football and try to mimic it to improve her skills.”

- 3). **Second, he hold the fastest backhand smash record in the world, it is 285 km / hour.**

The failure to attach suffix *s* into the word *hold* in this sentence is a grammatical error. The word *hold* in this sentence is refers to the third-person point of view *he* and most verbs in English form the third-person singular by adding *s* to the base form of verb which change *hold* into *holds*. The correct sentence should be “Second, he *holds* the fastest backhand smash record in the world, it is 285 km / hour.”

4. Comparative Adj / Adv

- a. **Especially the manufacturing material will also make the price of wallets got up *more higher*.**

This sentence is a grammatical error because the word *higher* already has suffix *er* to show a comparative of *wallets* which depending with the manufacturing material. *More* and suffix *er* cannot

be used together because more is a comparative form and it can be used in various ways such as in adverb, pronoun or after number or expressions of quantity. In the other hand, more cannot be use together with suffix an -er or -est.

The correct sentence should be “Especially the manufacturing material will also make the price of wallets got up *higher*.”

b. His body is fat but he can run *more faster* than other cat can do.

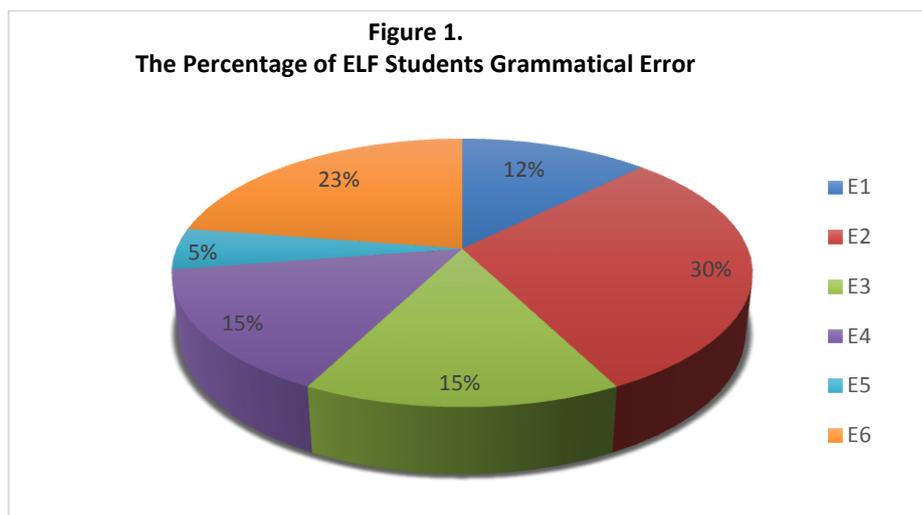
The use of **More** and suffix **er** in the word **faster** is a grammatical error because **more** and suffix **er** cannot be used together. The word **more** in this sentence is supposed to be comparative form which tell about his cat which can run faster than other cat can do. The correct sentence should be “His body is fat but he can run *faster* than other cat can do.”

c. This waterpark is *more larger* than the other waterpark around Jombang.

When comparing two things we will use adjectives like smaller, bigger, taller, more interesting, and less expensive this called as a comparative adjective. The word **larger** shouldn't be put together with comparative **more** because to form comparative adjective, we do not use **more** together with an **-er** ending and the correct sentence which show comparative adjective is “This waterpark is **larger** than the other waterpark around Jombang”.

Figure out the grammatical error often made by EFL students

The second goals are to figure out the grammatical error often made by EFL students. By doing analysis the researchers found 40 sentences consisting of different types of grammatical error and below is the chart that displays the percentage of student's grammatical errors. From the percentages of error, it can be seen that indefinite article incorrect an used for a is the most grammatical error that often made by students which have 30% of the total from all errors.



From this chart, it can be seen that EFL students often make a grammatical error on the second types of error which is the indefinite article incorrect an used for a. This error happens because students used article an before singular, countable nouns which begin with consonant sounds which caused a grammatical errors. The correct way to use article a is before singular, countable nouns which begin with vowel sounds.

Table 1. Grammatical Errors in Paragrapp Writing

Types of Grammatical Error	Number of percentage Grammatical errors	Examples
1. Indefinite article incorrect		
a) <u>a</u> used for <u>an</u> before vowels	12 %	a area, a awesome, a idol, a online game
b) <u>an</u> used for <u>a</u>	30%	An plate, an decision, an SIM, an slide, an statue, an gas, an condition, an negative impact, an cheerful, an popular
2. Omission of ‘S	15%	Nisa house, Bung Tomo speech, my mother hair
3. Third Person Singular		
a) Failure to attach -S	15%	He read, it walk, he work, he hold, she look
b) Wrong attachment of -S	5%	He trys, she watches
4. Comparative Adj / Adv	23%	More higher, more faster, more larger, more easier, more smaller, more nicer

Conclusion

Most of EFL learners have learned English since they were in primary school; however, their English proficiency, especially writing is still unsatisfied. Error analysis has been widely used as a mean to gain understanding on how writing skill is learnt. This study was an effort to systematically investigate the types of grammatical error made by EFL learners in Paragraph Writing. It also explored the linguistic taxonomy in which the learners made the most errors. The result of this study confirmed that EFL learners had grammatical difficulties in their paragraph writing, it can be reveal that there are six types of grammatical error found in EFL learners' worksheet of paragraph writing. This types of grammatical errors covering of; indefinite article incorrect *a* used for *an* before vowels, indefinite article incorrect *an* used for *a*, possessive case incorrect omission of 's, third person singular incorrect failure to attach *s*, third person singular incorrect wrong attachment of *s* and comparative adjective/adverb incorrect use of *more + er*. Indefinite article incorrect *an* used for *a* is the most grammatical error often made by EFL learners, in which it has 30% errors from all.

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