

Mechanics Error Analysis on *Skripsi* Abstract Written by English Education Department Students

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ABSTRACT

Abstract in skripsi an important part because it gives the readers a whole picture of the skripsi's content. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to its detail so that misunderstanding can be avoided. This research is aimed to find and describe the errors in writing skripsi abstract, especially in using the mechanics of writing, which include: capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. This research applied qualitative descriptive method in analyzing the data which is taken from 22 skripsi abstracts written by English Education Department students and published in 2022. The result showed that the numbers of errors found was quite high. The total number of errors found is 253 errors. The most frequent error committed is punctuation while the less frequent error committed is spelling. Furthermore, the errors found were classified based on surface taxonomy strategy, such as: omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. Error of addition represents the highest group of error (35.97%) followed by error of misinformation (32.81%), error of omission (30.83%), and lastly error of misordering (0.40%).

KEYWORDS: *error analysis, mechanics of writing, skripsi abstract*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is proven to be the most difficult skill to master in language learning. As Alwasilah (2004) mentioned, compared to the other three skills is regarded as the most difficult language skill to achieve by the students and to teach by the teachers. While communicating through spoken language can be supported by non-verbal languages, written language depends only on the form of words chosen. As Nunan (1991: 271) explains, producing a coherent, fluent, extended writing piece is likely the most difficult thing since the reader has to comprehend what has been written without asking for clarification or relying on the writer's tone of voice or expression.

A number of studies concerning learners' difficulties in writing have been done by previous researchers. From the level of junior to senior high school, the findings indicate that the problems related to writing remain an issue. Moreover, the study does not stop at the level of senior high school. Some researchers found that even university level students majoring in English have difficulties in terms of writing. Napitulu (2017) in the study entitled "Analyzing Linguistic Errors in Writing an English Letter: A Case Study of Indonesian Undergraduate Students" found that the highest number of errors the students committed is in grammatical use. In addition, Ratnawati et. al. (2018) in "Exploring Academic Writing Needs of Indonesian EFL Undergraduate Students"

found that more than 50% of the participants have difficulties in general skills as well as in academic writing skills.

At the university level, especially in English major, to be able to overcome difficulties in writing is crucial. It is because as they are in higher education level, the students will be dealing with academic writing throughout their education. In addition, by the end of their education, they are required to write a research paper or skripsi as the final project. Therefore, the skill is highly needed in order for them to graduate.

Skripsi is divided into several sections and the abstract is the most important part to be written carefully. Generally speaking, the abstract is the most important part of scientific writing. It contains general information related to the study including the purpose, method applied, and a brief explanation of the result. In other words, it highlights the whole content of the research which will help the readers whether or not the topic is related to their interest. Thus, they can decide if they will or will not continue reading. Therefore, it is crucial for the abstract to be perfectly organized and well-written. Writing abstract itself is a challenge, not to mention writing in English. In this case, there is no doubt that the students will typically make errors in writing the English version of the abstract. These errors can raise confusion or misunderstanding for the readers. In addition, errors that are unidentified will typically be underestimated (Al-Khresheh, 2016).

1.0 Error vs Mistake

Error is defined “as being an instance of language that is unintentionally deviant and is not self-correctible by its author” (James, 2013: 78). In essence, error is a deviance of the rules which is done unintentionally, and it cannot be corrected by the learner itself. Mistake, however, has different definitions. As James (2013: 78) states, “A mistake is either intentionally or unintentionally deviant and self-correctible”. In other words, if a student made an error while practicing and he can correct it, then it is a mistake not an error. Meanwhile, if he cannot correct the error he made, due to the lack of knowledge regarding his error, then it is an error. It is in agreement with Erdogan (2005: 261) who claimed that error occurred because of the learners do not know what is correct which as a result, the error cannot be self-corrected. In addition, Gass and Selinker (2008) describe mistake as a slip and it is not systematic, while error is systematic in grammatical rule perspective. Thus, it can be concluded that mistake and error are two distinct terms that can be systematically differentiated.

1.1 Error Analysis

Error analysis is a study in which the purpose is to investigate and explain the errors made by the learners to improve learners’ competency in the target language. As Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005: 51) state, “Error Analysis (EA) consists of a set of procedures for identifying, describing, and explaining learners’ errors. James (2013: 1) states, “Error analysis is the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language”. In other words, error analysis can provide a view to the process of second language acquisition which in return, can improve the teaching-learning process.

1.2 Classification of Errors

In Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005: 60), it is explained that those categories, in which referred as taxonomy, are: 1) linguistic taxonomy and 2) surface structure taxonomy.

Linguistic taxonomy is related to the errors in grammatical structure of the target language. In this taxonomy, the errors can be described in broader view or general categories of grammar, such as basic sentence structure, the use of verbs, prepositions, and so on. However, it can also be used to describe in a more specific category. In fact, each category in grammar can be developed into several subdivisions.

Meanwhile, surface strategy taxonomy is focused on the way errors happened. As cited in Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005: 61), it was proposed by Dulay et. al. which includes several forms, as follows:

- 1) Omission
Omission is an error caused by the absence of items that should appear in a particular utterance. Thus, the utterance produced is incomplete.
- 2) Addition
Addition is the contrary of omission. It is an error caused by the presence of an item that is not supposed to be presented in a particular utterance.
- 3) Misinformation
Misinformation is an error that is caused by using wrong item. This type of error includes the use of regular past, auxiliary, preposition, and progressive pronouns. The utterance of “He goed to school” can be taken as an example. As it shown, there is a misinformation of the use regular past verb when it is supposed to be irregular.
- 4) Misordering
Misordering is explained as the error caused by incorrect structure due to wrong placement of an item in an utterance. The example for this type of error can be seen in “I know where is the book”. The sentence is wrong because the “is” is supposed to be at the end of the sentence, which means there is an error in the order of the sentence.

1.3 Classification of Errors

Language as a tool for communication consists of the use of structured words. Kumaravadivelu (2006: 4) stated that a human language is a well-organized and well-crafted instrument. That is to say, it is clear that human language has a set of rules that works concurrently which is known as grammar. In writing, grammar works side by side with mechanics since written language cannot utilize the writers’ intonation to deliver the message. Mechanics is the part of writing that makes sure the writing makes sense for the readers and the content accurately represents the writer’s ideas. It is basically a system that controls technical aspects of writing.

Mechanics of writing consist of a few sets of rules. Biss et al (1994: 162) mentioned capitalization and punctuation as a part of mechanics. According to Harmer (2004: 44), spelling is also a part of mechanical components in writing. In addition, it is also important to pay attention to the use of abbreviations. Thus, it can be concluded there are four basic mechanics in writing composition, such as: capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

1.4 Skripsi Abstract

Abstract is one of the important components of scientific paper. It provides a brief explanation regarding the whole content of the paper. As Novita (2018) has defined, “abstract is the summary of a research paper”. Day and Gastel (2016: 55) illustrate abstract as a miniature of a paper. According to them, abstract should summarize all the sections in the paper.

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that abstract consists of the general purpose, particular aim, the reason of the study being conducted, how the study is carried out, and the result of the study. Thus, it can be concluded that abstract is generally aimed to summarize the whole paper to give the readers an overview whether the content is matched to the information that they are looking for. Therefore, it is essential for the abstract to be written briefly and clearly. Moreover, it should also be written in a perfect grammatical form.

METHOD

The researcher applied the method of descriptive qualitative in conducting this research. Meanwhile, the technique used is documentation technique. The object used in order to get the data was 22 *skripsi* abstracts written by students of English Education Department at University of Nusantara PGRI Kediri and were published in 2022. In collecting the data, the researcher collects the *skripsi* abstracts and analyzed them to find the errors committed by the students based on the rules in using mechanics of writing. Then, the researcher classified the errors found into classification proposed by Dulay et. al. which is explained in Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005: 61). Lastly, the collected data is presented in the form of percentage by using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

P = Percentage

F = Frequency of errors occurred

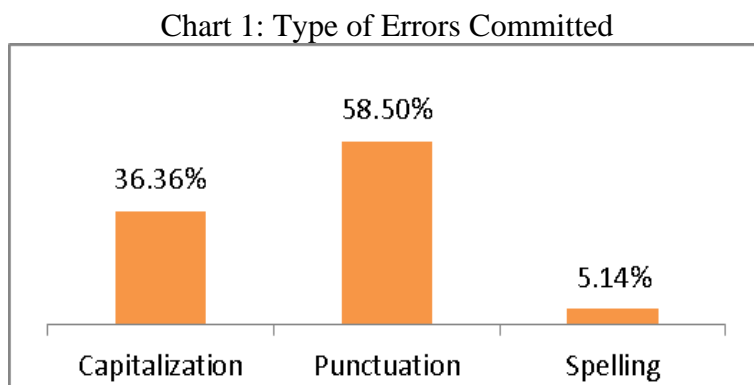
N = Total of errors

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher explains the result of the data analysis. After the process of analyzing the data, the result, then, is organized into the form of table, chart, and description. It was found that the errors of all types of mechanics (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling) were committed by the students.

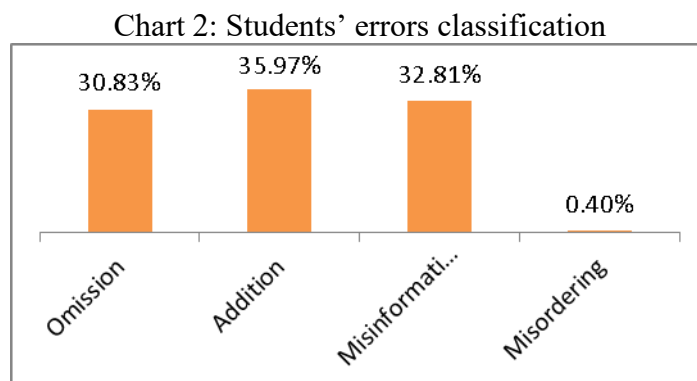
3.0 FINDINGS

3.1.1 Types of Errors Committed by the Students



Based on the analysis done by the researcher, the three types of mechanics included in the research were found in the *skripsi* abstracts written by students of English Education Department at University of Nusantara PGRI Kediri that were published in 2022. As it can be seen in the Chart 1 the most frequent error committed was punctuation, followed by capitalization, and lastly spelling. The difference between each type's frequencies was quite significant.

3.1.2 Frequency of Errors based on the Classification



Between the four categories, addition has the highest frequency compared to the other two categories. There are a total of ninety-one errors found in the category of addition which represents 35.97% of the total errors found. Error of misinformation, with a total of eighty-three errors, represents 32.81% of the total errors. Additionally, it was found that there are a total of seventy-eight errors of omission which represents 30.83% of the total errors. Lastly, 0.40% is represented by the category of misordering which only one error was found.

As is commonly known, the use of capital letters is required at the beginning of a sentence, name of a person or place, and the category of words that had been listed. Other than that, the use of capital letters is unnecessary or even wrong. Based on the analysis, the occurrence of errors in the use of capitalization in the *skripsi* abstracts written by English Education Department students was found in total of thirty-six percent of the total errors as displayed in chart 1.

(Error #1) *the Zoom application can be done anywhere ...*

(Error #2) *One of the strategies which can be applied during the pandemic is Project Based Learning.*

(Error #3) *However, the world is now in total chaos as a result of the Covid-19 virus, which has ...*

The first sample (Error #1) represents the example of error of omission. The word *the* should be capitalized since it is in the beginning of a sentence. The second sample (Error #2) is the example of error of addition in the use of capitalization. The word *project based learning* is not required to be capitalized. The writer may confuse it with the acronym form. It should be capitalized if it is abbreviated. Since it was written in the full form, it is unnecessary to be capitalized. The last sample (Error #3) is an example of error of misinformation. The underlined word is wrong because it is supposed to be capitalized. The writer may think it is the name of a particular virus, but in fact, it is an acronym of the virus' name. Thus, every letter should be written in capital letters.

It is shown in chart 1 that errors in punctuation are the most frequent errors among the other types. More than half of the overall errors found are errors in the use of punctuation. Furthermore, the highest frequency of errors in the use of punctuation is error of omission with the frequency of sixty times occurred, followed by misinformation with the number of fifty-eight, and lastly addition with the number of twenty-nine.

(Error #4) *The teacher has several roles namely as a planner, as director, as a model and as an assessor.*

(Error #5) *Considering that in this era, where technology is getting better and students'*

can learn from any source ...

(Error #6) *Recording 15 seconds video was not easy for them which caused them to take a lot of repetitions.*

The first sample (Error #4) provides an example of error of omission. The writer omitted the presence of punctuation (comma) which is stated in the list of rules that it is supposed to be added. The second sample (Error #5) represents the example for error of addition in the use of apostrophe when the writer meant to write a plural form of a noun. The last sample (Error #6) is another example of error of omission. The writer should have added a hyphen because *15 seconds* acts as the modifier of *video*. Aside from the function of *15 seconds* as the modifier of *video*, it is stated that there should be hyphenated to tell a span of time.

Furthermore, compared to capitalization and punctuation, error in spelling has the lowest frequency of errors occurred in the *skripsi* abstracts written by the students of English Education Department. According to the data displayed in chart 3.2, error of omission is the most frequent error occurred in spelling with approximately seventy-three percent occurrence among the total errors in spelling.

(Error #7) *They are able to understand the text easily ...*

(Error #8) *... and to express them-self.*

(Error #9) *Listtening activities also required in academic context ...*

(Error #10) *... speaking skills through Instagram stories futures.*

The errors were either the writer omitted a letter (Error #10) or added an unnecessary letter (Error #7 and Error #9). Confusion of the singular and plural forms of a word can also contribute to cause an error in spelling which can be seen in the second sample (Error #8). The writer confuses the form of personal possessive pronoun. When the pronoun is singular (e.g. her, him), the possessive pronoun form should also be singular (herself, himself). However, in the sentence mentioned, the pronoun is plural. Therefore, the suffix should also be in the plural form (-selves).

3.1 DISCUSSION

According to Biss et al (1994) and Harmer (2004), there are three types of mechanics rules, such as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Based on the data collected, the most frequent error committed between the three is punctuation, followed by capitalization and spelling.

However, since there are many types of punctuation included, it affects the number counted. If each type of punctuation is considered as an individual factor, then the most frequent error committed by the students is capitalization. This is in line with the previous study conducted by Maharani (2019) who found that error in capitalization is frequently committed. Moreover, the least committed error is the error in spelling. Even though there are several errors found, they were commonly simple error as double letters when it is not supposed to be written double.

In the category of punctuation, seven out of thirteen marks were found to be used in the *skripsi* abstracts. Those marks are period/full stop (.), comma (,), semicolon (;), colon (:), apostrophe ('), hyphen (-), and question mark (?). Furthermore, the researcher found that there were errors committed in using each mark. The most common errors found in punctuation is errors in using comma.

Furthermore, types of errors are classified into four categories, such as: omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. Omission occurred when there is an absence of an element when it should be presented. Meanwhile, addition, is the opposite of omission. Aside from those

two categories, students also committed the error of misinformation and misordering. Misinformation is the use of wrong element. Meanwhile, misordering is when the placement of the element is incorrect.

Based on the classification of surface strategy taxonomy, the most frequent errors found in the *skripsi* abstracts being analyzed is errors of addition which is the use of an element when it does not need to be used. It is in agreement with Ghozali (2014) that found error of addition as the most common error committed. In Novita (2018), error of addition in the use of capital letters was found to be committed 15 out of 90 errors. Thus, it can be taken into conclusion that during the process of writing the abstract, the students did not really pay attention to the detail which reflects the whole content of the *skripsi*.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result explained in the previous section, the researcher found that the students committed errors in all types of mechanics of writing, namely capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. In this case, the most frequent error committed was punctuation. However, if the types of punctuation included were counted, the most frequent error committed would be error in using capitalization. Moreover, the researcher also found that based on the classification of surface strategy taxonomy, the most frequent error committed by the students is error of addition which is the error that happens because of the presence of an element that should not be presented.

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