Grammatical Errors in Students' Paragraph

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Abstract. This research is part of an effort to map grammatical errors in students' writings of English Education Study Program in the academic year 2020/2021. This research was conducted through a mixed method design because the data were analyzed using quantitative percentage and error descriptions. The total subjects of this study were 53 students taking paragraph writing courses. The object of research was grammatical errors in the student paragraphs. The data were collected through the collection of student paragraphs obtained from the end of semester tests. The results showed that from a total of 697 sentences in paragraphs, there were 309 grammatical errors found in 187 sentences. Run-on errors were found in 90 (29.12%) sentences; Fragment errors were found in 62 sentences (20.06%); S-V agreement errors were found in 50 (16.18%) sentences; word form errors were found in 40 (12.94%) sentences; number agreement errors were found in 33 (10.68%) sentences; subordinate conjunction errors were found in 12 (3.88%) sentence; parallelism errors were found in 11 (3.56%) sentences; diction errors were found in 10 (3.24%) sentences; and the passive error was found 1 (0.32%) sentence. The results of this study are expected to provide an important insights of the students' learning growth by mapping their errors. Furthermore, based on this understanding, better interventions that embrace insightful learning strategies can well be designed.

Keywords: Grammatical errors · Paragraphs · Sentences

1 Introduction

No one can deny that writing is a reliable communication tool, especially in academic settings in the context of developing, disseminating, and publishing knowledge. From the beginning of the learning process at a formal school in Indonesia, the first thing that is introduced and taught is the acquisition of the alphabet and how to write it. Furthermore, these skills are explored and developed in a sustainable manner at various levels of education. This shows that writing skills are something that gets enough formal attention.

Writing skills in good and correct English are not only needed in the academic world, but also in the wider community. Especially in today's information age, there are many platforms, media, or programs that require writing skills, both as a means of communication and as a means of self-expression. Examples are e-mail, facebook, instagram, whatsapp, and so on. In this regard, Indonesia was ranked fifth in Asia as

internet users with users reaching 25 million in 2009 [1]. That number of internet users increased sharply in 2020 to become 175.4 million in Indonesia [2]. From that number of users, the use of social media gets the largest portion.

The development of the internet and social media has also become a trend that revolutionizes learning to write in English. Recently, various efforts have emerged to teach writing skills through social media. In this sense, many studies have been conducted with positive results from the use of social media for learning to write English [3]. In addition, it is also revealed that the integration of ICT and social media in learning English has become increasingly popular and [3] has succeeded in revealing positive results in this regard [4]. In addition, the students also tend to be satisfied with the use of ICT and social media in improving their writing skills.

Contrary to the importance of writing skills and the development of writing technology, the learning of writing still does not receive serious attention [5]. Writing skills are still considered as second-class skills, after speaking skills. In fact, writing skills tend to be hated by students and are less used to encourage critical-analytic thinking. In a general writing class, the teacher only gives time to students to write and collect the results of the writing to be assessed. In line with this phenomenon, Many researchers agree that contrary to the hard efforts of English learners to become fluent in using English, many fail and one of the failures is in mastering writing skills [6–9].

If we look more closely, the essence of writing skills is a way of conveying or presenting ideas or opinions so that they can be understood. This means that once an idea is drawn, the next step is how to convey or express the idea. There are two big things that need to be considered, namely the organization of ideas and the grammar of the language.

From these two things—organization of ideas and grammar of language—language grammar is an element that needs to be studied seriously because for learners of English as a second language, grammatical errors can occur easily without they even realized them. In this case, mastery of grammar is the foundation for language skills and an essential part of language learning [10, 11].

A research conducted by [12] that examined the grammatical errors made by students in writing essays observed, from the highest to the lowest percentage, as follows: fragments: 280 (17.5%), runs on: 235 (14.7%)), verb forms and verb tense: 225 (14.1%), passive: 220 (13.8%), linking verb deletion: 160 (10%), plural disagreement: 120 (7.5%), unclear reference: 115 (7.2%), proposition misuse 89: (5.6%), subject-verb disagreement: 80 (5%), and parallelism: 74 (4.6%) [12]. They also found that parallelism and passiveness, although the percentages are low, need to be given special focus because almost every use of them was characterized with errors [12].

Another research which was conducted [6] that investigated grammatical errors in English writing of Kupang State Polytechnic students in East Nusa Tenggara found the following errors: 65% in the use of verbs, 12.8% in the use of prepositions, 9.8% in the use of pronouns, 5.1% on plural usage, 4.3% on article usage, 1.7% on the use of conjunctions, and 1.3% on the use of subject-verb agreement [6]. The results of the study also recommended that the lecturers at the polytechnic focus on learning the use of verbs in writing class.

In relation with the above explanation, this research examined grammatical errors in the paragraphs of English Education Study Program students in 2021 who joined paragraph writing courses. This research is part of an effort to map students' grammatical errors in writing completely, especially in writing paragraphs, essays and thesis. In this case, a study on students' grammatical errors in essays writing has been carried out on 2020; Meanwhile, in 2021 a similar study was conducted on the students' paragraphs. Later, the students' grammatical errors in their Bachelor thesis will also be examined.

This study was conducted to obtain a complete description and explanation regarding the types of students' grammatical errors in writing. Furthermore, this mapping would be used to understand the development of students' grammatical knowledge and to identify gaps in that knowledge. In overall, they would be useful as inputs in developing and selecting appropriate materials and methods for effective writing learning. Thus, the problem in this research was formulated as "What are the grammatical errors made by the English Education study program students in their paragraphs?" Furthermore, the purpose of the research was to describe the grammatical errors made by the English Education study program students in their paragraphs.

2   Methods

This research applied a mixed method design because the data were discussed and presented in two forms, that is, quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data presentation was in the form of frequency and percentage of errors, while the qualitative data presentation was in the form of the results of analysis on the type of sentence errors and their revisions.

The subjects of this study were 53 English students who joined Paragraph Writing courses in 2021. They were in the first year when joining the course. The objects of the study were grammatical errors found in the students' paragraphs.

The data were collected through test and interview methods. The collected students' paragraphs were the results of the End of Semester test. Besides, the interview method was carried out on several students whose sentence formulations in the paragraphs were vague or ambiguous or needed to be confirmed and understood what they meant so as not to cause misunderstandings. The interview was also conducted in order to understand whether the students awared the errors they made.

There were two instruments used to collect data, namely the end-semester test and interview guide. The end-semester test contains some instructions for the students to write any type of paragraphs according to the choice of topics provided. Besides, the interview guide were also used to collect data. The interview guide consists of a number of questions that were used to explore what the students mean through their built sentences and whether the students were aware of the errors made.

To perform data analysis, the steps used included identifying language errors, determining the elements and locations of these errors, explaining the errors, and making their classifications and calculating their frequency and percentage based on the classification.

3   Results and Discussion

This study examined 53 students' paragraphs from their grammatical errors. The number of sentences in each paragraph is between 6–17 sentences, and the total sentences made by students are 697 sentences.

From a total of 697 sentences in the paragraph, there are 309 grammatical errors in 187 sentences. In this case, in 1 sentence can have more than 1 grammatical error. The run on error is found in 90 (29.12%) sentences; Fragment errors are found in 62 (20.06%) sentences; the S-V agreement error is found in 50 (16.18%) sentences; word form errors are found in 40 (12.94%) sentences; the number agreement error is found in 33 (10.68%) sentences; the subordinate conjunction error is at 12 (3.88%); parallelism errors are found in 11 (3.56%) sentences; diction errors are found in 10 (3.24%) sentences; and the passive error is in 1 (0.32%) sentence. For more details, see Table 1.

Table 1 shows that the most frequent errors were run-on sentences, and then followed by fragment errors, S-V agreement errors, word form errors, number agreement errors, subordinate conjunction errors, parallelism errors, diction errors, and passive errors sequentially. For more details, see Fig. 1.

Figure 1 shows that the highest mistake was made on run-on sentences and the lowest one was passive construction. In between those two errors were errors in terms of Fragment, S-V agreement, Word Form, Number Agreement, Subordinate Conjunction, Parallelism, Diction, and Passive Construction.

The number of the error types found in this research are quite similar with the number of error types found on the previous research conducted by [12] on students' essays. The two highest errors are also similar, such as run-on sentences and fragments. Quite similarly in the number of types, a research conducted by [6] discovered 8 types of errors that were related with the verb group, the use of prepositions, the use of pronouns, the use of pronouns, errors in pluralization, the use of articles, the use of conjunctions, and the use of subject-verb agreement [6]. However, these results were more varied

Table 1. The Frequency and Percentage of Grammatical Errors in Student Paragraphs

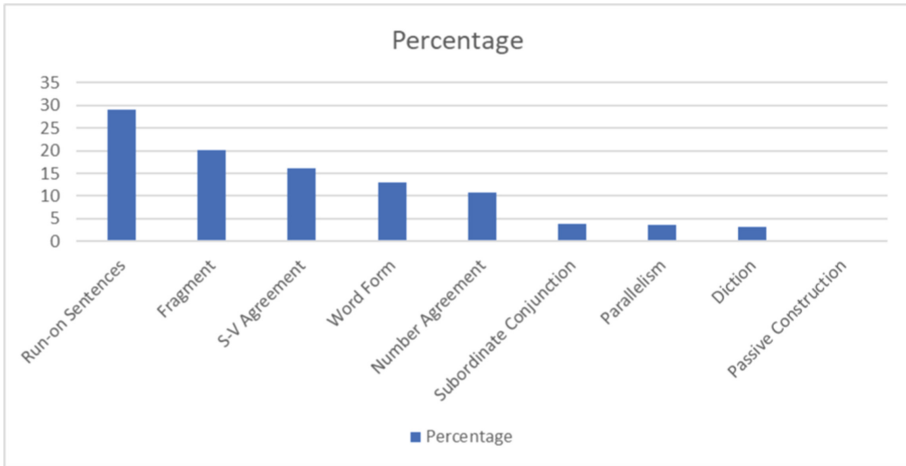| No	Error Types	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Run-on Sentences	90	29.12
2.	Fragment	62	20.06
3.	S-V Agreement	50	16.18
4.	Word Form	40	12.94
5.	Number Agreement	33	10.68
6.	Subordinate Conjunction	12	3.88
7.	Parallelism	11	3.56
8.	Diction	10	3.24
9.	Passive Construction	1	0.32
Total		309	100

Fig. 1. The Frequency and Percentage of Grammatical Errors in Student Paragraphs

compared with the results of study conducted by [13], et al. (2014) who found 5 types of errors in their study, such as errors in the use of tenses, in the use of prepositions, in the use of articles, in the use of active and passive forms and morphological errors [13].

To be able to understand the nature of the errors and in what way they were errors and the analysis clearly, please consider the followings.

A. Run on error.

Run on errors occur because two or more main sentences are juxtaposed or combined, without the appropriate punctuation, as in the following example 1a1-1b1 sentences. Sentences 1a2-1b2 are suggested revised sentences which can be done only by separating the main clauses with a period.

Wrong Sentences:

1a1.   My family really likes sports such as cycling and playing badminton, my parents always remind their children to always maintain their immune system.
1b1.   My family consists of four people, including my father named Ketut Wirawan, he is works in a villa as an employee staff and he has worked in the villa for 25 years.

Revised Sentences:

1a2.   My family really likes sports such as cycling and playing badminton. My parents always remind their children to always maintain their immune system.
1b2.   My family consists of four people, including my father named Ketut Wirawan. He works in a villa as an employee staff and he has worked in the villa for 25 years.

B. Fragment Error

Fragment errors occur because a sentence does not have a complete structure or meaning. The incompleteness is because a sentence does not have a subject or predicate element. Sentences 2a1-2b1 indicate a fragment error. Sentences 2a2-2b2 are the revised sentences which can be done by removing the conjunction *and*.

Wrong Sentences:

2a1.   And friends also prepare the vehicle that we will use.
2b1.   And to me she is the best mother of all time.

Revised Sentences

2a2.   Some friends also prepare the vehicle that we will use.
2b2.   To me she is the best mother of all time.

C. Subject-Verb agreement error

The subject-verb agreement error occurs because of a mismatch between the subject and the accompanying verb in terms of number. In this case, if there is one subject or a noun that cannot be counted, the root verb that follows it should end in -s, but if the number of subjects is more than one, then the verb that follows is the root verb without the -s ending. Sentences 3a1-3b1 shows a subject-verb agreement error. Sentences 3a2-3b2 show the revised sentences which can be done by omitting or adding -s on the verb depending on the number of the subject.

Wrong Sentences:

3a1.   **There has been** a lot of news in social media about certain government using this unfortunate situation to make profit for themselves.
3b1.   **She works** as housewife.

Revised Sentences:

3a2.   There have been a lot of news in social media about certain government using this unfortunate situation to make profit for themselves.
3b2.   She works as a housewife.

D. Word form error

Word form errors are related to the use of the wrong word forms in the sentences. In the student paragraphs, the most common form of word form errors are the use of inappropriate verb forms. In a sentence, the required verb is, for example, a basic verb, but the -ing verb is used, so that the sentence contains word (verb) forms errors. Sentences 4a1-4b1 indicate a word form error. Sentences 4a2-4b2 indicate the revised sentences.

Wrong Sentences:

4a1. The trust between the public and the government **causing** many **to ignore** health protocol.
4b1. Therefore, the mother's responsibilities are to spend most of her time with the children especially about education such like **talks** regularly and **helps** their homework.

Revised Sentences:

4a2. The trust between the public and the government causes many ignoring health protocol.
4b2. Therefore, the mother's responsibilities are to spend most of her time with the children especially about education such like talking regularly and helping their homework.

E. Number agreement error
The number agreement error is indicated by the difference between the quantifier and the noun that follows it. If the quantifier is more than one, then the noun that follows it should be plural. However, if the quantifier is one, then the noun that follows is of course singular. Sentences 5a1-5b1 contain a number agreement error, while sentences 5a2-5b2 indicate the revised sentences.

Wrong Sentences:

5a1. In my opinion, in view of current situation, the pandemic would last long unless the public and government trust each other and put **more effort** to prevent it to spread widely.
5b1. She has a hobby like cooking and reading newspaper.

Revised Sentences:

5a1. In my opinion, in view of the current situation, the pandemic would last long unless the public and government trust each other and put more efforts to prevent it to spread widely.
5b1. She has some hobbies like cooking and reading newspaper.

F. Subordinate conjunction error
Subordinating conjunction errors occur because of the placement or selection of a subordinate conjunction that does not match the noun in the main sentence being referred to. Sentences 6a1-6b1 show the wrong placement or selection of subordinate conjunctions, while sentences 6a2-6b2 show the revised sentences.

Wrong Sentences:

6a1. We may often see on social media many people are against this virus, **where** they call it a conspiracy and other ridiculous things, not even a few of them.

6b1. Against medicine and vaccinations that have been given by the government, this creates confusion in society, **where** some people are afraid of the virus and some people tell people to Ignoring this and starting to violate health protocols.

Revised Sentences:

6a2. We may often see on social media many people are against this virus that they call it a conspiracy and other ridiculous things.

6b2. Against medicine and vaccinations that have been given by the government, this creates confusion in society in which some people are afraid of the virus and some people tell people to ignore this and starting to violate health protocols.

G. Parallelism error

Parallelism errors occur due to the installation of serial components in sentences that are not balanced. If the series are Noun words, they should all be put in Noun form words; if Ver words, all should be put in the same Verb form words, and so on. If the series are Noun phrase, they should all be put in Noun phrase; If verb phrase, all should be put in verb phrases, and so on. Sentences 7a1-7b1 indicate the parallelism error, while sentences 7a2-7b2 indicate the revised sentences.

Wrong Sentences:

7a1. But the most important parents' responsibilities are making their children **safe, healthy, happy, successful, and have a good attitude.**

7b1. The government always reminds the public to follow health protocols, such as **social distancing, always wearing masks, and avoiding excessive crowds.**

Revised Sentences:

7a2. But the most important parents' responsibilities are making their children safe, healthy, happy, successful, and mature.

7b2. The government always reminds the public to follow health protocols, such as keeping social distance, wearing masks, and avoiding excessive crowds.

H. Diction error

Diction errors are related to the selection of words that are not appropriate and do not match the context of the sentence. Sentences 8a1-8b1 show a diction error, while sentences 8a2-8b2 are the revised sentences.

Wrong Sentences:

8a1.   This is the source of more **branches reason such as not** taking health protocol seriously.
8b1.   Not only do my brother and I differ in age and occupation, but we are **unlike** in personality.

Revised Sentences:

8a2.   This is the source reason why not taking health protocol seriously.
8b2.   Not only do my brother and I differ in age and occupation, but we are also different in personality.

I. Passive error

Passive error is related to the passivity of a sentence that is not done with the correct structure. For passive sentences, the structure is usually be followed by a past participle verb. Sentence 9a1 shows passive error, while 9a2 shows the revised sentences.

Wrong Sentences:

9a1.   Even though this Delta variant has not been confirmed to makes the death rate increased but this version **reported** can increase the number of hospitalized patients.

Revised Sentences:

9a2.   Even though this Delta variant has not been confirmed to makes the death rate increased but this version is reported to increase the number of hospitalized patients.

4 Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that of the total 697 sentences in the paragraph, there are 309 grammatical errors contained in 187 sentences. Run on errors were found in 90 (29.12%) sentences; Fragment error is in 62 sentences (20.06%); S-V agreement errors are found in 50 (16.18%) sentences; word form errors were found in 40 (12.94%) sentences; the number agreement error is found in 33 (10.68%) sentences; subordinate conjunction errors are found in 12 (3.88%) sentences; parallelism errors are found in 11 (3.56%) sentences; diction errors were found in 10 (3.24%) sentences; and passive errors are found in 1 (0.32%) sentence.

It is believed that grammatical errors are an interesting topic to study especially in the context of learning English as a Foreign Language because they help teachers to

understand and then design a follow up teaching model in helping students develop their language skills. Furthermore, based on this understanding, interventions in the form of appropriate learning that can trigger the growth of the learner's language can be well designed.

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