

Students' Difficulties in Grammar of Seventh Grade Junior High School 1 Magelang

Atiqoch Novie Ameliani

English Department, Tidar University, Magelang and 56195, Indonesia

tikanovieameliani98@gmail.com

Abstract

Learning English will be effective if we also understand the grammar. Grammar is the essential thing in learning English. However, there are still many students have difficulties in understanding grammar. Therefore, this research study aims at: (1) finding out the students' difficulties in grammar of the seventh grade of Junior High School 1 Magelang and (2) finding out the causal factors of students' difficulties in grammar. The study was a case study. It used a qualitative descriptive approach. The participants consisted of 30 students. The main data were obtained from the 30 students' compositions. The other data were collected from observation, test, questionnaire, and interviews. The results show that students have difficulties in grammar involves tenses, plurality, article, preposition and pronoun. Besides that, there are some factors that cause students' difficulties in grammar such as negative interlanguage and intralingual transfers in the forms of adverb interference, copulative verb interference, word-order interference, tense-form interference, overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restriction, and incomplete application of rules.

Key words: students' difficulties, grammar, causal factors

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a main point of communication because the purpose of communication is getting the meaning. The similar thing happen in learning English. Everyone has known that English is universal language that will accompany people of all the countries in the world. It means that everyone can communicate with other using English. Thus each children in early age is taught English. There are many thing when learning English such as the structure, the types include the skills and so on. The structure in English we usually called it grammar. Brown (1980: 41) stated in the process of language learning, learners will get more problem and some difficulties, for example their pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and other aspects of language. Moreover, Wilkins (1980: 197) pointed out that aspects of language will cause the errors and sometimes happens due to the interface from mother tongue. That is why, as one aspects of language, grammar cannot be separated from learning English.

Grammar is an important thing especially in the use of language process. It is an essential part both in spoken and written language. Learning English will be effective if we also understand the grammar. As we know, grammar is a pattern or structure of the sentence. Therefore, grammar will help learners to understand the meaning of the sentence. Not only a sentence, learners will get the point of the others' means can be form of utterances or paragraphs. The use of grammar is to identify the grammatical form which shows the meaning.

Learning English involves the grammar which is taught for the young learners not always be easy. Grammar that is an essential part of the language that cannot be understood easily. Learners especially young learners usually face the difficulties in grammar. When they are learning English, they should know the structure or the pattern of the sentence because it is different with their own language. Students usually get confused when they want to make sentence grammatically.

In this case, students are known that they have difficulties in understanding grammar. The term of language does not seem to have fixed and clear definition. Quirk (2000) said that grammar as complex system in which all parts of grammar are mutually defining and there is no simple linear path we can take in explaining one part in terms of another. The grammatical correctness is described as analyzing and explaining in a sentence while the letter is focused in the attempt of making the learners understand how to use the language in a real context.

Patterson (2001) explained that through low understanding of grammar, students will have no insight knowledge of what they should do when they write also fail in expressing their ideas in written production. The important grammar can be seen in the previous statement because by using grammar, students can express their feeling freely. Thus students should have a deep understanding of target language grammar.

1.2 Research Problem

1. What are the difficulties types in grammar of seventh grades at SMPN 1 Magelang?
2. What are the possible causes of those difficulties in grammar?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study are:

1. To classify the difficulties in grammar of the seventh grades at SMPN 1 Magelang.
2. To find the causes of the students' difficulties of seventh grades at SMPN 1 Magelang.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study is hoped some concrete information to the seventh student of SMPN 1 Magelang about their difficulties in grammar. After knowing the difficulties and its causes, the students will be able to know their own difficulties in grammar so they will try for studying them well and seriously. So, it will be hoped giving some better changes in the process of learning English especially in learning grammar.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The limitation of this study is to find the difficulties of seventh grades at SMPN 1 Magelang especially the students of VII B and the researcher only concerns on analyzing difficulties of problems on the grammar. The difficulties problems include tense and tense discussed only simple present because this tense is commonly use and others are article, conjunction, preposition, singular and plural, passive verb form and sentence structure.

1.6 Literature Review

Difficulty can be defined as the effort needed to complete task. It is a relative concept with objective and subjective legitimacy. It is also comparative concept in that some starting point and goal are indicated and unstated comparison implied. Higa's notion (1966) in Hadler (2005) explained the existence of abstract concept such as difficulty. Cronbach (1984) in Levine (2006) pointed out at the difficulty in terms of *anxiety* which 'expresses motivation to avoid psychological failure'. From these explanations, difficulty as an abstract concept on people's mind.

According to Al-Mekhlafi (2011: 70) there are three areas of teaching grammar that have to be considered: grammar as rules, grammar as form and grammar as resource. For many 1,2 learners, learning grammar often means learning the rules of grammar and having intellectual knowledge of grammar. A better approach is perhaps to see grammar as one of many resources that we have in language which helps us to communicate. We should see how grammar relates to what we want to say and how we expect others to interpret what our language use and its focus.

Haudeck has reported that many students have difficulty in internalizing grammar rules although these have been taught intensively (1996, cited in European Commission, 2006). Many different factors contribute as the cause of students' difficulties in understanding grammar. Several those factors are the learner's background, some within the teaching technique and some within the learner's environment.

The learner's background means something which comes from the learners themselves. This factor is from the internal of the learner itself. Then, teaching techniques as one of school factor who has important role to increase students learning achievement. The other factor is learner's environment that can influence the students in mastering and learning English.

Moreover, Selinker in Richards (1977: 37) explained that there are five sources of errors namely: language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of second language learning, strategies of second language communication and overgeneralization of linguistic material of target language. On the other hand, Brown (2000: 223-227) defined sources of error into, 1) interlingual transfer, that is the negative influence of the mother tongue of learner, 2) intralingual transfer, that is the negative transfer of items within the target language, 3) context of learning, which overlaps both types of transfer, 4) communication strategies. It is clearly stated that there are some reason of students' error which is show the difficulties of the students.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Design

The study is classified a case study using descriptive qualitative method. It is aimed at findings out the forms causal factors of students' difficulties in grammar. Case study as an

intensive study of an individual or group that is seen having a particular case. A case study can be ranged from one individual to a class, a school or an entire community. The data gathered include interview data, narrative accounts, classroom observation and written documents.

The design of the study is descriptive qualitative where the researcher uses descriptive form. Descriptive qualitative is used in this study because the data obtained by the researcher based on qualitative data then the researcher explains results into descriptive form. The descriptive design is appropriate with the study since it describes the difficulties in understanding grammar among the seventh grade students at SMPN 1 Magelang and the factors that cause the students' difficulties.

2.2 Research Setting

The setting of the study is at SMPN 1 Magelang. It is located on Pahlawan Street 66 Magelang City. In this school, English class was held twice a week, every Friday and Saturday and every meeting was held for 80 minutes (2x40 minutes/meeting).

2.3 Research Subject

The subject of the study is the 7th grade students at SMPN 1 Magelang because there was a tendency that they have difficulties in understanding grammar. The subject is VII B which is consisted of 30 students. There were 11 boys and 19 girls in the class.

2.4 Data and Source of Data

Source of the data is important thing in a study. The sources data of this study are:

1. The seventh grade students at SMPN 1 Magelang. The students are the primary source of the data from which the researcher observed their difficulties and cause of difficulties in understanding grammar by giving them questionnaire. The researcher also interviewed them to get some information.
2. The English teacher of the seventh grade students, Nanda Vidyastria. The researcher interviewed the English teacher to get some information related with students' difficulties in learning grammar.

2.5 Research Procedure

There will be some procedures to be followed during the study, in order to find out the valid data to answer the research problems.

The procedures are:

1. The researcher prepares all the instruments to collect the data.

There are steps in preparing the instrument:

- a. Deciding the test. Test adopted from tutoring materials for the national examination to junior high school and consulted to the English teacher in that school.

- b. Making questionnaires. The question in questionnaire related to the theory of the factor contribute as the cause of students' difficulties in understanding grammar. After making the questionnaires, she asks the lecture to validate her instruments.
 - c. Making some questions to interview the English teacher and some students related with the teaching and learning process especially in learning grammar.
2. The researcher asks permission to the headmaster to conduct the research in that school.
 3. The researcher asks the permission to the English teacher to join his class for introducing the study.
 - a. The first meeting, the researcher observes the students in the classroom.
 - b. The second meeting, the researcher gives the test to the students.
 - c. The third meeting, the researcher gives questionnaire and the students fill it.
 - d. The fourth meeting, the researcher interviews the teacher and the students to get some information relate to the study.
 4. The researcher collects all of the data, analyze the data and make conclusion as the study.

2.6 Data Collection Technique

The researcher uses some ways of collecting the data, they are:

a. Questionnaire

Questionnaire is a technique of collecting data by delivering or distributing a questionnaire to the respondent with the hopes that they will respond to the questionnaire.

In this study, the researcher used close form questionnaire which is provided two options for each questions. The questionnaire was distributed after the students did the test.

b. Interview

Interview is one of the techniques of collecting data that is done dealing a question directly to the interviewee. Interview will help the interviewer to know what the interviewee feels about something. In this study, the researcher interviews the English teacher and some of the students who were detected as having difficulties in understanding grammar. It is used to know more detail information both of the teacher and the students in order to support the data obtained through the questionnaire.

2.7 Research Instrument

There were some instruments in the study: a guidance of interview, a questionnaire, a test and a form of observation. Meanwhile techniques used to validate the data were triangulation, continuous observation, member-check, discussion with colleagues and lengthening the period of observation (Moleong, 2006: 327).

a. Test

The test is included in diagnostic test. The diagnostic test is used to determine students' strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills. Furthermore, the diagnostic test is used in this study to diagnose the students' difficulties in understanding grammar.

The researcher has conducted a test which consisting of five questions. The students are given 60 minutes to answer the questions in the test.

b. Questionnaire

Questionnaire is a written form of question that used to get information from the respondents. The questions are related to the students' difficulties.

c. Interview Guide

The interview was held to some seventh students and the English teacher of seventh grade students of SMPN 1 Magelang as the respondent who have difficulties in understanding English grammar and the English teacher as the person who teach grammar.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result shows that many students have difficulties in learning English because grammar. From the participants, they said that grammar is the most difficult thing.

Some participants said, "Although I can speak English, sometimes I get confused when arranging words and sentences relate to the grammar."

Not only that, the students usually face the other difficulties such as when making sentence or paragraph relate to the tenses. They get the difficulty in choosing the suitable verbs. Sometimes they do not use the appropriate tenses so it makes the sentence is meaningless.

The students have difficulties in grammar because of many things. Richards (1974: 124) differentiates three sources of competence errors:

1. Interference errors occurs as a result of the use of element from one language while speaking another. The errors that caused by another tongue or it is called interlangua.

Example :The pencil yellowit should be The yellow pencil

2. Intralingual errors reflect the general characteristics of rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply.

3. Development errors occur when the learner attempts to build up hypothesis about the target language on the basis of limited experience.

e.g: we can look at the way Indonesian sentences *for* English sentences

- a. Kami sedang makan sekarang For We are eating now
- b. Kami makan kemarin For We ate yesterday
- c. Kami akan makan besok For We are going to eat tomorrow

From the explanation above, it is clear that the way Indonesian sentence is different from the English way. Therefore, the students get difficulties in understanding and applying the grammar of English. Sometimes, they make the sentence using Indonesian form.

This study deals with the students' English grammar mastery. So this study conducted on analyzing grammatical errors of students' written text made by students of the eleven grades of SMPN 1 Magelang in Class VII B, it focused on sentence problem include: tenses (simple present only), article, conjunction, preposition, singular and plural, passive verb form and sentence structure.

Besides that, it has been done to make simpler and detail for collecting the data and researching. The researcher choose the SMPN 1 Magelang because the place is a great school in that area and this school also has English Club program to develop the students comprehension in English skill; the English teacher of the school usually uses English language in transferring materials during the teacher learning process. Moreover, the other reason is because the researcher has a chance to practice teaching in this school.

The researcher try to find the students' difficulties in learning grammar. The statement that make this study interested enough to be studied is the statement from Wang (2010). He stated "some people say that to be understood a language is to understand its grammar and vocabulary well." From the statement, we realize how the important grammar is.

4. CONCLUSION

Many problems are faced by young learners or students. Many researches are done to investigate and observe what really happened in this case. Grammar is a big problem when students learn English as EFL learners. English usually signed by grammar. Grammar is an important one tools in learning English. It will help us much in learning English when we understand about the grammar.

Then, the result of the research also will show the students' difficulties in grammar. Beside that, it will be useful not only for the students of the seventh grades of SMPN 1 Magelang but also for the teachers and any other people in the education environment.

5. REFERENCES

- A.M.Al-Mekhlafi, & Nagaratman. (2011). Difficulties in teaching and learning grammar in an EFL context. *International Journal of Instruction*, 69-92.
- F.Y.Ferdhiyanto. (2014). *Junior high school students' grammar problems in their written production*. Salatiga: Satya Wacana University.
- H.D.Brown. (1980). *Principle of language and teaching*. New Jersey: Prentice hALL.

- H.D.Brown. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* . London: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Hadler, G. (n.d). *English language learning difficulty in Hongkong schools*. Retrieved May from <http://www.tuition.com.hk/academic/difficulties.htm>.
- Moleong, L. (2006). *Metode penelitian kualitatif*. Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Patterson. (2001). Summary and concluding comments. *Journal of Occupational and Organization Psychology Vol.74 Issue 4*.
- Richards, J. (1974). *Error Analysis in Longman*. London.
- S.M.Dewi. (2014). *Difficulties in teaching grammar in junior high school*. Salatiga: Satya Wacana University.
- Wilkins, D. (1980). *In linguistic in language teaching*. London: Edward Arnold Ltd.