Syntactical Errors in Explanatory Text and Teacher's Efforts in Improving the Language Skills of Class XI Students

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Abstract. The objective of this research is to identify and explain the language errors in the syntactic field contained in the explanatory text and to describe the Indonesian teacher's efforts to improve the language skills of class XI students. This research uses descriptive qualitative method. Data collection techniques was in the form of observation, documentation, and interviews. Distribution method was used in the data analysis. The results of this study found that there are 11 sentences containing errors which was categorized based on phrase structure errors and sentence structure errors. Phrase structure errors were found in 3 types, in the form of 1 double plural error, 3 incorrect prepositional writing, and 3 excessive or redundant word use. In the sentence structure, there were 5 types of errors, which are 1 incorrect use of diction, 2 unnecessary interrogative sentences, 1 sentence without a subject and without a predicate, 1 sentence without a subject, and 1 illogical sentence. The teacher's effort in improving the language skills of class XI students was that the teacher shows errors in the results of explanatory texts made by students and has been given input about their mistakes, in this way students can learn language errors and avoid them in the next task of writing essays.

Keywords: Syntactical errors · explanatory text · language skills

1 Introduction

Education in Indonesia is one of the means for Indonesian people to gain knowledge. The development of education in Indonesia is often in the spotlight of the outside media because the system used is considered ineffective. However, there is one quality indicator that has high quality, which is the opportunity and space for students to develop their abilities and talents to express their emotional needs as a student [1].

Language is one of the communication tools that everyone uses to deliver messages from one person to another. Language can be used in verbal or written. Indonesian people generally use Indonesian as the main language to communicate with each other, even though Indonesia has various languages for each region. Learning Indonesian requires 4 skills that need to be mastered, which are reading, listening, speaking, and writing

skills. The four skills must be mastered by language users, but there are a number of Indonesian people who are experiencing language difficulties [2].

Analysis of language errors is a technique for identifying language errors. Language errors are categorized into language errors and language mistake. Language errors are systematic and consistent deviations that represent a certain level of student competence gradually [3]. The objective of language error analysis is to find language errors written by students. Writing ability is one of the Indonesian language skills that requires time, experience, opportunity, training, special skills, and direct instruction for someone to become proficient in the language [4]. Writing skills must also master linguistic competence in accordance with linguistic rules, PUEBI, so that the writing has high quality. Based on the internal structure of the language, there are several types of language errors, such as phonological, morphological, syntactical, and semantical levels. Language errors at the syntactical level focus on the placement of elements in a phrase, clause, and sentence [5].

Syntax is a branch of linguistics that studies the relationship between words in a language [6]. The linguistic elements contained in the realm of syntax are phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax is part of linguistics which studies matters related to phrases, clauses and sentences [7]. A phrase is an unpredictable combination of two or more words that occupies certain function in a sentence. Phrases are non-predictive, meaning that even if they consist of more than two words, they cannot become sentences because they are not predicated. Phrases occupy a function in a sentence, meaning that phrases can occupy subject, predicate, object, complement, or adverb functions [8]. Clause is a collection of words or phrases which consists of several parts. It means that there is a form of action as subject and predicate in these words and phrases. Sentence is the biggest element in syntax. Sentence consists of a collection of words, phrases, and clauses that form a whole and can be understood by its meaning. Sentence is said to be the largest element because it consists of all parts, such as subject, predicate, object, complement, and adverb [9].

Syntactical errors are divided into two types, which are language errors in phrase structure and language errors in sentence structure [10]. Language errors in sentence structure are divided into several types, which are (1) double plurality, (2) inappropriate prepositional writing, (3) excessive or redundant word use, (4) excessive superlative use, and (5) incorrect reciprocal use. Meanwhile, language errors in sentence structure are: (1) inappropriate diction, (2) unnecessary question words, (3) sentences without subject, (4) sentences without predicate, (5) sentences without subject and predicate, and (6) illogical sentences.

A collection of student essays attracts attention because of the many forms of errors. One of them is an error in the field of syntax, although errors in the field of phonology and morphology are also existed. This research will only examine syntax errors. The essays of the students studied were in the form of explanatory texts. Explanatory text is a text that describes the process of occurrence or formation of a natural phenomenon or social event. Phenomena that are commonly used in an explanatory text are nature, law, culture, economic, social, political, and so on [11]. Explanatory texts written by students of class XI contain many grammatical errors in syntax. This was realized by Indonesian

language subject teachers when correcting texts made by students. Therefore, the teacher seeks to improve students' language skills.

Relevant research regarding language errors in the field of syntax has been carried out by several researchers [10, 12–19]. The similarity with this research is the analysis on language errors in the field of syntax. The difference with previous studies is the objects and this research is supplemented by the teacher's efforts to improve the language skills of class XI students.

Other relevant research attempts to improve students' language skills [20]. The difference is that previous research used research data in the form of teacher learning tools, assessments of student learning outcomes, statements written by teachers, mapping tools, teaching materials, and assignments reported to teachers in the form of products. Meanwhile, this study only used explanatory texts made by students as assignments for Indonesian language subjects. The similarities are that both of them are conducting research in an effort to improve students' language skills.

This study focuses on language errors in the field of syntax in explanatory texts and the teacher's efforts in developing the language skills of class XI students. The problem formulation of this research are: (1) what are the language errors in the syntax field found in the explanatory texts of class XI students and (2) what are the efforts of the Indonesian teacher in developing the language skills of class XI students?

2 Method

This is descriptive qualitative research. The problem is the emergence of various forms of language errors in writings composed by students in the form of explanatory texts. The object of research is language errors in the field of syntax, as well as the Indonesian teacher's efforts to improve students' language skills. The subjects of this research were students and teachers of class XI. In this study, data were obtained from sentences containing syntax errors in explanatory texts made by students of class XI. The source of data for this research is explanatory text. Data was collected through observation, documentation, and interviews. Data was analyzed using distribution method with direct division techniques and insertion techniques. This method is carried out by sorting out linguistic elements in a language by analyzing data using determinants in the language.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Syntactical Errors

Errors in the field of syntax are errors in the form of deviations related to the structure of phrases, sentences, and inaccuracies in the use of particles [21]. Analysis of errors found in students' writing is related to phrase structure and sentence structure errors.

3.1.1 Phrase Structure Errors

Phrases are grammatical units in the form of words and word combinations that are not predicative [22]. Phrases cannot form new meanings and cannot be inserted with word

yang and itu. Phrases are usually used as word combinations that complete one of the syntactic functions.

3.1.1.1 Double Pluralization

Double pluralization is formed from words that express plural forms and repeat words in one sentence. The use of words that contain plural meanings are used side by side, resulting in double pluralization. A plural word is a word that means many. In the explanatory text of class XI students found word forms that have double plural forms.

(1) *Guguran hujan deras selama 3 hari, membuat aktivitas warga dan **para siswa-siswa** terganggu, salah satunya di sekolah menengah Negeri 1 Kabupaten Sintang Kalimantan Barat.*

(1) *Heavy rain for 3 days disrupted the activities of residents and **many students**, one of which was at State Middle School 1, Sintang Regency, West Kalimantan.*

In sentence (1) there is a plural marker, which is para and repeated words siswa-siswa. In one sentence, it should only require one plural form so double pluralization does not occur. The word para already states more than one student, when paired with the word siswa-siswa, results in a double plurality. The following is the correction of the above sentence.

(1a) *Membuat aktivitas warga dan **para siswa** terganggu, salah satunya di sekolah menengah Negeri 1 Kabupaten Sintang Kalimantan Barat.*

The improvement is by using the single word siswa to become para siswa, or eliminating the word para. One of the extravagant forms of sentences is the pluralization of words that already have a plural meaning. Previous research [17] also found errors in phrase structure and one of them was double pluralization. The difference is that previous research focused on announcements for students in the STKIP Santu Paulus Ruteng.

3.1.1.2 Incorrect Prepositional Writing

Prepositions are words that have the objective of showing the relationship between a noun or pronoun with other word classes in a sentence [23]. Prepositional phrases are formed from groups of words such as in (di), from (dari), to (ke), on (pada), and so on. Errors in the use of prepositions were found in the explanatory text of class XI students.

(2) *Cuaca cerah hingga hujan, angin lemah hingga kencang **kearah** utara, timur laut, timur, selatan, barat daya, dan barat juga terjadi **digunung** api tersebut dan sekitarnya.*

(2) *The weather is sunny to rainy, weak to strong winds **towards** north, northeast, east, south, southwest and west also occur **on the volcano** and its surroundings*

In sentence (2) two inappropriate prepositions are found, which is **kearah** and **digunung**. The first word, **kearah**, should be written separately, because the word **arah** is a type of word that refers to a place and **ke** has a function as a preposition which states a place. The second word, **digunung**, should be written separately as **di gunung** because **di** in the sentence is a preposition which state place.

(3) *Tanggul jebol adalah salah satu infrastuktur persungaian yang **di buat** untuk menahan debit banjir sungai.*

(3) *A broken embankment is one of the river infrastructures **made** to withstand river flood discharges.*

In sentence (3) the error is in the word ***di buat*** which is written separately, the word should have been written together as ***dibuat***. ***di*** is not a preposition, but a prefix. The followings are the correct preposition writing.

(2a) *Cuaca cerah hingga hujan, angin lemah hingga kencang **ke arah** utama, timur laut, timur, selatan, barat daya, dan barat juga terjadi **di gunung** api tersebut san sekitarnya.*

(3a) *Tanggul jebol adalah salah satu infrastruktur persuangaian yang **dibuat** untuk menahan debit banjir sungai.*

The form of writing in these sentences is incorrect according to PUEBI. Prepositions are words that connect all the words in a sentence, so the reader understand how the parts in a sentence match each other, prepositions can be clues and guides about how each word in a sentence unites with each other [24]. Previous research found incorrect prepositions writing of the word ***kerumah*** in students' essays [25].

3.1.1.3 Redundant Use of Elements

Redundant use of elements means excessive use of words or having two or more sentences that have the same meaning. Sentence redundancy occurs when there is redundant use of words. Several errors in the use of redundant elements were found in the explanatory text of class XI students.

(4) *Luncuran **awan panas** di**erupsi** yang berada di Jawa Timur itu terjadi selama hampir tiga jam.*

(4) *The **eruption** of **hot clouds** in East Java lasted for almost three hours.*

In sentence (4) words with same meaning were used in one sentence or there is a redundancy of element in it. The words ***awan panas*** and ***erupsi*** have more or less the same meaning, which is to release material that comes from the volcano.

(5) *Oleh karena itu kita harus **berhati-hati** dan **waspada** mempersiapkan diri menghadapi bencana tsunami.*

(5) *Therefore, we must be **careful** and **vigilant** in preparing ourselves for a tsunami disaster*

In sentence (5) there is the use of exaggerated elements, which is the phrases ***berhati-hati** and **waspada***. The phrases ***berhati-hati** and **waspada*** in sentence (5) can represent the position of each in the sentence. Both have the same meaning, which is to protect oneself from a situation.

(6) *Inilah **alasannya mengapa** saat peristiwa gerhana bulan, tampilan bulan akan terlihat lebih gelap yang biasanya berwarna merah gelap, jingga atau bahkan coklat.*

(6) This is *the **reason why** during a lunar eclipse, the moon will appear darker which is normally dark red, orange or even brown.

In sentence (6) there is an excessive or redundant use of elements in the phrase ***alasannya mengapa***. This phrase makes the sentence redundant because these two elements

have same meaning. The word ***mengapa*** functions to ask for a reason, but ***alasannya*** is written previously. Therefore, one element must be removed to avoid redundancy. The following is the corrections of the redundancy elements.

(4a) *Luncuran **awan panas** yang berada di Jawa timur itu terjadi selama hampir tiga jam.*

(5a) *Oleh karena itu kita harus **waspada** dan mempersiapkan diri mengahadapi bencana tsunami.*

(6a) *Inilah **mengapa** saat peristiwa gerhana bulan, tampilan bulan akan terlihat gelap yang biasanya berwarna gelap, jingga atau bahkan coklat.*

Sentences (4), (5), and (6) show that there is excessive or redundant use of words, which is unusual in the Indonesian written language. It happens because there are two words that have the same meaning in one sentence. Redundant words are words that have the same meaning or synonymous [26]. The results of this study are in line with previous research [27], which found errors in the use of redundant words in a speech text.

3.1.2 Sentence Structure Errors

Sentence is the largest element in syntax. It means a sentence has all parts of its elements, such as subject, predicate, object and non-obligatory elements, adverbs and complements [9].

3.1.2.1 Incorrect Use of Diction

Syntactical errors in the sentence structure were found in the explanatory text of class XI students in the form of incorrect use of diction. [28] Diction is the choice of words used to explain something through the right sorting of words. Inaccuracy in a sentence causes the sentence to have an unclear meaning. The following is an error in using incorrect diction.

(7) ***Fikiran** yang **rumyang** masih bisa dilampiaskan **di kopi**, **healing**/mendengarkan lagu sesuai dengan suasana hati.*

(7) ***Rumbled thoughts** can still be vented to **coffee**, **healing**/listening to songs according to mood.*

Sentence (7) contains the use of incorrect diction. The use of the word ***fikiran, rumyang, di kopi,*** and ***healing*** in this sentence is incorrect. The first mistake is the use of the word ***fikiran*** which is not standard. The correct word according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) is p***ikiran***. The second mistake is the use of the word ***rumyang***. This word is not listed in the KBBI, so it confuses the reader. The third mistake is the use of the word ***di kopi***. The word ***di*** in PUEBI refers to a place, so the use of the word ***di*** followed by ***kopi*** is incorrect. The fourth mistake is the word ***healing***, the word ***healing*** is a foreign language which means ***healer***. The word ***healer*** in that sentence is also incorrect, because it is not coherent with the sentence before or after it. It is better to make improvements according to language rules.

(7a) ***Pikiran*** *yang **kacau** bisa dilampiaskan dengan **meminum kopi**, mendengarkan lagu sesuai dengan suasana hati, atau melakukan kegiatan sesuai dengan hobi masing-masing.*

Diction is a form of word choice that is used appropriately and harmoniously in its use to express an idea to achieve the desired result [29]. The results of this study are relevant to previous research [30]. The research found some incorrect use of diction in the student's procedural text.

3.1.2.2 Unnecessary Use of Question Words

Question words are generally used to ask something. In writing, the question word is often located at the beginning of the sentence. In direct conversation, the question word is often located at the end of the sentence. The use of the question word is not necessary if the question word is used in a sentence that does not ask something. Unnecessary question words were found in the explanatory text of class XI students.

(8) *Kerusakan tersebut banyak menghantam pemukiman pendidik, dan menyeret **apa** saja yang dilaluinya, baik benda kecil maupun benda besar.*

(8) *The damage hit many residential areas, and dragged **what** is everything in its path, both small and large objects*

Sentence (8) contains unnecessary interrogative words, which is ***apa***. The sentence is incorrect because there is a question word ***apa*** that is not necessarily used. Many found the use of unnecessary question words in a news text used as a connecting link in a news sentence.

(9) *Di Indonesia sendiri kemiskinan mencapai angka 10% yang **dimana** menempati nomer 8 jumlah orang miskin didunia.*

(9) *In Indonesia alone, poverty has reached 10%, which is **where** ranks 8th in the number of poor people in the world.*

In sentence (9) there is an unnecessary question word, which is the word ***dimana***. The word ***dimana*** is a word used to ask for a place, not as a conjunction. Therefore, the word ***dimana*** in the sentence is not needed. If the word ***dimana*** is omitted it will not change the meaning of the sentence, because the sentence already contains the word ***yang***. The followings are the corrections of the use of unnecessary question words.

(8a) *Kerusakan tersebut banyak menghantam pemukiman penduduk, dan menyeret benda-benda kecil maupun benda besar yang dilaluinya.*

(9a) *Di Indonesia sendiri kemiskinan mencapai angka 10% yang menempati nomer 8 jumlah orang miskin di dunia.*

Question words have the task of forming an interrogative sentence. In forming interrogative sentences question words must be used by language users [31]. This finding

is in line with the findings of a previous study [12], which resulted in the findings of unnecessary question words in student papers.

3.1.2.3 Sentences Without Subject

Subject is a noun that refers to the actor in the sentence. Subject is an important structure to prevent ambiguousness in a sentence. Syntactic field errors in the sentence structure in the form of sentences without a subject were found in the explanatory text of class XI students.

(10) *Agar bisa memecahkan permasalahan pengangguran diera pandemi yang tak kunjung selesai.*

(10) *In order to be able to solve the unemployment problem in the never-ending pandemic era*

Sentence (10) has no subject. This is categorized as unclear sentence because subject of an active sentence is preceded by a preposition ***agar*** which express an adverb of purpose. Words that often fade the subject are the words *dalam, bagi, agar, dari, sebagai, dengan, merupakan, kepada, untuk, di,* and *dari.* Active sentence is marked by the subject doing a job or action [33]. The following is an improvement for the sentence (10).

(10a) *Kita bisa memecahkan permasalahan pengangguran diera pandemi yang tak kunjung selesai.*

Without subject, sentence (11) indicate that it has an incomplete structure or an unclear sentence. Very often students use prepositions or conjunctions that vague the subject in sentences. The correction is by adding the word ***kita*** and removing the conjunction ***agar*** so that ***kita*** functions as the subject. Subject has a principal role in a sentence, its role can be placed at the beginning, middle or end of the sentence [34]. Subject is an element of a sentence or phrase that is explained by other elements in a related sentence [7]. The subject functions as a character in a sentence, so its presence is needed by all components in a sentence. This study is in line with previous research [35]. The findings are in the form of a subject contained in a sentence that is not clear because it begins with the use of a preposition.

3.1.2.4 Illogical Sentences

Logical is a thought that can be understood by others and has a clear wording. An illogical sentence means a sentence that is difficult or even incomprehensible to others. Syntactic field errors in sentence structures in the form of illogical sentences were found in the explanatory text of class XI students.

(11) *Warga masih kena banjir untuk tetap berada di pengungsian.*

(11) *Residents are still subject to flooding to remain in evacuation*

Sentence (11) is an illogical sentence. It is illogical because the ideas it conveys do not make sense, the relationship between ideas in the sentence does not make sense, and the relationship between the main idea and the explanatory idea does not make sense either. The following fixes the illogical sentence above.

(12a) *Warga yang tempat tinggalnya masih terendam banjir, lebih baik tetap berada di pengungsian.*

The ambiguity of the sentence is related to the combination of inappropriate word choices. Research [36] found errors in relation to sentence logic. The similarity with sentence (11) is that the sentence cannot be understood by the reader which creates a double or ambiguous meaning. The difference is, the object of research [36] is a thesis.

3.2   Efforts to Improve the Language Ability of Class XI Students

The improvement of language skills in Vocational Schools started since the beginning of learning in class X. The teacher realized that most of the language errors were made by students of class X, because they were still carried away by the use of language in junior high school. Therefore, the teacher began implementing an improvement in students' language skills from the beginning of class X to class XII. This application helps students to understand the form of language errors that are made and can use language appropriately when making an essay.

The activity to improve language skills is carried out by the teacher outside of teaching and learning activities, explanations are given in stages starting from conjunctions, standard words, prepositions, punctuation marks, and so on. This activity is implemented after the teacher corrects the results of student essays. Forms of language errors found are described to students by explaining how to use correct language and sentence structure. This activity has become a routine for the Indonesian teacher. The teacher also wants his students to be able to understand the correct arrangement of sentences and choice of words.

The material taught to students is different for each chapter and each chapter usually discusses one type of text. The text material also contains material that discusses the linguistic rules that need to be applied in the writing of the text. Linguistic rules generally discuss the rules that serve as linguistic guidelines in compiling texts. Linguistic material is useful for teachers and students. It makes it easier for teachers to improve students' language skills through this material and provides broad knowledge and insight into language for students.

The conclusions of this research show that there are several errors in syntax in the explanatory text of class XI students. These errors are grouped into phrase structure language errors and sentence structure errors. In the phrase structure errors, 3 sentences were found containing 6 incorrect phrases, 1 double plural error, 3 incorrect writing of prepositions and prefixes, and 3 excessive uses of words. Meanwhile, there were 4 types of language errors in sentence structure, which are 1 error in using inappropriate diction, 2 unnecessary interrogative sentences, 1 sentence without a subject, and 1 sentence that was illogical.

Teacher's effort in improving the language skills of class XI students applied in the form of correcting the students' essays, describing the errors and explaining them to

students. This activity is carried out regularly. This effort is also supported by language rules material which is very helpful in improving students' abilities in language, as well as facilitating teachers in teaching them.

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