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## **The Grammatical Error Analysis of Students' Speaking Performance**

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**Abstract:** *The aims of this study were to investigate the types of grammatical errors in students' speaking performances, the factors that cause the grammatical errors and the difficulties faced by English department students in speaking. The data were collected through observation and interview. The sample of this study was 10 students of English department at Tarbiyah Faculty of Muhammadiyah University, Aceh. The result of this study revealed that the students made the four types of grammatical errors which classified into omission, misformation, disorder, and overgeneralization. In errors of omission, the students mostly omitted use of verbs, subject, object, prepositions, plural nouns, articles, conjunctions, superlatives form, passive verbs, and to be. In misformation type, the students made incorrect form of verbs, noun, articles, object pronoun, and chosen words. For disordering type, the incorrect placement of verbs, adjectives, nouns, and modals were committed. Last, the students overused the adverb, objects, articles, prepositions, and to be, in overgeneralization. Also, the finding indicated that interlingua and intralingua transfer are two main factors that caused students' grammatical errors in speaking. Meanwhile, the students' understanding of grammar and chosen vocabulary were indicated as the problems faced by students in speaking performance..*

**Keywords :** *Grammatical Error, Factor, Problem, Speaking Performance*

**Abstrak:** Tujuan dari studi ini adalah untuk mengetahui jenis-jenis dari kesalahan grammar (tata bahasa) dari penampilan lisan (berbicara) para mahasiswa, faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kesalahan dalam tata bahasa dan kesulitan-kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris dalam berbicara. Data yang dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan interview. Sampel dari studi ini adalah 10 mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris di Fakultas Tarbiyah Universitas Muhammadiyah Aceh. Hasil dari studi ini menunjukkan bahwa para mahasiswa membuat empat jenis kesalahan grammar, yang diklasifikasikan kedalam omission, misformation, disorder dan overgeneralization. Kesalahan pada omission, para mahasiswa kebanyakan mengurangi penggunaan kata kerja, subjek, objek, kata depan, kata benda jamak, artikel, kata hubung, bentuk superlatif, kata kerja pasif, dan to be. Dalam jenis misformation, para mahasiswa membuat kesalahan dalam bentuk kata kerja, kata benda, artikel, kata ganti orang sebagai objek, dan pemilihan kata-kata. Untuk jenis disordering, kesalahan terjadi pada peletakan kata kerja, kata sifat, kata benda, dan modal. Yang terakhir, para mahasiswa dalam overgeneralization, membuat kesalahan pada kata keterangan, objek, artikel, kata depan dan to be. Lebih lanjut, hasil menunjukkan bahwa transfer interlingua dan intralingua adalah dua faktor utama yang menyebabkan kesalahan grammar mahasiswa dalam berbicara. Sementara itu, pemahaman para mahasiswa terhadap grammar dan pemilihan kosa kata diindikasikan sebagai masalah-masalah yang dihadapi oleh para mahasiswa dalam penampilan berbicara/lisan

**Kata kunci :** *Grammatical Error, Faktor, Masalah, Speaking Performance.*

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The Grammatical Error Analysis....

(Helmanda, Safura, & Suriadi, 2018)

Speaking is very essential in conveying message or information to others. As Campbell and Kryszewska (1992), stated that “speaking is an activity on the part of one individual to make oneself understood by another and an activity on the part of the other to understand what is in the mind in the first”. It is a tool by which the speakers and the listeners are transferring idea and information to each other. So, in language learning, speaking is one of language skills that must be mastered by students.

Further, Burkart (n.d) added that “many language learners regard speaking ability as the measurement of knowing a language. These learners define fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write or comprehend oral language. They regard speaking as the most important skill and they asses their progress in term of their accomplishments in spoken communication”. It cannot be denied that speaking is the product of language learning and it is considered a crucial part of language learning process. Moreover, Nunan (1999) explained that “learning language is not only learning about the theory, but also learning about how to practice in the real communication, as a function of language”. From this statement it can be concluded that speaking is the most important one than other language skills in which students should have good ability in this skill.

However, to have a good ability in mastering speaking skills, students face some factor such as grammatical errors. This error mostly happens when students talk in speaking performance. Errors in students’ speaking are supposed as a gap in learners’ knowledge about the language. As Ellis

(1997) said that “errors reflect gaps in a learner’s knowledge; they occur because the learner does not know what is correct structure”. They commonly misunderstand in using some structure or utterance. Students in speaking class often make incorrect structure when perform their English speaking.

Learners’ knowledge about language is a set of rules of the language. Students need to apply correct grammar in their speech. Due to learning English as foreign language is not an easy task for them, grammatical errors are frequently found on their performance. Thus, the teacher needs to identify grammatical errors made by students, what cause the errors and provide a solution for them.

To identify the grammatical errors, some method are applied that called as error analysis. Brown (1987) described that “the fact that learners do make errors, and that these errors can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of system operating within learner, led to a surge of study of learner errors”. It means that the error is not the mistake that cannot be explained. But, the errors can be observed, analyzed, and classified to know what errors that students made. Furthermore, Hasyim (2002) asserted that “error analysis is an activity to reveal some errors found in speaking and writing”. So, grammatical error analysis of speaking is a measurement to determine how well students master the speaking skill.

Ellis (1997) also explained that “the goals of error analysis were pedagogic-errors provided information which could be used to sequence items for teaching or to devise remedial lesson.” This error analysis could be applied by teacher to see the

feedback of the teacher's teaching. Also, teacher can check if the teaching learning process has run well. As Corder (1981) said "error gives suggestion to the teacher because error can be level of achievement indication in teaching process done."

Absolutely, the correction of errors is very essential for leading students so that they will not make the mistakes another time. Students will use the appropriate structure in speaking English instead of the incorrect one. Moreover, error analysis also helps the students identify what errors they made because the students cannot apply their language acquisition directly without committing errors first. By analyzing their own errors, they can achieve good communication in the target language. As a result, analyzing grammatical errors on students' speaking performances plays an important role in the process of speaking development.

Realizing this fact, this study elaborated three points to be identified: 1) What types of grammatical errors that found in students' speaking performance? 2) What are the factors that cause the grammatical errors in students' speaking performance? 3) what are the difficulties that faced by students in speaking English?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Importance of Speaking**

In language teaching and learning, speaking is the most important skill among the others. It is the primary skill that language learners must have after language learning process. As Nunan (1999) stated that "if listening is the Cinderella skill in the second language learning, then speaking is the overbearing elder sister. The ability to function in

another language is generally characterized in terms of being able to speak that language". This indicates that the ability to speak is the most crucial aspect that students should master. Goh and Burns (2012) stated that "the mastery of speaking in English is a priority for many second language learners. Learners often evaluate their success in language learning, as well as the effectiveness of their English course, on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken language". Based on this statement, the students' successful in learning a language is indicated by how well they can speak and practice it in daily life.

Burkart (n.d) also said that "Many language learners regard speaking ability as the measurement of knowing a language. He defined fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write or comprehend oral language. They regard speaking as the most important skill and they assess their progress in term of their accomplishments in spoken communication". It cannot be denied that speaking plays important role in students' language learning because the mastery of a language is measured by how well students speak in that language.

### **Errors Analysis**

In order to avoid misunderstanding, it is important to distinguish between mistakes and errors. Errors reflect gaps in learner's knowledge; they occur because the learner does not know the correct one. While mistakes reflect occasional lapses in performance; they occur because, in a particular instance, the learner is unable to perform what he or she knows (Ellis, 1997). Thus, error happens in students' speaking because they do not know how to say in the correct way. But, mistake

refers to students' inability to perform as what they know.

Harmer (2007), added that "mistakes is which students can correct themselves once the mistake has pointed out to them, errors is mistakes which they cannot correct themselves-and which therefore need explanation". Errors found in students' speaking need explanation from the teachers, while mistake does not need to be explained.

According to Nunan (1999), "error is a piece of speech or writing that is recognizably different in some way from native speaker usage. Errors can occur at the level of discourse, grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation". In some studies, the errors are related to the use of sentence structure (word order) on the L2 from L1 and word by word translation from L1 into L2. For example, a student tends to say "interested with", rather than "interested in", or "I go to Sibreh yesterday". It can be seen that the structure applied in English is transferred from Indonesian as L1.

Saville (2006) described that "negative transfer is defined when a first language structure or rule is used in a target language and this use is inappropriate and considered as error". In line with this, Littlewood (1984) mentioned that "interference is negative transfer of L1 to L2 which is the cause of learning difficulties and errors". It can be summed up that the first language (L1) has significant effect in the second language learning. Errors are frequently caused by the intervention of L1 into L2. Students often make errors in their English speaking due to their knowledge of grammar, and refer their L1 to complete their speaking performance. Therefore, it ultimately

needs analysis on utterance during the speaking performance.

### **Grammatical Errors**

Richard (1971) explained that "a grammatical category is a set of syntactic features that express meanings from the same conceptual domain occur in contrast to each other, and are typically express in the same fashion". Grammar is the pattern that governs a language and every language has different rules in forming words and sentences. Students often use their rule of mother tongue when they get difficulties in producing some utterance in the second language. This phenomenon is called grammatical error.

Ellis (1997) proposed four characteristics of grammatical errors which mostly occur in students' speaking, namely omission (leaving out grammatical item required for sentences), misformation (using the wrong forms of words or structures), misordering (putting the word or sentences in the wrong order), and overgeneralization (using over grammatical forms in sentences).

#### **1. Omission**

Omission is the lack of form or grammar that is supposed to have it the sentence, but the students omit it. For example, no article, no main verb, no helping verb, no preposition, no punctuation, no possessive case, no object and no subject.

#### **2. Misformation**

Misformation is using the wrong form of words or structures. For example, misspelling, incorrect word selection, wrong form of verbs, adjectives, or nouns.

#### **3. Misordering**

Misordering in putting words and sentences

in the wrong order. For example, incorrect placement of adjectives, nouns, or verbs.

#### 4. Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization is overusing the grammatical forms in sentences. For example, putting a preposition when it is not needed, applying *ed* past tense signal with irregular verbs, putting *s* as plural signal as exceptional nouns.

#### Factors Cause the Errors

Many linguists have identified some factors that cause the error. Selinker (n.d) points out five sources of errors; language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of language learning, strategies of second language communication, and overgeneralization of language linguistic material. Language transfer is a process of transformation from L1 to L2. In adjusting to L2 students cannot avoid to make errors. These errors are frequently caused by the interference of their native language. They often borrow their L1 structure or words due to limited knowledge they have in the target language.

Likewise, Corder (1981) proposed three factors influencing error, namely interlingua transfer, intralingua transfer, and context of learning. Interlingua transfer is source of error in which there is influencing from mother tongue. This phenomenon is categorized intervention, later it is called interference. This happens in the beginning of learning a second language or foreign language. Brown (2000) stated that “interlingua transfer is a major source of errors for all L2”. Most of students’ errors in producing utterance in the target language are caused by this interlingua transfer.

The second error source is the intralingua

transfer. It is different from interlingua transfer. Intralingua transfer occurs after the second language learners get new language system then they apply it to all language units. For example, a learner has just known English verbs like *show* for present tense, and *showed* for past tense. Then the students make an overgeneralization where they add *ed* to all English verbs to show past tense, like *he comed here yesterday*. The third cause of the errors is context of learning. Errors also happen because of wrong explanation during the teaching learning process.

The teacher should analyze students’ error correctly and give the results as the contribution to increase students’ speaking performance. The sources of the errors are from the transformation process from first language (L1) to the second language (L2) which involves the interference of L1. The overgeneralization of language system is also the factor causes the students’ errors. As well, wrong context of language learning will result negative effect on students’ language development.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

This study utilized qualitative analysis method. It means that it just gives descriptions about content of this research and it does not calculate the data of this research. It is conducted in some phases includes collecting data, analyzing data and drawing the conclusion. This study also applied descriptive analysis method in analyzing the collected data obtained from students’ speaking utterances.

The sample of this study was 10 students of English department at Tarbiyah Faculty of Muhammadiyah University, Aceh. Sample is a

small group that is observed and a population is defined as all members of any well-defined class of people, events or subjects (Arikunto, 2006). To select the sample, this study used purposive sampling technique where the samples chosen based on certain characteristic in which students had taken speaking and grammar class.

To collect data, the observation and interview was conducted in this study. During collecting data, a recorder is used to record students' English speaking. Recording is to write (something) down so that it can be used or seen again in the future, or to produce a record of information or data on a particular subject, collected and preserved (Merriem Webster, 1996). Observation is conducted to gain the information about types of grammatical error of students' speaking performance and the cause of the errors made by the students. Meanwhile, interview is done to find out the problems faced in students speaking performances.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from observation and interview performed there are kinds of students' grammatical errors in speaking, factors cause the grammatical errors and students' difficulties in speaking.

Based on observation, it was found that the students made the four kinds of grammatical errors in speaking. Those are omission, misformation, misordering, and overgeneralization. In errors of omission, the students omitted use of verbs, subject, object, prepositions, plural nouns, articles, conjunctions, superlatives form, passive verbs, and *to be*. In misformation type, the students made

incorrect form of verbs, noun, articles, object pronoun, and incorrect words choosing. In misordering type, the errors are incorrect placement of verbs, adjectives, nouns, and modals. Meanwhile, in overgeneralization, the students overused the adverb, objects, articles, prepositions, and *to be*.

Students A made three kinds of grammatical error. They are omission, misformation and disorder. The student did not make an overgeneralization. In omission, there are five error sentences. They have two omission of verbs, three omission of prepositions, one omission of *to be*, one omission of subject, and one omission of passive form. It can be concluded that in misformation, there are three incorrect forms of nouns and two incorrect word selections. While in disorder, there are two incorrect sentences with one incorrect placement of adjective and one incorrect of verb.

Student B had three kinds of grammatical errors; omission, misformation, and overgeneralization. In omission, there are three sentences with one article missing, one preposition missing, and one conjunction missing. In misformation, there are two sentences with wrong form of articles, two sentences with wrong form of verbs, and one sentence with incorrect word selection. In overgeneralization, there are two sentences with overused of unnecessary word and adverb.

Student C had all kinds of grammatical errors in her speaking. In omission, she made four errors sentences which includes two omission of *to* infinitive, one omission of article *a*, one omission of plural noun. In misformation, she made three

sentences with incorrect words choosing and one sentence with wrong form adjective. In disorder, there are only one incorrect order sentence. In overgeneralization, the student has two sentences which used unneeded words.

Student D also made the four kinds of grammatical errors. In omission, the student omitted *to* infinitive, plural noun, *to be*, object and verb in five sentences. In misformation, she had four sentences contain two wrong word selections, one incorrect form of verb, and one incorrect form of object pronoun. In disorder, the student only made one wrong order sentence. Meanwhile, in overgeneralization, there are two error sentences with overused of modals and *to be*.

Student E made three kinds grammatical error; they are omission, misformation, and overgeneralization. In omission, there are six sentences consisting of three verb omissions, one subject omission, one adjective omission, and one plural noun omission. In misformation, there are two sentences have incorrect word selection. In overgeneralization, there are overused of personal pronouns and *to* infinitive in two sentences.

Student F made all kinds of grammatical errors. In omission, she has four sentences with two *to* omission, one plural noun omission, and one *most* omission. In misformation, she made three sentences with wrong form of verbs and one sentence with incorrect word selection. In disorder, there are two sentences with incorrect placement of nouns in the sentence. In overgeneralization, the student made three overused of *to* infinitive.

Student G only made two kinds of grammatical errors in his speaking. They are

misformation and overgeneralization. In misformation, the student made four incorrect forms of verbs and one wrong word selection in five sentences. In overgeneralization, he overused *to* infinitive and auxiliary verb *did*.

Student H made three kinds of grammatical error, they are omission, misformation, and overgeneralization. In omission, there are one omission of subject, one omission of plural noun, and one omission of passive form in two sentences. In overgeneralization, the student made one overgeneralization of helping verb *did*.

Student I had four kinds of grammatical errors namely omission, misformation, and disorder, and overgeneralization. In omission, the student omitted *to be*, *there are*, and passive form in two sentences. In disorder, he made one in correct order sentence. While, in disorder, he had one incorrect order of noun and one wrong order sentence. In overgeneralization, the speaker generalized the use of *to* and overused the unneeded word in the sentence.

Lastly, student J made three kinds of grammatical error. They are misformation, disorder, and overgeneralization. In misformation, the student made three incorrect forms of verbs in three sentences. In disorder, he had two incorrect placements of modal in two sentences. While, in overgeneralization, he overused the *to* infinitive.

From all kinds of grammatical errors, misformation is the most common type of error that students' made in their English speaking in which they made incorrect form of verbs, adjectives, nouns, possessive pronouns, object pronouns, article, and incorrect word selection. From students' English speaking, it also indicated

that there are two factors that caused their grammatical errors, they are interlingua transfer and intralingua transfer. In interlingua transfer, the students made errors because lack of understanding of L2 and they used their L1 structure into L2 like incorrect word choice and incorrect word formation. Intralingua transfer is when the student has already understood the system of target language, but she or he overgeneralized it, for example overused of *to*.

The result of interview performed that all of students were interested in learning English. But, they still found difficulties in speaking English. Two major problems faced by students in learning speaking are lack of mastering grammar and vocabulary. This causes students have a poor ability in speaking skill. As a conclusion, teacher should provide many activities in teaching speaking that make students can practice their language in many contexts of grammar.

## CONCLUSION

Speaking is one of the important skills in learning language. It is regarded as indicator of students' successful in language learning. Hence, they should be directed to use correct grammatical rules in their speaking. While, grammar is very important in language speaking that enables students to form sentences in correct structure. Moreover, analysis of grammatical errors is very essential in order to know how well students understand the language structures in their speaking. However, inability to apply correct grammar and choose the correct vocabulary makes students' speaking performance become poor. Due to grammatical aspect is essential in speaking skill,

the teachers are responsibility to overcome these problems by providing many strategy so that students do not make grammatical errors or use their mother tongue into their English speaking.

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