

STUDENTS' ERRORS IN USING PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this research are to know what are the errors made by the tenth grade students at MAN 2 Lubuklinggau in using punctuation marks in writing descriptive text and to know the dominant errors made by the tenth grade students at MAN 2 Lubuklinggau in using punctuation marks in writing descriptive text. The sample of the research was tenth grade students at MAN 2 Lubuklinggau. The writers used simple quantification. This is because this study did not measure the students' achievement in writing, but merely to find out the grammatical errors in students' writing. It tries to find out the types of error produced by the students in their writing, as well as the most type of errors made by the students. The main instrument that the writer used in this study was writing test. The type of errors made by the tenth grade students at MAN 2 Lubuklinggau in using punctuation marks in writing descriptive text are divided into three types that had been analyzed. The first highest frequency of error made by the tenth grade students at MAN 2 Lubuklinggau in using punctuation marks in writing descriptive is omission. In conclusion, Omission is the highest frequency in both of the functions, grammatically and semantically.

Keywords: Capitalization, Error, Punctuation,

INTRODUCTION

Writing skill seems to be more difficult to acquire than those of other language skills as some aspects of language are involved or interrelated. How sentences are made up of words according to the grammatical rules of English is an important part of writing skill. That means accuracy is very important. In other words, mastering English grammar means the students can solve one major problem in writing. In short, accuracy in writing should not be ignored.

Writing is one of the compulsory courses required for EFL students at Senior high school especially in MAN 2 Lubuklinggau. By writing, the students can express their idea, thought, feeling, and giving the information to the others. Therefore, the students are expected to have a writing competence.

Waris (2009) investigated about grammatical errors in writing produced by the students of Muhammad university of Malang. And also Salikin (2008) conducted his research about spoken error correction as perceived by Indonesia EFL learners in speaking class. According to Hansen, et al., (1998:109) stated as follows learning to use punctuation correctly will help you to communicate effectively with your reader.

Correct punctuation increases your reader's understanding of, and interest in your writing. It means that punctuation marks have an important role in writing in order to make the reader understand about what we write. When we write, the thing that helps us to express our idea is the punctuation marks. Punctuation marks help our writing will be clearer and understandable.

The researcher here found that the using of punctuation marks gives a big rule in the learners' writing, because a good punctuation is essential in clear and effective writing. It was correlated to Harmer's theory (2004:49) which states that using punctuation correctly is one of the important skills in writing. According to Bram (1995:92) states Using correct punctuation is indispensable to careful writing. Misused punctuation, for instance, a **question mark (?)** instead of a **fullstop (.)** at the end of a sentence may convey the different message, namely a question, not a statement.

Using correct punctuation can determine the quality of your writing. The first function is more mechanical and hence more easily learned; the second is part of what distinguishes the skilled writer (Anne, 1997). The mechanic in writing is defined as a system of parts in a living thing together performs a particular function. Biss (1994) states the mechanics of writing include rules for capitalization and punctuation. Correct punctuation marks makes your writing work more clear, and expresses your real ideas by knowing when to slow down, stop, or emphasize. But in contrast, when you can not put the punctuation marks correctly, the reader will have a difficulty to understand your writing. The example of error in using punctuation mark is misinformation of comma. One of the function of the comma is to separate two items in a sentence. If the sentence contains of two independent clauses and join with a coordinating conjunction, we should put a comma before the coordinating conjunction. But, if the sentence consists of two Independent clauses without any conjunction, we should not to put a comma between them in a sentence.

The Role of Punctuation Marks

Naturally, Based on Kirkman (2006:187), punctuation marks has two roles. The first is grammatical, and the other is rhetorical or also can be called as semantical.

1. Grammatical: They show where the boundaries are meant to be between segments of larger statements, and how segments of text are meant to relate to each other. So, it means that punctuation mark has a function in grammatically, because it is a part of the sentence's construction. It supports the sentence based on the punctuation's rule to avoid wrong sentences, such as comma splice (the placement of comma to separate two independent clauses), sentence fragments (incomplete thoughts and ended by a period), and fused sentences or also can be called as run-on sentences (a sentence that consist of several ideas without putting punctuation marks at all).
2. Semantically: They show the meaning of the sentence based on the placement of punctuation marks. Different used punctuation marks will create different meaning. The purpose of using punctuation marks here is to make the sentence clear and build the reader's understanding, so it needs to emphasize the semantically function of punctuation marks. Look at the following example.

The Uses of Punctuation Marks

Punctuation marks are little things, but they are essentials in writing as the nails to a carpenter. The meaning of punctuation here is to clarify the meaning of a sentence, and it is

necessary for having an effective communication. Learning to use punctuation correctly will help you communicate effectively with your reader (Hansen & McDaniel, 1998:109). It means that if we use a correct punctuation, it will create the reader's understanding and interest in our writing. When we speak, we can use hand gestures, eye movement, and voice intonation to convey our ideas, but when writing, we must rely on punctuation to tell the reader when to slow down, stop, or emphasize.

In short, we can conclude that punctuation is a little thing but it brings a big impact to our writing. There are many kinds of punctuation, and each of them has a different function. According to Harmer (2004) Punctuation has twelve characters; they are capital letter, full stop, comma, question mark, exclamation mark, colon, semicolon, a hyphen, quotation mark, brackets, dash, and apostrophe. These punctuation marks have chosen, because they were often used by the students in writing.

According to Dulay, *et al.*, (1982) the writer sometimes distinguishes between the errors caused by factors such as fatigue and inattention, what Chomsky called "performance" factors, and the errors resulting from lack of knowledge of the rules of the language, what Chomsky called "competence". The errors caused by the performance factors also called "mistakes". Mistakes is wrong language which a native speaker would not usually produce (Bartram & Walton, 1999). In addition, mistakes maybe seen as integral and natural parts of language learning (Ur, 1996).

RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the research design, the writer used quantitative research. The design of the study is survey research. This is because this study did not measure the students' achievement in writing, but merely to find out the grammatical errors in students' writing. It tries to find out the types of error produced by the students in their writing, as well as the most type of errors made by the students.

The main instrument that the writer used in this study was writing test. In doing the observation, the writer was the observer who observed the students activities in teaching learning. The role of the writer was as non-participant. Data were collected by writing test in the class room. Besides, the students did the activities based on the teacher's instruction in writing test, especially in writing descriptive text.

DISCUSSION

The researcher analyzes two functions of punctuation marks, grammatical and semantical. The researcher found 219 errors made by the students in using the punctuation marks in the function of grammatically, and 48 errors in the function of semantically. The errors occurred in various kinds of punctuation marks. There were seven kinds of punctuation marks as the researcher mentioned above that occurred in the students' written text.

Grammatically

In the function of grammatically, there were 219 errors in the seven kinds of punctuation marks made by the students. Those errors were classified into three types: omission, addition, and misformation.

Semantically

In semantically function, the errors made by the students in using punctuation marks was analyzed by emphasizing the semantic aspect. Different used of punctuation marks create the different meaning. The errors were classified into three types of errors: omission, addition, and misformation.

Types of Errors in Using Punctuation Marks in Writing Descriptive text

The errors made by the tenth semester students in using punctuation marks in writing essay are divided into three types. Those three types were analyzed into two functions, grammatically and semantically. The errors are omission, addition, and misformation. Omission is the error that is characterized by the absence of the item that actually needed in a well-sentence. This meant that in writing, the student omit the punctuation mark that actually needed in a well-formed sentence. The second type is addition. This error is characterized by the presence of the item that must not appear in the sentence. In this research, addition error happened when the presence of punctuation mark was not appropriate in a well-formed sentence.

The last error type is misformation. This type is characterized by the use wrong form in morpheme or sentence. Here, the students put the kind of punctuation marks in their text, but that was not appropriate one. Based on the data gotten by the researcher, there were any possibilities caused of errors made by the tenth grade students at MAN 2 Lubuklinggau.

The first, basically the function of punctuation marks in English and Bahasa Indonesia are mostly same. Here, the students might not understand about the function of punctuation marks in their first language. So, it could influence their writing work in English, especially in the used of punctuation marks. Secondly, Nurhayati (2013) stated The causes of errors in using punctuation marks are the students confused about the use of punctuation correctly, and forget the punctuation material due to it covered in writing one only.

In this research, those possibilities also might happen. The students sometimes felt confuse in using punctuation marks, because the lack of understanding of it. It could happen because the punctuation material was rarely taught in writing lesson class. The students also might forget about the using of punctuation marks. Sometimes, the students thought that punctuation mark is a little thing that doesn't much important in writing. They just concern in their content and structure, and ignore the punctuation marks.

The frequencies of errors in using punctuation marks in writing descriptive based on the data that has been analyzed by the researcher, there were two functions that the researcher analyzed, grammatically and semantically. Firstly, in grammatically function, the highest frequency of errors happened in omission of the using of punctuation marks.

Here, the students omit the punctuation marks that were actually needed in a well sentence. Almost of the students did omission of comma in their writing works. So, the dominant error made by the third semester in using punctuation marks in writing essay was omission of comma. Actually, comma is needed to make their sentence clear and suitable with the rules. A comma put to emphasize the sentence which must be separated based on their classification and rule, as mentioned in the chapter II based on the several theories. For the example, a comma should put to separate a series of thing in the same category. From the data gotten by the researcher, there was an example of a sentence that included in omission of comma, as in the sentence, 'The students who live there also can be more *independent responsible and active* in the large community.' From that sentence, that was a series of thing in the same category, in adjective category. There were independent, responsible, active. Those three adjective should be

separated by the commas as the rule mentioned in Bram (1995:92). The students omitted the commas by not putting anything between the adjectives.

The second highest of omission was period. Here, the students didn't put the period in their complete thought sentence. The period itself signed of the end of the sentence. The second highest frequency of errors in using punctuation marks in writing descriptive text that are made by the tenth grade students at MAN 2 Lubuklinggau was misformation errors. Misformation errors happened when the students used the wrong form in the morpheme and structure.

Here, the students used the punctuation marks, but that was not the appropriate one. The students often put a comma that actually in the end of the sentence. They arranged the sentences by separating with a comma, although it should be ended by a period. From the data, there was an example of misformation. Here, as the rule of comma, the sentences can be separated by the comma if they are in the same category, or there is a coordinating conjunction in separating the sentences.

According to Hansen and McDaniel (1998:109), the two independent clauses can be joined if there is a coordinating conjunction, and a comma should put to separate them before the conjunction. On the sentence above, they were not a coordinating conjunction there, so that there was not a compound sentence that must be separated by a comma. A comma at the sentence above should be replaced by a period. Those misformation of comma in grammatically also can be called as "*comma splice*". It was also done to the other punctuation marks that categorized in misformation error.

That was the example that the students did not allow the rule of using punctuation well. The last type of errors made by the students in using punctuation marks in writing descriptive text was addition error.

Addition Errors are the Errors

That are characterized of item that must not appear in a morpheme or sentence. Here, the students put the punctuation marks that should not appear in a sentence. In the data gotten by the researcher, the students often add the period in a sentence that was not appropriate.

A period that was between two clauses, the dependent clause and the independent clause. Here, the adding of period in the independent clause was not allowed. That was a unit of a clause that must not be separated by a period. Secondly, in semantically function, the students made many errors that were classified into three kinds of errors: omission, addition, and misformation. The dominant error was omission of comma in 66% of all errors. Actually, omission of punctuation marks, such as comma created a different meaning with the correct one. Actually, that sentence classified in omission of comma. Therefore, omission of comma absolutely created a different meaning to the writing.

The second highest frequency was addition of errors. In addition errors, the students often added the punctuation marks that could change the meaning of the students' writing work itself. For the example was in the addition of apostrophe. An apostrophe naturally used to emphasize the possession of something.

CONCLUSION

The result of this study has been presented in the previous chapter. Furthermore, the conclusion of this study is presented as the type of errors made by the tenth grade students at MAN 2 Lubuklinggau in using punctuation marks in writing descriptive text are divided into three types that had been analyzed. The first highest frequency of error made by the tenth grade

students at MAN 2 Lubuklinggau in using punctuation marks in writing descriptive is omission. Omission is the highest frequency in both of the functions, grammatically and semantically.

SUGGESTION

After finishing this research, hopefully the students can learn more about the punctuation marks in their writing. The use of punctuation marks can determine students' understanding in writing and grammar.

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