

GRAMMATICAL ERRORS MADE BY FACEBOOK USERS

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Abstract: This study was to find out the grammatical errors made by facebook users in posting their english status and to find out the possible causes of the grammatical erros made by facebook users in posting their statuses. A descriptive method was used in conducting this research. The objects of the study were English statuses posted in Facebook and made by the students of Bina Dharma Palembang. The resultof this study:there were four kinds of errors, ommision errors (13.2%), addition errors (10.5%), Misfortune errors (72.4%), and misordering errors (3.9%) the highest number of errors that made by the students was misformation or misselection errors (72.4%). The lowest number of errors that the students made was misordering errors (3.9%).

Keywords: Grammatical Errors, Facebook, and Statuses

Abstrak: penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kesalahan tata bahasa yang dibuat oleh pengguna facebook dalam menulis statusnya dalam bahasa Inggris dan untuk mengetahui kemungkinan penyebab kesalahan tata bahasa yang dibuat oleh pengguna facebook dalam posting status mereka. Metode deskriptif digunakan dalam melakukan penelitian ini. Obyek penelitian ini adalah status bahasa Inggris yang diposting di Facebook dan dibuat oleh mahasiswa Bina Darma Palembang Hasil dari penelitian ini: ada empat jenis kesalahan, ommision errors (13.2%), addition errors (10.5%), misfortune errors (72.4%), and misordering errors (3.9%) jumlah tertinggi kesalahan yang dibuat oleh siswa adalah misformation atau misselection errors(72,4%). Jumlah terendah dari kesalahan yang dibuat siswa adalah misordering errors (3.9%).

Kata kunci: Kesalahan Tata Bahasa, Facebook, dan Status.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of communication. According to Hornby (2003: 752), language is a system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people around the world. From that quotation, we can see that language is very important thing in our life. In addition, by using a language people can communicate with each other as well as share ideas and information.

Every country has its own language that becomes an identity of the local people within it to communicate with each other. English is one of the languages used to communicate internationally. It is used by almost all people around the world. As a matter of fact, people use English for many reasons besides

communication, for instance in the field of science, information, culture and many others. In Indonesia, children start to learn English when they are in the elementary school and it will be continued until they are in the high school. Some reasons above make us realize that it is very important for us to know English and learn it well.

In order to communicate well, English learners or speakers should learn the four English skills as they are very important and related to each other. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition, they also need to have a good comprehension of language aspects such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and others.

Every language has its own structure which is called “grammar”. It is an essential part of the use of both spoken and written language. Hornby (1995: 517) notes that grammar is the rules in a language for changing the form of a word and combining them into sentence and it is important thing in making a good sentence. By having a good grammar system of a language, it will be easier for people to express their ideas, messages and feelings. However, students who are learning English often encounter problems with grammar. They make errors either in speaking or writing. For example, the learners make errors in sentence formulation. They sometimes do not use correct punctuation or subject of the sentence, and they even have problems with pronouns or modifiers.

However, learning a language can not be separated from making errors. Making errors are seen positively during the process of learning the second language. It can be considered as a means of building learners’ ability because they can learn something from making errors. One type of errors that are often produced by learners is grammatical errors. These errors may be found in students’ writings, for example, in writing their English statuses on their *facebook* account. Corder (1981: 36) says that descriptions of errors are a linguistic operation. Errors are described by the application of linguistics theory to the data of erroneous utterances produced by a learner or a group of learners. There is a distinction between error and mistake, Corder in Sattayatham (2007: 1); differentiates errors from mistakes in the way that errors are systematic in nature being “errors of competence” which occur in the continuum of

the learning process. They are the result of the learners’ transitional competence. On the other hand, mistakes are “errors of performance” which are not systematic.

Based on *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (1992) in Erdogan (2005:1), a learner often makes mistakes in writing or speaking because of lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspects of performance. Mistakes can be self-corrected when attention is called. On the other hand, an error is systematic. It is likely to occur repeatedly so it is not recognized by the learner as an error. Errors are sometimes classified according to vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, misunderstanding, of a speaker’s intention or meanings, production of the wrong communication effect. For example “*Mr. Eddy drive a minivan*”, it should be “*Mr. Eddy drives a minivan*” because this is in the present tense and we need to add an -s to the verb (*drives*) because the subject (*Mr. Eddy*) is singular.

Facebook is a social network service and website launched in February 2004 that is operated and privately owned by *Facebook, Inc.* As of July 2010 *Facebook* has more than 500 million active users. Users may create a personal profile, add other users as friends and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their profile. Additionally, users may join common interest user groups, organized by workplace, school, or college, or other characteristics. The name of the service stems from the colloquial name for the book given to students at the start of the academic year by university administrations in the US with the

intention of helping students to get to know each other better. *Facebook* allows anyone who declares him or herself to be at least 13 years old to become a registered user of the website.

Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates and fellow computer science students Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. The website's membership was initially limited by the founders to Harvard students, but was expanded to other colleges in the Boston area, the Ivy League, and Stanford University. It gradually added various other universities before opening to high school students, and, finally, to anyone aged 13 and over.

Updating status is one of the major activities for *Facebook* members. When the Indonesian *Facebook* users want to update English status, sometimes they do not realize the errors of the language they have made. Considering the above issue, the researcher was interested in conducting a study to find out the grammatical errors made by *facebook* users in posting English statuses because the researcher is one of *facebook* users

This paper discusses the result of a conducted study on grammatical errors made by Facebook users.

2. METHODOLOGY

The researchers applied descriptive method in this study. The researchers created a Facebook group to identify any grammatical errors in the statuses posted by the users within the group. In analyzing the errors, the

reserachers did the error analysis and referred to the theory of error analysis proposed by Corder (1981).

According to James (1998: 1), error analysis is the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language. Meanwhile, Richard et al., in Sulistia (2008: 5) state that error analysis may be carried out in order to identify the cause of learner's errors and obtain information on common difficulties in language learning as an aid for teaching or in preparation of teaching material. In addition, Corder (1981: 35) says that error analysis confirms or disproves the predictions of the theory lying behind bilingual comparison. In this sense error analysis is an experimental technique for validating the theory of transfer.

Error analysis can be the investigation of the students' error by some techniques or procedures. In analyzing the students' errors, the researchers refer to the techniques or procedures offered by Corder in his book *Introduction to Applied Linguistics* (1973:275-294) and they are:

1) Identifying errors

The first step in analyzing errors is to identify them by comparing the sentence learners produce with what seem to be the normal or correct sentences in the target which corresponds to them.

2) Describing errors

The second step in analyzing errors is describing and classifying them into types. There are several ways of doing this:

- a. To classify errors in grammatical categories. We should gather all the errors relating to verbs and then identify the

different kinds of verbs, errors in our sample.

- b. To try to identify general ways in which the learners' utterances differ from the target language utterances. Such as omission, addition, substitution, misformation and misordering.

3) Explaining errors

Errors are to enlarge, systematic and to a certain extend, predictable so they can be identified and described. This step explains why the errors occur by identifying and describing them.

4) Evaluating errors

The purpose of error analysis is to help learners learn second language. Some errors can be considered more serious than the others because they are more likely to interfere with the intelligibility of what someone says.

The errors then were put into types referring to Dulay, Burt and Krashen' Taxonomy of errors (1982) in James (1998). They are:

2.1 Omission Errors

Omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. Language learners omit grammatical morphemes much more frequently than content words. From the quotation, it informs that omission errors are happened when the speaker or learners omit the grammatical morphemes which must be used in an utterance

that they made. As we know that in linguistics a morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit in the grammar of a language.

For example:

Incorrect: **I am waiting you.*

Correct: I am waiting for you.

2.2 Addition Errors

Addition errors are characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance. In this case, addition errors are happened when the speaker or learners add the grammatical morphemes which must not be used in an utterance that they made.

For example:

Incorrect: **My girl is more beautiful than your's.*

Correct : My girl is more beautiful than yours.

2.3 Misformation Errors

Misformation errors are characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morphemes or structure. In other word, misformation errors are happened when the speaker or learner used the wrong form of structure in their utterance.

For example:

Incorrect: **The players is too tired to play football.*

Correct: The players are too tired to play football.

2.4 Misordering Errors

Misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group

of morphemes in an utterance. In a similar way, misordering errors are occurred when the speaker or learner used a grammatical morpheme or group of morpheme in a wrong place of sentence formulation.

For example:

Incorrect: **You do not understand what is my question.*

Correct: You do not understand what my question is.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers found out that there were 76 (39,6%) incorrect sentences out of 192 (60,4%) sentences made by twenty students of UniversitasBinaDarma Palembang who are members of “Posting English Status” group on *facebook* as the samples in this research.

The data revealed that out of 76 errors committed by the students, there were 55 (72,4%) misformation or misselection errors, 10 (13,2%) omission errors, 8 (10,5%) addition errors, and 3 (3,9%) misordering errors.

The researchers distributed questionnaires to find out the causes of the errors. There were 15 questions in the questionnaire which were used to find out the sources of possible causes of the English students as the members of Posting English Status group in posting English statuses. The results of questionnaire indicate that for item 1, “Do you like writing in English?” there were thirteen students (65%) liked writing English very much. There were seven students (35%)

liked to write in English. However, no students (0%) disliked and hate writing in English.

For item 2, “Do you take some English courses for your extra activities?” there were six students (30%) take some English courses for their extra activities. There were nine students (45%) who ever took some English courses for their extra activities. Then, there were two students (10%) did not take some English courses and there were three students (15%) who never take some English courses for their extra activities.

For item 3, “How often do you practice writing skill in English in other chances out of the campus?” there were two students (10%) practiced writing skill in English in other chances out of the campus very often. Five students (25%) often practiced writing skill in English in other chances out of the campus. There were twelve students (60%) sometimes practiced writing skill in English in other chances out of the campus. A student (5%) never practiced writing skill in English in other chances out of the campus.

For item 4, “What difficulties do you often face in writing in English?” there were seven students (35%) that had the difficulty in sentence formulation or structure/grammar. Five students (25%) had the difficulty in choosing the proper diction and spelling of the English words. There were seven students (35%) had the difficulty in writing English because structure of bahasa Indonesia still influences them. Next, a student (5%) had no difficulty at all.

For item 5, “Do you think the writing classes in university helps you in writing English outside classroom?” there were eleven students

(55%) think that the writing classes in university very helpful in their writing English outside the classroom. There were five students (25%) think that the writing classes in university help them in writing English outside the classroom. Then, there were two students (10%) think that the writing classes in university less and not help them in writing English outside the classroom.

For item 6, "How do you improve your English writing skill?" there were eleven students (55%) practiced a lot to improve their English writing skill. There were three students (15%) joined the English course to improve their English writing skill. Furthermore, there were three students (15%) consulted with their lecturer to improve their English writing skill. The rest three students (15%) did not give any care to improve their English writing skill.

For item 7, "Do you like linguistics more than literature?" there were two students (10%) who like linguistics very much more than literature. There were eleven students (55%) like linguistics more than literature. Moreover, there were six students (30%) do not like linguistics and one student (5%) does not like linguistics at all.

For item 8, "Do you like structure/grammar subject in your study list?" there were four students (20%) liked structure/grammar subject very much in their study list. There were nine students (45%) like structure/grammar subject in their study list. In addition, there were four students (20%) do not like structure/grammar subject in their study list. The last, three students (15%) hate structure/grammar subject in their study list.

For the item 9, "Do you know the classification of grammatical error?" there were four students (20%) knew the classification of grammatical error. There were thirteen students (65%) knew a little about the classification of grammatical error. However, there were two students (10%) did not really understand about the classification of grammatical error. A student (5%) never heard about the classification of grammatical error.

For the item 10, "How is your comprehension about structure/grammar pattern?" there was only a student (5%) was very comprehensive about structure/grammar pattern. There were fifteen students (75%) were comprehensive about structure/grammar pattern. Three students (15%) were less comprehensive about structure/grammar pattern. A student (5%) was not comprehensive about structure/grammar pattern.

For the item 11, "Do you think that structure/grammar of bahasa Indonesia influences you when you write English sentences?" there were two students (10%) think that structure/grammar of bahasa Indonesia is not influences them at all when they write English sentences. A student (5%) was think that structure/grammar of bahasa Indonesia is not influences her when she writes English sentences. There were twelve students (60%) think that structure/grammar of bahasa Indonesia is sometimes influences them when they write English sentences. Next, there were five students (25%) think that structure/grammar of bahasa Indonesia is influences them when they write English sentences.

For the item 12, “What language aspect of English is difficult for you?” there were nine students (45%) choose structure/grammar is the aspect that makes them difficult in writing in English. There were seven students (35%) choose vocabulary as the aspect that makes them difficult in writing in English. Furthermore, a student (5%) chooses spelling as the aspect that makes them difficult in writing in English. There were three students (15%) choose diction as the aspect that makes them difficult in writing in English.

For the item 13, “Do you frequently mix Indonesian and English in your spoken and written language?” there were three students (15%) mix Indonesian and English in their spoken and written language very often. There were five students (25%) who often mix Indonesian and English in their spoken and written language. Moreover, there were nine students (45%) sometimes mix Indonesian and English in their spoken and written language. There were three students (15%) who never mix Indonesian and English in their spoken and written language.

For the item 14, “Are you aware of grammatical errors when you post your English status?” there were six students (30%) who are very aware of grammatical errors when they post their English status. There were five students (25%) who are aware of grammatical errors when they post their English status. Moreover, there were eight students (40%) sometimes aware of grammatical errors when they post their English status. Then, there was only a student (5%) who never thinks about the grammatical errors when he posts his English status.

For the last item, “How many times a day do you post your status in English?” there was a student (5%) who posts English statuses four times a day. There were four students (20%) who post English statuses about three and two times a day. Furthermore, there were eleven students (55%) who post English statuses once a day.

From the findings, it reveals that all of the students of English Study Program of UniversitasBinaDarma Palembang who were also the members of Posting English Status group in *facebook* still made the grammatical errors. The researcherS found out that there were 76 (39,6%) incorrect sentences out of 192 (60,4%) sentences made by the students. The four kinds of errors which made by the students in posting their English statuses were omission errors (13,2%) 10 sentences, addition errors (10,5%) 8 sentences, misformation or misselection errors (72,4%) 55 sentences, and misordering errors (3,9%) 3 sentences.

From the data above, it can be seen that the highest number of errors made by the students was misformation or misselection errors. The misformation errors that the students made most were the errors in forming the right formulation of the sentence as they got confused whether to use present or past form of the verb and plural or singular of the subject/pronoun. For example, “there **are** someone who asked me to **wrote** something on this wall”, in this sentence, the verb “wrote” should be in the present form/1st verb and “are” should be in the past form, so the correct sentence was “there **was** someone who asked me to **write** something on this wall”. Other example, “Don't say that Allah **don't** love us”, in this case, we can see that the

subject was singular, so the correct formulation of the sentence should be “Do not say that Allah **does not** love us”.

The second highest number of errors made by the students was omission errors. These kinds of errors that the student made most were the errors in constructing incomplete sentence or omitting the current part of the sentence. For example, “we play *futsal* this afternoon, ok!” this sentence was incomplete, so it should be “we **will** play *futsal* this afternoon, ok!”.

Addition errors were the third highest number of errors made by the students. The addition errors that the students made most were in adding the unnecessary item which must not appear in well-formed utterance. The example was, “I hate **this my** life”, it supposed to be “I hate **my** life” or “I hate **this** life”. The lowest number of errors made by the students was misordering errors. These errors that the students made most were in making incorrect placement of morpheme or group of morphemes in their sentences. For example, “I don't know **what's that**”, It should be “I don't know **what that is**”.

As we can see from the questionnaire, we know that most of the students are less comprehensive about structure/grammar. It appears in the students' answers of the item number 12; it is shown that 45% of them claimed structure/grammar as the aspect that makes them difficult in writing in English. Furthermore, item number 14 tells that eight (40%) of the students sometimes did not aware of their grammatical errors when they post their English statuses on *facebok*, they made incorrect formulation of the sentence, acquired the wrong dictions, and did

not have enough English vocabulary to support their English writing skills.

Although 55% of the students practiced a lot and 15% of them joined the English courses and consulted with their lecturer to improve their English writing skills, it confirmed that they still mixed their English and Indonesian in their written and spoken language frequently, twelve (45%) of the students did. So, obviously BahasaIndonesia influenced them and it was inserted as one of the possible causes for the students in making errors when they write in English.

Looking at the errors that made by the students and the result of the questionnaire, it can be said that there were some possible causes why students made grammatical errors. Firstly, their English might be influenced by their L1/Bahasa Indonesia which has some grammar differences from English, e.g. the use of tenses. For example, “I did not know before”, in Indonesian language the translated sentence was “sayatidaktahusebelumnya”. In English grammar, the sentence was in the form of past tense, so the verb should be in the past form, it was a kind of misinformation error when the student made the sentence as “I do not know before”. Moreover, in Bahasa Indonesia there were no rules of the use of tenses such as the form of past or present tense in English. So, the verb “tidaktahu” remained in regular form for the use of tense whether in past or present. Mixing Bahasa Indonesia and English language in their English writing also influenced them in making some errors and e.g. the use of To Be in English sentence formulation which in Bahasa

Indonesia we did not use any of it. For example, “The deadline before February, 10th, 2011” it should be “The deadline **is** before February, 10th, 2011”, as we made it in Bahasa Indonesia, “Batasannyasebelum 11 Februari 2011”. The error that made by the student in this sentence was omission error.

Secondly, the students seldom practiced their ability in learning structure/grammar. It was proved by the fact that all of the students had the same main difficulties in writing sentences in English, especially for structure/grammar. The next possible causes followed by their habit in making errors. Some of them did not want to change their habit in making errors. They still did not care about that, there was no effort that they did. Moreover, although some of the students liked writing in English, they still made the errors in forming the sentences whether in present or past form because they did not understand structure/grammar well.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the researchers concluded that the students of English Study Program of UniversitasBinaDarma Palembang who are also the member of Posting English Status group in *facebook* still made the grammatical errors. There were four kinds of errors; they are omission errors, addition errors, misformation errors, and misordering errors. The highest number of error that made by the students was misformation or misselection errors

(72,4%). The lowest number of error that made by the students was misordering errors (3,9%).

Furthermore, from the result of the analysis and questionnaire, the researcher found some possible causes of the grammatical errors made by *facebook* users who are also students of English Study Program of Universitas Bina Darma Palembang. Firstly, the students got confused to write the sentences in English especially about tenses, and the students seldom practiced their ability in learning structure or grammar. It was proved by the fact that all of the students had the same main difficulty in writing sentences in English, especially for structure/grammar. Some of them did not want to change their habit in making errors. They still did not care about that, there was no effort that they did.

Moreover, although some of the students like writing in English, they still made errors in forming the sentences whether in present or past form because they do not understand structure/grammar well.

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