

German Grammatical Errors by 2nd Semester Students in Essay Writing

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe errors, causes of errors, and grammatical materials that must be comprehended by 2nd semester students; all this is meant to make them free from German grammatical mistakes when they make essays. This research is qualitative involving 136 students as research subjects who were selected from four German study programs. The results show that students made many errors in their writing production amounting to 19 types of errors in vocabularies and grammar. It is recommended that students enrich vocabularies (*deutsche Vokabeln*) and improve the mastery of German grammar (*Strukturen*) in order they are able to write German language well.

Key words: Error analysis, grammatical error, composition, German grammar

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a difficult skill, not only for pupils, students but also for junior lecturers (Saragih, 2007: 42). Students at German Study Program, Faculty of Language and Arts (UNIMED) also experienced difficulties in writing because they did not yet master German grammar and vocabulary (Perdamean, 2013: 85); in addition, students who were graduated from high schools majoring in language also had difficulties in writing. They felt that they could not write something and did not know what to write (Hanh, 2015: 350).

Anyone who learns a foreign language, like German, certainly makes an error (Lahti, 2018: 32). This error is a problem that must be solved and to solve the problem one must know his/her difficulties and errors in writing. To study students' errors, these errors must be analyzed first (Prediger and Wittmann, 2018: 1). The paper has three research problems: i) what errors do students make in German grammar?, ii) what causes such errors?, and iii) what

materials do 2nd semester students master in writing production in German?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Error analysis (*Fehleranalyse*)

Error analysis (*Fehleranalyse*) compares pre- and post-errors students make during their study and is addressed to how to minimize student such errors as soon as possible (James in Sermsook, Liamnimitr and Pochakorn, 2017: 102). Error analysis is also said to be an attempt to explain errors in the use of foreign language which is different from mother tongue. Errors are defined as deviations from the rules that apply or as a violation of the rules of grammar, which occur due to misunderstandings or difficulties in communicating (Cherubim, 1980: 1). Brown (1980: 148) stated that error analysis is an analysis of the errors of a student's language either foreign, second language or general language. In line with the opinions above Ardiana and Yonohudiyono (1998: 2.4) argued that error analysis in language is a process based on the analysis of students' or

someone's errors. Corder (1981: 45) said that error analysis has two functions in the learning process, namely to investigate the process of language learning and to find out whether remedial teaching is necessary or not so that the achievement of learning objectives is successful.

Error analysis is a method, a technique, or a strategy to find out mistakes made by students. When quoting Crystal, Pateda (1989: 32) stated that error analysis is a technique to identify, classify, and interpret systematically errors made by students who learn a foreign language or a second language. Error analysis is a working process and as a working procedure, error analysis has the following working steps: i) collecting data in the form of language errors, ii) identifying and clarifying errors, iii) arranging error ratings, iv) explaining mistakes, v) predicting areas that are vulnerable, and vi) correcting mistakes (correcting mistakes, if possible, eliminate errors through the preparation of appropriate materials, good handbooks and matching teaching techniques (Ardiana and Yonohudiyono, 1998: 2.8)).

German grammar (*Strukturen*)

German grammar may involve morphology (word formation, verbal conjugation, adjective declination), syntax (the choice of words, wording, one word relations with other words, one sentence relations with other sentences), and orthography including: the use of punctuation and the correct writing of words (Perdamean and Sari, 2015: 40). In the 2008 Block System Curriculum that is applied in the German Study Program, there are structural courses with 12 credits (first and second semester have 4 credits respectively and third and fourth semester have 2 credits respectively). One of the causes in students' low mastery in German grammar is the unavailability of German grammatical teaching books that are suitable for the Program. In the IQF curriculum that is valid and was begun in 2016 there are no German grammatical courses, and all this makes

students difficult to master German grammar.

Writing skills (*Schreibfähigkeit*)

Writing means to pour thoughts or feelings on paper (Leo, 2002: 10) and as a skill it can be learned (Takwin, 2008 at www.kompas.com) and might become an achievement (Indrawijaya, Sitorus and Wacker, 1996: 3). Writing skill is a difficult category (Zulkarnainidiran, 2013), therefore, students should pay attention to the elements in writing, namely: i) spelling and punctuation (*Satzzeichen*), ii) choice of words (*Wortwahl*), iii) effective sentences (*der Satz*), and iv) paragraph development (Mardiyah, 2016: 265). mastery in vocabulary and in sentence structure (grammar) contribute to learners in composing or writing good sentences (Munirah and Hadian, 2016: 84).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is a qualitative research aimed at describing the forms of German grammatical errors, the causes of errors and the preparatory materials that must be mastered by students. The research subjects were 136 students selected from German study programs at four universities in Indonesia. The instruments used were related to writing tests with the theme *Ausflug auf die Insel Samosir*. Students had 30 minutes to write essays and after they finished, the essays were collected, corrected, tabulated, and analyzed using percentage techniques.

RESULTS

1. Errors in *Strukturen*

Some samples of errors in *Strukturen* made by students when they wrote essays are shown in (i)-(xix) in the followings:

(i) *Rechtschreibung*

There were 105 of 136 research subjects made mistakes in writing German vocabulary; the first letter of a noun (or something that was principally called a noun) was not written in uppercase (capital) letters and the first letter of the first word on a sentence was either not written in capital

letter (as seen in sentences (a), (b) and (c)). In sentence (a) *Die reise von Medan nach Parapat dauert 6 bis 7 Stunden* the word *reise* must be written with capital letter as in *Reise*. In sentence (b) *Ja, ich bin sehr glücklich* the word *glücklich* must be written with small letters as in *glücklich*. In sentence (c) *ich möchte noch mal nach Samosir fahren* the sentence should be written as *Ich möchte noch mal nach Samosir fahren*.

(ii) Position of verbs (*Position des Verbs*)

There were 76 students putting verbs in various positions, but not in the second positions, such as in the final positions following the conjunctions *wenn, weil*; they did not separate the basic verb (*Infinitiv*) from its prefix (*trennbares Verb*) as shown in sentences (d), (e), (f), and (g). The sentence (d) *Zuerst ich bin mit dem Bus nach Samosir gefahren* is better written as *Zuerst bin ich mit dem Bus nach Samosir gefahren*. The sentence (e) *Wenn ich noch Zeit hatte, ich möchte noch mal dorthin fahren* should be written as *Wenn ich noch Zeit hätte, möchte ich noch mal dorthin fahren*. The sentence (f) *Zum Schluss möchte ich noch mal auf die Insel Samosir fahren, weil es gibt dort schönes Strand* should be written as *Zum Schluss möchte ich noch mal auf die Insel Samosir fahren, weil es dort schönen Strand gibt*. The sentence (g) *zuerst ich abfahre* should be written as *Zuerst fahre ich ab*.

(iii) Word choice (*Wortwahl*)

As many as 64 students chose and used appropriate words as written in the sentence (h). The sentence (h) *Nesthe woche ich in Insel Samoier gehen* should be *Nächste Woche fahre ich auf die Insel Samosir*.

(iv) Preposition (*die Präposition*)

A total of 55 students did not properly use prepositions, as shown in sentences (i) and (j), in the *Dativ* and *Akkusativ* case. The sentence (i) *Letzte Woche war ich in der Insel Samosir* should be grammatically written as *In der letzten Woche auf der Insel Samosir*. Meanwhile, the sentence (j) *Ersten Mal als ging ich in*

Insel Samosir has to be written as *Zum ersten mal fuhr ich auf die Insel Samosir*.

(v) Dativ case

Fifty two students made errors in the *Dativ* case; the sentence (k) *Wir sind mit ein Auto gefahren* should be grammatically written as *Wir sind mit einem Auto gefahren*.

(vi) Punctuation marks (*das Satzzeichen*)

Forty six students did not put a comma (,) to separate independent and dependent clauses and did not use a period (.) at the end of sentences.

(vii) Incomplete sentence (*der Satz*)

There were 43 students wrote verbless sentences as shown in sentence (l). The sentence (i) *Ich wähle die Insel Samosir, weil dort sehr schön* should be *Ich wähle die Insel Samosir, weil es dort sehr schön ist*.

(viii) Conjunction (*die conjugation*)

A total of 37 students did not conjugate verbs in accordance with the subject as shown in the sentence (m). The sentence (m) *Wir kann schöne Insel Samosir* should be written as *Wir können schöne Insel ansehen*.

(ix) Akkusativ Case

Twenty six students made errors in the *Akkusativ*; the sentence (n) *Dann haben wir der Sand gespielt* has to be written as *Dann haben wir den Sand gespielt*.

(x) Form of *Partizip Perfekt*

A total of 14 students made errors in the formation of *Partizip Perfekt*; the sentence (o) *Wir sind um 5 Uhr abgefahrt* should be *Wir Sind um fff Uhr losgefahren*.

(xi) Nominative Cases

There were 14 students made errors in the *Nominativ* case: the sentence (p) *Meine Brother und Mutters* should actually be written as *Mein Brother und meine Mutter sind aufgeregt*.

(xii) Wrong uses of auxiliaries *haben* and *sein*

A total number of 14 students did not use the auxiliaries verbs *haben* or *sein* in the *Perfekt* sentence; the sentence (q) *Ich möchte schon seit lange dort fahren, weil ich viel über Insel Samosir gehört* should be well written as *Ich möchte schon seit lange*

dorthin fahren, weil ich viel über Insel Samosir gehört habe.

(xiii) Singular or plural forms of objects (der Singular oder der Plural)

Thirteen students made errors in the uses of singular or plural formation of nouns; the sentence (r) *Dort habe ich viele interessant Platz ansehenshould* be better written as *Dort habe ich viele interessante Plätze ansehen*.

(xiv) Word structure (die Wortstellung)

Ten students made errors in placing words in sentences as shown in the following sentential fragment (s) ..., *weil die Insel Samosir gibt es einige historische von Medan* which should be grammatically written as ..., *weil es auf der Insel Samosir einige historische Plätze gibt*.

(xv) Declination (die Deklination)

Nine students did not correctly use adjectives; the sentence (t) *Ich fahre mit meinem große Familie* must be written as *Fah fahre mit meiner großen Familie*.

(xvi) Reflexive pronouns (Reflexive Pronomen)

There were six students di not complete their sentences with *Reflexive*

Pronomen; the sentence (u) ..., *die ich fühle ist glücklich*, should be better written as ..., *ich fühle mich glücklich*.

(xvii) Articles

Five students mistakenly wrote articles for nouns when they made titles as in the *Die schönen Urlaub auf der Insel Samosir* which should be written as *Der schöne Urlaub auf der Insel Samosir*.

(xviii) Genetiv case

Three students made errors in the use of *Genitiv* case as shown in the sentential fragment (v): ..., *weil die Insel Samosir in der Mitte des Tobasee liegt*; the fragment should be ..., *weil die Insel Samosir in der Mitte des Tobasees liegt*.

(xix) zu Infinitiv

One student made errors in using the *Infinitiv zu*; the sentence (w) *Wir fahren mit dem Auto undauchau circa sechs Stunden zu ankommenshould* be grammatically written as *fahren mit dem Auto und brauchen circa sechs Stunden anzukommen*.

The Table 1 summarizes the types of errors and the number of students who made errors in German grammar.

Tabel 1. Types of errors and number of students making errors

No	Types of errors	Number of students making errors	%
1	<i>Rechtschreibung</i>	105	77,20
2	Verb positions (<i>Position des Verbs</i>)	76	55,88
	Word choice (<i>Wortwahl</i>)	64	47,06
4	Preposition(<i>die Präpositionen</i>)	55	40,44
5	<i>Dativcase</i>	52	38,23
6	Punctuation (<i>das Satzzeichen</i>)	46	33,82
7	Incomplete sentences (<i>der Satz</i>)	43	31,61
8	Verbal conjunctions (<i>die Konjugation</i>)	37	27,20
9	<i>Akkusativ case</i>	26	19,11
10	<i>Partizip Perfektforms</i>	14	10,29
11	<i>Nominativcase</i>	14	10,29
12	Use of auxiliary verbshaben orsein	14	10,29
13	<i>der Plural or der Singular</i>	13	9,55
14	Word structure in sentence (<i>die Wortstellung</i>)	10	7,35
15	Declination (<i>die Deklination</i>)	9	6,61
16	<i>Reflexive Pronomen</i>	6	4,41
17	Articles (<i>Artikel</i>)	5	3,67
18	<i>Genetivcase</i>	3	2,30
19	<i>zu Infinitiv</i>	1	0,73

2. Causes of errors

Some causes of errors students made are: i) students rarely wrote essays in German, therefore, they were not careful whether their choices of words are correct, and ii) students did not master German grammar.

3. Teaching materials in Strukturen 2

Based on the number of students who made errors, the materials in *Strukturen 2* were grouped into two parts; the first part is particularly given to semester 1 and the second one to semester 2. Materials for semester 1 include Wort, Satz, Paragraph,

Rechtschreibung, Personalpronomen, Verben and Nomen. Meanwhile, those for semester 2 cover prepositions (*die Präpositionen*), cases of Genitiv, Perfekt and Präteritum, adjectives (*das Adjektiv*), reflexive Pronomen, die Konjunktionen, Passiv and Konjunktiv II.

DISCUSSION

Writing essays are difficult; therefore, university students make mistakes (Herweg et al, 2006: 12). The differences between German and Indonesian grammars cause students to experience such errors, for example, in German, in declarative sentence (*der Aussagesatz*), the verb is always placed in the second position (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~deutsch/Grammatik/WordOrder/WordOrder.html>) and must be conjugated according to the subject, while in Indonesian the verb does not conjugate. Plural forms in Indonesian are also different from German. In German, to form plural (Plural) can be carried out in more than ten procedures (Gallmann, 2016: 1), whereas in Indonesian, it is enough to add plural markers such as *banyak* 'many', *para* 'a number of' (<https://www.britishconnectionfoundation.id/english/articles/language-main-differences>, 2018). In German verbs have complements in which the complementary forms are determined by prepositions, depending on the prepositions in the case of Akkusativ or Dativ (<https://deutsch.info/de/grammar/verbs>, 2018), while prepositions in Indonesian do not change nouns.

CONCLUSIONS

Students make 19 types of errors which are caused by less knowledge of German grammar and vocabularies. It is recommended that they must also learn skills in writing production. The results of the study can be used as a reference by other researchers who discuss the types and causes of German grammatical errors for first semester students.

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