Idiosyncratic Expression: Analysis of the Junior Students' Paragraph Writing Test

Desfianur Ardhi[1], Ikhsanudin [2], Urai Salam[3]

[1,2,3]Undergraduate Study Program of English Language Education, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Tanjungpura University, Pontianak, Indonesia
Email: desfianurardhi8@gmail.com

Abstract

The study analyzes the errors in the idiosyncratic expressions of 2nd-semester undergraduates in the English Language Education Program at Tanjungpura University. The objectives of the study are to describe the types of errors encountered in the students' idiosyncratic expressions. The method of research is descriptive. The research participants were the 2nd-semester undergraduate students of the English Language Education Program of Tanjungpura University. The data were collected from corpora written by the students. Idiosyncrasy occurred in the students' text. 187 constructions, out of 244, were deemed idiosyncratic. the types of errors found in the students' idiosyncratic expressions were verb form errors (24,60%), subject and verb agreement errors (19,25%), plurality errors (9,63%), pronoun errors (9,09%), preposition errors (9,63%), verb tense errors (8,56%), word form errors (8,56%), article errors (5,88%) and word order errors (4,81%).

Keywords: Idiosyncratic Expressions, Errors, Types, Paragraph Writing

Introduction

There are two ways in which learners of a new language may approach learning its system. Some learners may use their native language to approximate the language system, while others who are aware of the differences between the target language and their native language may test the rules of the target language that they discover. Such practices may lead to negative transfers (Selinker, Cited in Wei, 2008, p. 13). The negative transfer that shows traces of the source language is called interlingual error (Dulay *et al.*, 1982, p. 171).

The negative transfer that occurs because of the incorrect application of rules of the target language is called intralingual error (Brown, 2000, p. 227);(Kholipah, Asikin, Mijoyo, Tarsini, & Khoerudin, 2024). In this context, negative transfers, either interlingual or intralingual-related are common occurrences among English language learners whose source language is Indonesian. The following examples are the errors possibly committed by English language learners whose source language is Indonesian; (1a) House big (Negative transfer). (1b) Big House (Expected form in target language). (1c) Rumah besar (Source language). (2a) I drive a car yesterday. (2b) I drove a car yesterday.

Examples (1a) and (2a) represent interlingual and intralingual errors, respectively. In example (1a), the trace of the source language is visible, as seen in (1c). The rule that is applied in (1a) is Indonesian, as seen in (1c), where the noun head 'house' precedes the modifier 'big'. However, in English, the phrase should begin with the modifier 'big', followed by the noun head 'house', as seen in (1b). Example (2a) demonstrates an incorrect application of the target language rule.

In English, verbs must agree with the time marker to indicate tense. This agreement is reflected by changing the verb form, as demonstrated in (2b). However, this rule does not exist in Indonesia. Students whose source language is Indonesian usually do not change the verb form when encountering this, thus creating unacceptable constructions in the target language. These interlingual and intralingual factors result in unacceptable constructions.

These constructions are considered a type of language that lies between the source language and the target language. This language is unique to language learners themselves and is called the learners' language. Various language scholars have given different names to this type of language. Corder (1976) calls it Idiosyncratic language and categorizes it as the fourth class idiosyncratic. The following research shows that Indonesian students tend to use non-standard English structures which can be considered as idiosyncratic dialects.

Adib (2012) conducted a study on grammatical errors in the speaking ability of the English department students at IAIN Walisongo. He analyzed the errors made by 8 students and found that each of them made different kinds of errors. However, he identified some common errors such as omission errors, substitution errors, misinformation, and incorrect use of verbs. Adib concluded that the errors occurred due to factors such as interference of the source language and lack of proficiency in the target language.

Choiriyah (2007, p. 52-53) conducted a study on error analysis using English students' theses as samples. In her research, she employed the surface strategy taxonomy to classify errors into several categories, including omission, addition, misordering, and misformation. In total, she found 70 syntax mistakes, comprising 17 errors of omission, 6 errors of addition, 20 errors of misformation, and 1 error of misordering.

Habibullah (2018) analyzed students' thesis to identify the types and causes of errors made by students in their grammar. He specifically focused on the surface strategy taxonomy as a guideline. Among the four types of errors, omission was found to be the most common, with 80 errors. Additionally, there were 25 addition errors and 9 misordering errors. Habibullah attributed these errors to the student's source language and their learning strategy.

The writer assumes that the second-semester students of the English study program at Tanjung Pura University can produce idiosyncratic expressions. Since idiosyncrasies follow certain sets of rules, the writer plans to use the error analysis method to study and describe the types of errors found in the students' idiosyncratic dialect. Error Analysis includes stages that can be used to describe the types of errors

that occur in learners' language (idiosyncratic expression), such as analyzing, identifying, describing, and classifying errors.

The research will use paragraph-writing texts written by second-semester students who are enrolled in paragraph-writing classes of the English Language Education Study Program at the Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Tanjungpura University. Writing has been selected as the data collection method because it is an accurate way of obtaining information. The objective of the study is to identify the different types of errors present in the students' texts and the frequency of each error.

Research Method

For this research, the researcher will collect data, and analyze and describe the students' corpus. Descriptive qualitative research is the most appropriate method to facilitate this process. Creswell (2012) states that text and image data are the primary sources for conducting qualitative research design. He further explains that data collection, analysis, and writing are the stages that characterize qualitative research design. To serve this, the writer will use the error analysis method. Error analysis is a method to study the types and causes of errors in second language production.

The participants of this study are the students of Tanjungpura University who are registered in paragraph writing classes. The goals of the study are to know the types and the most frequent types of errors in the students' idiosyncratic expressions. The total number of participants number was 15 students. The participants came from similar backgrounds in linguistic environment and language acquisition.

In this research, the writer will collect the corpora made by the 15 participants. As stated by Desagulier (2017, p. 3), the term "corpora" refers to language data that is gathered from different sources, both written and spoken, and utilized for language analysis. The corpora in this research were the texts written by the semester-2 students who are enrolled in the paragraph writing class. The corpora will be obtained by using clinical elicitation. Clinical elicitation can be derived from interviews or written compositions made by the respondents (Ellis, 1994).

In this research, the writer chose written composition to elicit the corpora. The students are assigned to write a 120-word paragraph. Participants are free to choose their topics and have 60 minutes to develop their ideas into a coherent paragraph. When the corpora are obtained, the next process is to sort out the data from the corpora.

When the corpora have been obtained, the writer will do the following steps. a) Sorting out the idiosyncratic phrases and clauses from the corpus. b) Categorizing the idiosyncratic phrases and clauses into the types of errors such as verb tense, subject-verb agreement, verb form, singular/plural noun ending, word form, articles, word order, prepositional, and pronoun errors. c) Elaborating and interpreting the findings that are completed with the relevant examples. Finding the frequency of each of the errors encountered in the students' idiosyncratic expressions.

Results and Discussion

The findings are presented in the order of the research questions raised in this study. The study specifically addressed the following questions: 1) What is the frequency of each type of errors that occur in the students' idiosyncratic expressions? 2) What is the most dominant type of errors that occur in the students' idiosyncratic expression?

The detailed frequency of the types of errors encountered in the students' idiosyncratic expressions can be seen in the Table below. This table shows that verb form error is the error that is the most frequently made by the respondents, and the last one is word order.

Table 1. The frequency of each error

NO	Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Verb form	46	24,60
2.	Subject-verb agreement	36	19,25
3.	Plurality	18	9,63
4.	Pronoun	17	9,09
5.	Preposition	18	9,63
6.	Verb tense	16	8,56
7.	Word form	16	8,56
8.	Article	11	5,88
9.	Word order	9	4,81
	Total	187	100%

Verb form refers to the different forms of a verb, such as the base form, present form, past form, future form, gerund, and participle. The use of these forms not only indicates the tense but also the aspect, mood, voice, and agreement with the subject or object (Reed & Cappelle, 2006). verb form error occurs when a verb is not formed correctly. In this research Verb form errors are caused by alternating form (18), double marking (1), omission of the copula be (4), omission of the main verb (2), omission of suffix -ing (6), regularization (7) and simple addition (8).

The form of a verb is determined by the subject. A singular subject requires a singular verb and vice versa Davidson (2002) Subject-verb agreement error occurs when the subject does not agree with the verb in person or number. In this research, the subject and verb agreement errors are caused by alternating form (9), double marking (7), omission of auxiliary verb (3), omission of linking verb (6), omission of suffix -s (6), and regularization (5).

According to Herring (2016) nouns are words that represent a person, place, or thing. In a sentence, nouns can serve as the subject or object of a verb or preposition. Additionally, they can come after linking verbs to rename or re-identify the subject of a sentence or clause. In this research, the plurality errors are caused by alternating form (1), double marking (1), omission of suffix -s (13), and regularization (3).

Herring (2016) states that pronouns are the words used to refer to nouns Pronoun error occurs when the learners use inappropriate pronouns to refer to the antecedent, or when the learners fail to distinguish the use of subject pronouns, object pronouns, and

possessive pronoun in the sentence. In this research, the pronoun errors are caused by alternating form (15), double marking (1), and omission of subject pronouns (1).

Preposition functions as a connector between nouns, pronouns, phrases, and other words in a sentence (McClumpha & Grote, 2016, p. 85). A preposition is commonly used to help explain time and place. In this research, the preposition errors are caused by alternating form (8), double marking (1), omission of prepositions (3), and simple addition (6).

Verb tenses illustrate the connection between the time of the statement and the time of the action or state (Brown, 2016, p. 4). In this research, the verb tense errors are caused by alternating form (14), omission of suffix -ed (1), and regularization (1). Error in word form happens when the wrong part of speech is chosen. In this research, the word form errors are all caused by alternating forms.

Articles are words such as a, an, and the. They precede the noun phrase (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2009). In this research, the article errors are caused by alternating form (2), double marking (1), omission of articles (7), and simple addition (1). The sequence of words in a sentence is called word order. It is important to arrange words according to grammatical rules to ensure that the writer's intended meaning is conveyed accurately in the target language. In this research, the word order errors are caused by misplacement of adverb (1), misplacement of article (1), misplacement of noun head (4), misplacement of subject and verb (3).

Below is an illustration of each type of error. The examples (3a to 37a) show the errors in subject-verb agreement, verb form, verb tense, article, plurality, preposition, pronoun, word form, and word order respectively. (3a) Those things _very beneficial. (3b) Those things are very beneficial. (4a) it will be helpful and make your study easier. (4b) it will be helpful and make your study easier. (5a) In 2012, my family and I go to Singapore. (5b) In 2012, my family and I went to Singapore. (6a) You can use a gadget to take pictures. (6b) You can use a gadget to take pictures. (7a) The government has tried to solve this problem. (7b) The government has tried to solve these problems. (8a) I was amazed at the cleanliness there. (8b) I was amazed by the cleanliness there. (9a) A child who watches TV will have a short vision. (9b) A child who watches TV will have a short vision. (10a) Those things are very beneficial. (10b) Those things are very beneficial. (11a) As parents or as the people closest. (11b) As parents or as the closest people.

The sentence (3a) contains an error in subject and verb agreement. The sentence lacks a linking verb between the subject and the complement. The acceptable form of the sentence can be seen in the example (3b). The sentence (4a) contains an error in the verb form. The addition of the suffix s in the verb is unacceptable because it is preceded by the modal will, therefore it should be in the bare form as seen in the example (4b). The sentence (5a) contains an error in the verb tense because of the disagreement between the time marker in 2012 with the verb go. the student used the present form of the verb instead of the past form as seen in (5b).

The sentence (6a) contains an error in the use of the article because the student marked the word picture with both plural and singular markers. The noun picture should

be in plural form only such as in (6b). The sentence (7a) contains an error in plurality, because of the disagreement between the demonstrative pronoun with the noun problems. The demonstrative pronoun there is a plural form, therefore it should be followed by the plural noun as seen in the example (7b). The sentence (8a) contains an error in the selection of prepositions.

The sentence is in passive form, therefore using the preposition about is inappropriate because it doesn't show what or who performs an action. The appropriate preposition used to show what or who performs something in a passive sentence is by as seen in the example (8b). The sentence (9a) contains an error in the use of pronouns. The addition of the pronoun they in this sentence causes double marking where two subjects are used in the same clause. The sentence has got a subject that acts; therefore, the pronoun has to be omitted as seen in the example (9b). The sentence (10a) shows an error in word form.

The sentence requires an adjective form of the word benefit as a subject complement, but the student selected the noun form. The adjective form has to be selected as the subject complement as seen in (10b). The sentence (11a) shows an error in word order, especially in the noun phrase. The placement of the noun head people as seen in the sentence is incorrect. When a noun phrase consists of a noun and an adjective, the adjective should precede the noun as seen in (11b).

The most dominant type of errors that occur in the students' idiosyncratic expression is verb form error contributing 24,6% of all errors. The errors in the verb form are caused by alternating form (18), double marking (1), omission of the copula be (4), omission of the main verb (2), omission of suffix -ing (6), regularization (7) and simple addition (8).

The errors of alternating form, double marking, omission of the copula be, omission of the main verb, omission of suffix -ing, regularization, and simple addition are illustrated respectively by the examples () to () (12a) gadgets can help you to get some information. (12b) gadgets can help you to get some information. (13a) who will be responsible for this case? (13b) who will be responsible for this case? (14a) It makes them want to learn or play with their friends. (14b) It makes them not learn or play with their friends. (15a) I hope I can back to Singapore. (15b) I hope I can go back to Singapore. (16a) Some advantages and disadvantages of using a gadget are. (16b) Some advantages and disadvantages of using a gadget are. (17a) Some television shows can affect and bring negative impacts. (17b) Some television shows can affect and bring negative impacts. (18a) They will lose time for learning. (18b) They will lose time for learning.
infinitive to. The verb form that follows infinitive to has to be a base verb form as seen in the example (12b).

The sentence (13a) is erroneous because of the absence of a copula between the modal will and the adjective responsible. The modal will is a helping verb that explains the main verb and the adjective responsible cannot act as a verb. Therefore, this sentence needs a copula that can act as a main verb as seen in (13b). The sentence (14a) is erroneous because the student added the modal will in a causative construction. In the causative

construction, either in affirmative or negative form, the second verb has to be in the bare form as seen in the example (14b).

The sentence (15a) is erroneous because it lacks the main verb as seen in the example (15b). The sentence (16a) is erroneous because the student omitted the suffix ing after the preposition of. The verbs that follow prepositions have to take gerund form as seen in the example (16b).

The sentence (17a) is erroneous because the student regularizes the attachment of suffix s to the verb that follows the modal. The verbs that follow a modal have to be in base verb form as seen in the example (17b). The sentence (18a) is erroneous because the student added copula before the main verb lose. The copula be is used as a linking verb to link a subject and its complements such as nouns or adjectives. This sentence does not need a linking verb such as the copula be, because it has got a main verb as seen in (18b)

Conclusion

The research found 187 idiosyncratic expressions out of 218 constructions. The students' idiosyncratic expressions in writing contain errors in various areas including verb form (46), subject-verb agreement (36), plurality (18), pronoun (17), preposition (18), verb tense (16), word form (16), article (11), and word order (9). Error in verb form is the most dominant type contributing to 24.6% of all errors. The results of the above research indicate that errors in students' writing skills, particularly in the grammar aspect, still occur. This implies that the students have not yet mastered the grammar aspect well.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adib, Qowimul. (2012). Grammatical error analysis of speaking of english department students (a study at 2010 speaking class of ELT department of IAIN Walisongo). *Unpublished Thesis. Walisongo State Institute for Islamic Studies Semarang*.

Brown, H. Douglas. (2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. https://doi.org/10.2307/3586319

Corder, S. P. (1976). Error Analysis and Interlanguage. *Applied Linguistics*, *2*.

Creswell, John W. (2012). *Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluation quantitative and qualitative research*. Boston: Pearson Education.

Davidson, George W. (2002). *Phrases, clauses and sentences*. Learners Pub.

Dulay, Heidi, Burt, Marina, & Krashen, Stephen. (1982). *Language Two*. https://doi.org/10.2307/327086

Declreck, R., Reed, S. & Capelle, B. 2008. The Grammar of the English Tense System. Walter de Gruyter. New York: Mouton de Gruyter. Tersedia di https://www.researchgate.net/publication/27688194.

Desagulier, G. 2017. Corpus linguistics and statistics with R. Springer. Paris: Springer Nature. Tersedia di http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-59-64572-8.

Dulay, H., Burt, M. & Krashen, S. 1982. Language Two. New York: Oxford University Press.Ellis, R. 1994. The Study of Second Language Acquisition. United States of America: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, Rod. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford University.

Greenbaum, Sidney, & Nelson, Gerald. (2009). *An introduction to English grammar*.

Pearson Education.

Habibullah, Moh Miftahul. (2018). *An Error analysis on grammatical structures of the studenst'theses*.

Herring, Peter. (2016). *Complete English grammar rules*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Kholipah, Siti Ainul, Asikin, Muhamad Zaenal, Mijoyo, Mijoyo, Tarsini, Iin, & Khoerudin, Muhamad. (2024). Optimization of Natural Resources to Realize Community Welfare. *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Teknologi*, *5*(2), 577–592.

Kaweera, C. 2013. Writing error: A review of interlingual and intralingual interference in EFL context. English Language Teaching, 6(7).

Reed, Susan, & Cappelle, Bert. (2006). The Grammar of the English Tense System. *(No Title)*.

Tarone, E. & Han, Z.H. 2014. Interlanguage: Forty Years Later. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Verspoor, M. & Sauter, K. 2000. English Sentence Analysis. English Sentence Analysis. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Wei, X. 2008. Implication of IL Fossilization in Second Language Acquisition. English Language Teaching, 1(1).

Wei, Xueping. (2008). Implication of IL Fossilization in Second Language Acquisition. *English Language Teaching*, *1*(1). https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v1n1p127