Error Recognition of EFL Learners in Subject-Verb Agreement and Parallel Structure at STIBA Persada Bunda Pekanbaru

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Abstract: In teaching grammar in this era especially in error recognition, the learners should know and choose the error option. In this research, the researcher took the error recognition in answering the subject verb agreement and parallel structure since these two parts of error recognition are important parts in grammar. This study aims at evaluating error recognition of EFL learners in subject-verb agreement and parallel structure. This research used quantitative method explained descriptively, since the population was 18 learners, so the sample used in this research was 18 learners. In collecting data, the questions were 30 questions divided into two categories—subject verb agreement and parallel structure. Then, the learners were asked to answer error recognition about subject-verb agreement and parallel structure, counted the score of the correct number and wrong number, and classified the answer based from the form of the question. The result showed that from all questions, the learners’ ability in answering error recognition falls into good level. Findings of the research are divided into two things. First, the error recognition in subject-verb agreement is very difficult to answer by the learners since the learners could not differentiate the subject whether it is singular or plural. While second, the error recognition in parallel structure, especially in paired conjunction, it is easy to understand for the learners since the format of paired conjunction and the word used should be parallel. However, in the comparison, it is hard for the learners to choose the parallel structure of comparison.

Keywords: error recognition in grammar, subject-verb agreement, parallel structure

1. Introduction

Teaching grammar should apply drilling approach as exercises, especially in advanced level or in higher education, not only in choose the best answer for grammatical correct but also in error recognition of grammatical options. Error recognition, in some ways, seemed easy to answer. However, in error recognition, the learners should pay attention to the error option. In university level, the learners in STIBA Persada Bunda Pekanbaru were expected to gain more information of the grammar material to explore their knowledge. For instance, in this research, the researcher tried to focus on subject-verb agreement and parallel structure material. These two material were very important to be mastered. So, the researcher wanted to examine error recognition of EFL learners of STIBA Persada Bunda Pekanbaru in subject-verb agreement and parallel structures.

Based on the background of this study, the formulation of the study is formulated as: the learners’ ability and the type of error made by the learners in subject-verb agreement and parallel structure of STIBA Persada Bunda Pekanbaru. This study is limited in the subject-verb agreement and parallel structure—in paired conjunction and comparison. These points were categorized into the most common error used by learners and the most common established in error recognition of TOEFL questions. The needs to conduct the study in examining the learners’ ability in answering error recognition of subject-verb agreement and parallel structures are:
1) as the information for the lecturer about the learners’ ability in answering error recognition of subject-verb agreement and parallel structures in higher education level.

2) as the information about the learners the error option better than the other correct options in answering error recognition of subject-verb agreement and parallel structures.

3) as the information for the following researchers in conducting the research about the most valuable material in teaching grammar to solve the learners’ problem in answering error recognition of subject-verb agreement and parallel structures.

2. Method

The researcher used descriptive quantitative research design in order to examine the learners’ ability in answering error recognition of subject-verb agreement and parallel structures in higher education level. The descriptive research involves collecting data to test or to answer question concerning the status of the subject. In this research, the researcher calculated data quantitative by using formula and described it descriptively.

The population of this research was the fifth semester learners of STIBA Persada Bunda Pekanbaru in academic year 2016/2017. The population of this research was the sample of this study since the number of the learners below 100 persons, about 18 persons. If the population less than 100 persons, the sample will be all population number. In this research, the researcher collected data by using test of error recognition. The test was multiple choices test consisting of 30 questions from two part material—subject-verb agreement and parallel structure. The questions were adapted from book Understanding and Using Grammar.

The data collected by using test was analyzed by using these procedures. First, the researcher counted the number of error made by learners individually. Second, the researcher classified the questions in the same difficulties level. Then, the result could be seen clearly by each component in in answering error recognition of subject-verb agreement and parallel structures. Formula below was used to examine the learners’ ability described by mean score in answering error recognition of subject-verb agreement and parallel structures

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M = \frac{X}{N}
\]

M = mean score
X = correct answer
N = Number of all items

After calculating the learners’ score, the researcher categorized the learners’ ability in answering error recognition of subject-verb agreement and parallel structures

3. Literature Review

The research about investigating and analyzing five types of errors in learners’ written works. The result showed that the subject verb agreement was one of the frequent type of error caused by the mother tongue about 13.48%. The second research was about participants’ language proficiency level and their error types in writing. The result showed that there were significant differences among proficiency groups on overall error types they made in their compositions. The third research investigated on GEC (Grammatical Error Correction) for learners of English as a Second Language (ESL)—as a translation task from incorrect into correct English. It was to explore new models for
developing end-to-end GEC systems for all error types. The result showed that it was very useful by evaluating system performance for each error type. The error type information in all-errors GEC (Grammatical Error Correction) systems was very few published results.

The last research investigated on English grammar, error analysis, and language teaching Theory. Theory of error analysis was used to analyze the learners’ error based on the Linguistic Category Taxonomy particularly for the English passive voice, and Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was used to find out the similarity and the difference between English and Indonesian passive voice. The result showed that the highest percentage of error was 31.3% in the error category related to the misformation of present perfect in passive voice. While, the lowest percentage of error was 0.9% for the category of error related to the incorrect use of past participle. Based on the Comparative Taxonomy, the source of learners’ error was Interlingual Error.

3.1. Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement deals with the main sections deal with the problem of number: quantities and various aspects of singular-plural agreement between subject and verb. For example, “Every flower, plant, and tree needs water.” “Each novel and literary book is listed in the catalog of the online system.” These words “every” and “each” should be followed by singular form of noun and should agree with the verb of singular form, too. Then, the researcher also took some irregularities subject-verb agreement from the grammar book.

Some irregularities of subject-verb agreement become problem in answering subject-verb agreement, likes:

A. Sometimes a proper noun that ends in -s is singular. In the examples, if the noun is changed to a pronoun, the singular pronoun it is ’used (not the plural pronoun they) because the noun is singular. In (a): The United States = it (not the). News is singular.

The example:

a) The United States is big.
b) The Philippines consists of more than 7,000 islands.
c) The United Nations has its headquarters in New York City.
d) Sears is a department store.
e) The news is interesting.

B. Fields of study that end in -ics require singular verbs.

f) Mathematics is easy for her. Physics is easy for her too.

C. Certain illnesses that end in -s are singular: diabetes, measles, mumps, rabies, rickets, shingles

g) Diabetes is an illness.

D. Expressions of time, money, and distance usually require a singular verb.

Arithmetic expressions require singular verbs.

h) Eight hours of sleep is enough.
i) Ten dollars is too much to pay.
j) Five thousand miles is too far to travel.
k) Two and two is four. Two and two equals four.
l) Five times five is twenty-five.

E. In (p): English = language. In (q): The English = people from England. Some nouns of nationality that end in -sh, -ese, and -ch can mean either language or people, e.g., English, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Portuguese, French.

m) Those people are from Canada.

n) The police have been called.
o) Cattle are domestic animals

A few adjectives can be preceded by the and used as a plural noun (without final -s) to refer to people who have that quality. Other examples: the young, the ebb, the living, the dead, the blind, the deaf, the dGabled People, police, and cattle do not end in -s, but are plural nouns and require plural verbs.

t) The poor have many problems.
u) The rich get richer

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In addition, the use of the name of the country without article the, means singular for subject. While the use the, means plural for subject. The irregularities can be found below:

For Singular Verb

p) English is spoken in many countries.

q) Chinese is his native language.

For Plural Verb

r) The English drink tea.

s) The Chinese have an interesting history.

3.2. Parallel Structures

Parallel structures may contain more than two parts. In a series, commas are used to separate each unit. The problem in error recognition is the use of paired conjunction or also called orrelative conjunction for example 1) both...and, 2) not only...but also, 3) either...or, 4) neither...nor. These are examples of paired conjunctions.

Two subjects connected by both...and take a plural verb, as in (a). When two subjects are connected by not only...but also, either...or, or neither...nor, the subject. That is closer to the verb determines whether the verb is singular or plural.

(a) Both my mother and my sister are here.

(b) Not only my mother but also my sister is here.
(c) Not only my sister but also my parents are here.
(d) Neither my mother nor my sister is here.
(e) Neither my sister nor my parents are here.

In (f): both + noun + and + noun
In (g): not only + verb + but also + verb
In (h): either + noun + or + noun
In (i): neither + adjective + nor + adjective

(f) The research project will take both time and money.
(g) Yesterday it not only rained but (also) snowed.
(h) I’ll take either chemistry or physics next quarter.

(i) That book is neither interesting nor accurate. Notice the parallel structure in the examples. The same grammatical form should follow each part of the paired conjunctions.*

In this research, the researcher chose the subject verb-agreement and parallel structure questions.

4. Analysis and Discussion

After collecting the data, it is found that the ability of fifth semester learners of STIBA Persada Bunda Pekanbaru in answering error recognition of subject-verb agreement and parallel structures was “good” level. From the calculation above based on the formula of mean score, total correct all items (540) was divided into total correct got by learners (421) was 77.96 so, the level of ability was categorized into “good” level. The findings can be concluded into two things. First, the error recognition in subject-verb agreement is very difficult to answer by the learners since the learners could not differentiate the subject whether it is singular or plural. While second, the error recognition in parallel structure is easy to understand for the learners. Especially for paired conjunction, it is much easier than comparison since the format of paired conjunction was easy to memorize.

In analyzing the data, the researcher computed the number of correct made by learners individually, after that, grouped the questions divided into 2 parts— subject-verb agreement and parallel structures. The number of all questions was 30 questions. The questions consisted subject-verb agreement and parallel structures material. The questions from number 1 to 10 were subject-verb agreement. The questions from number 11 to 20 were parallel structure of paired conjunction. Then the result could be seen clearly by each explanation in the following paragraph. The mean score of each part of question of error recognition can be seen as follows. For subject-verb agreement the mean score falls into 78.33. For parallel structures, the mean score falls into 77.78. To gain information of parallel structure, the researcher counted the mean score for specific part of parallel structures. First, for paired conjunction of parallel structure, the mean score falls into 83.89. Second, for comparison of parallel structure, the mean score falls into 64.44.

In the discussion from the explanation of the main scores above, the researcher explained about error recognition in each part of questions of Subject-Verb Agreement were categorized into “good” level, questions of Parallel Structures were categorized into “good” level. Questions of Paired Conjunction-Parallel Structures were categorized into “excellent” level, questions of subject-verb agreement were categorized into “good” level.
In this discussion, the researcher can be concluded that the error recognition was in excellent level in paired conjunction of parallel structures. It is easy for learners to answer since the format of paired conjunction was in pairs, so that, the mean score of learners’ answer was in “excellent” level. However in comparison of parallel structures, it is not easy for learners to answer since the format of question in random to memorize of comparative degree, superlative degree, and double comparison, so that, the mean score of learners’ answer was in “good” level.

5. Conclusion

In accordance with the objective of the research question is to answer the question “learners’ ability in answering error recognition of subject-verb agreement and parallel structures.”. It can be concluded that 18 fifth semester learners of STIBA Pekanbaru could comprehend the subject-verb agreement and parallel structures of paired conjunction and comparison. It is categorized into “good” level. Eventhough, the problem in answering error recognition of subject-verb agreement was in the plural form of noun and the verb used. Then, the problem in answering error recognition of parallel structures of paired conjunction was in the cautious of the word used after and before paired conjunction. Error recognition of subject-verb agreement was a type of error since the number of the learners did the error in answering the questions. Accordance with the previous researcher stated that subject verb agreement was one type of error made by learners caused by mother tongue. Error recognition of parallel structures was a problem because the learners made error in their thinking in parallel. The language proficiency was the problem in answering error type of questions. Also, the problem in answering error recognition of parallel structures of comparison was the use of appropriate form of comparison form like comparative degree, superlative degree, and double comparison.

After knowing the learners’ ability in subject-verb agreement and parallel structures, it is important to suggest that the learners should practice more in error recognition not only in subject-verb agreement and parallel structures but also in all materials of grammar to get the highest score in grammar subject. The learners need to memorize some form of parallel structures and irregular plural nouns of subject-verb agreement. In this case, the learners need to have some practice books of grammar to explore their grammar ability to get higher score.

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