STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING

(Exploratory Case Study at XI Grade of Senior High School of Al Abidin Bilingual Boarding School (ABBS) Surakarta Academic Year 2015 - 2016)

THESIS

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Magister of Language Education Programme

By

Ahmad Sunandar

NIM 14PSC01592

MAGISTER PROGRAMME

WIDYA DHARMA UNIVERSITY KLATEN

2016

APPROVAL

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Ahmad Sunandar

NIM 14PSC01592

A thesis approved by:

Name	Signature	Date
Consultant I Dr. Hersulastuti, M.Hum.		16/04/2016
NIP.19650421 198703 2 002		
Consultant II Dr. Iswan Riyadi, M.M.		16/04/2016
NIP. 19600401 198611 1 001		

Head of Language Education Study Programme,

Dr. Dwi Bambang Putut Setiyadi, M.Hum.

NIP. 19600412 198901 1 001

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ACCEPTANCE

STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING

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By
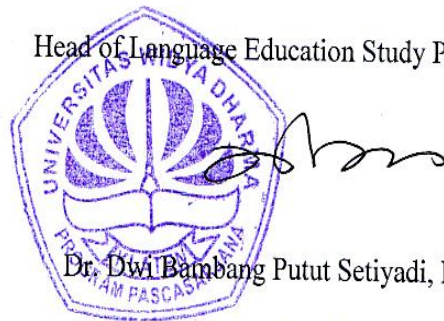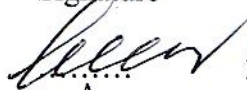
Ahmad Sunandar

NIM 14PSC01592

The thesis was accepted by Board of Examiners of the Magister Programme of the

Language Education Programme Widya Dharma University Klaten

On, May 21st 2016

	Name	Signature	Date
Chairman	Prof. Dr. Herman J. Waluyo, M.Pd.		21/05/2016
Secretary	Dr. D. B. Putut Setiyadi, M. HUM.		21/05/2016
Examiner I	Dr. Hersulastuti, M.Hum.		21/05/2016
Examiner II	Dr. Iswan Riyadi, M.M.		21/05/2016

Accepted by

Director of Magister Programme

Widya Dharma University

Prof. Dr. Herman J. Waluyo, M.Pd.

NIK. 690 115 345

Head of Language Education

Study Programme

Dr. D. B. Putut Setiyadi, M. Hum.

NIP. 19600412 198901 1 001

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The undersigned's

Name   : Ahmad Sunandar

Student Number   : 14PSC01592

Study Programme   : Language Education Magister

Faculty   : Magister Programme

Hereby I certify that the thesis as follows:

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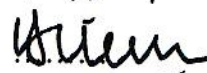
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Klaten, May 21st 2016

Researcher,

Ahmad Sunandar

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DEDICATION

To :

1. Amin Hidayat and Chadinem, my beloved parents

2. Purwaningsih, my beloved wife

3. Alya Nabilah Sunandar, my angelic daughter

4. Legowo Hadi Mulyono and Suwarni, my beloved parents-in-law

5. Adhi Purnomo and Triyani Rahayu, my beloved brother and sister

6. The big family of SMP Islam Al Abidin Surakarta

MOTTO

Good things come to those who believe, better things come to those who are

patient, and the best things come to those who don't give up.

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First of all, researcher would like to praise to the God, the Almighty for blessing and mercy given to me in finishing this thesis. The thesis entitled **STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING** (Exploratory Case Study at XI Grade of Senior High School of Al Abidin Bilingual Boarding School (ABBS) Surakarta Academic Year 2015 - 2016).

In doing this research, researcher realizes that it is impossible to finish it without contributions, helps, suggestions, comments and revisions from many people. So, in this chance researcher would like to express thanks and deep appreciation to:

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Klaten, May 2016

Researcher

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ABSTRACT

Ahmad Sunandar, NIM 14PSC01592. *Students' Grammatical Errors in Writing* (Exploratory Case Study at XI Grade of Senior High School of Al Abidin Bilingual Boarding School (ABBS) Surakarta Academic Year 2015 - 2016). Thesis. Magister Programme of Language Education, Widya Dharma University Klaten, 2016.

This research is aimed at: 1) Investigating types of grammatical errors found in the students' written works. 2) Figuring out how mother tongue interference affects to the students' written works. 3) Revealing why such errors occur in students' written works.

The research was in the form of an exploratory case study at XI grade of Senior High School of Al Abidin Bilingual Boarding School (ABBS) Surakarta Academic Year 2015 – 2016. The main data were obtained from students' written works of Shaffa class. The research focused on the types of errors found in 20 written sheets of students' descriptive text given as a part of assignment of the eleventh year students of ABBS Surakarta in the first semester of the academic year 2015

In this research, it was found that 1) in investigating types of grammatical errors in students' written works, it can be inferred that there are 417 errors which occurred in students' written works. It was found 40 types of grammatical errors in this study. It can be known that the plural nouns were the highest frequency of grammatical errors and uncountable nouns were the lowest frequency of grammatical errors which occurred in students' written works of descriptive text. 2) In figuring out how mother tongue interference affects to students' written works. It was found 66 or 15,83 % was caused of mother tongue interference or interlingual errors. Errors due to mother tongue interference were categorized into three: (I) word-by-word translation, it was found 14 or 21 % errors, (II) using Indonesian construction in English, it was counted 21 or 32 %, (III) using adjectives as main verbs, 31 or 47 % errors were found. 3) In revealing why such errors occur in students' written works. Researcher found two general causes of errors in students' written works. The total grammatical errors found in students' written works were 417 errors, 351 (84,17 %) errors were caused of intralingual errors and 66 (15,83 %) errors were caused of interlingual errors. So, it can be inferred that the grammatical errors in students' written works were caused of lack of grammatical understanding, and students more likely translated Indonesian into English without taking notice of the grammars.

Keywords   : students' grammatical errors, students' written works, interlingual and intralingual errors

ABSTRAK

Ahmad Sunandar, NIM 14PSC01592. *Students' Grammatical Errors in Writing* (Exploratory Case Study at XI Grade of Senior High School of Al Abidin Bilingual Boarding School (ABBS) Surakarta Academic Year 2015 - 2016). Tesis. Program Studi Magister Pendidikan Bahasa, Program Pascasarjana Universitas Widya Dharma Klaten, 2016.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: 1) Menyelidiki jenis-jenis kesalahan tata bahasa yang ditemukan pada karya tulisan siswa. 2) Mengetahui pengaruh bahasa ibu terhadap karya tulisan siswa. 3)Mengungkap mengapa kesalahan tersebut terjadi pada karya tulisan siswa.

Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kasus eksplorasi di kelas XI SMA Al Abidin Bilingual Boarding School (ABBS) Surakarta Tahun Ajaran 2015 - 2016. Data utama diperoleh dari karya tulisan siswa kelas Shaffa. Penelitian ini difokuskan pada kesalahan yang ditemukan di 20 lembar tulisan teks deskriptif siswa yang diberikan sebagai penugasan di kelas sebelas ABBS Surakarta pada semester pertama tahun akademik 2015.

Dalam penelitian ini ditemukan bahwa 1) Dalam menyelidiki jenis-jenis kesalahan tata bahasa dalam karya tulisan siswa, dapat disimpulkan bahwa ditemukan 417 kesalahan yang terjadi pada karya tulisan siswa. Ditemukan 40 jenis kesalahan tata bahasa dalam penelitian ini. Hal ini dapat diketahui bahwa kata benda bentuk jamak menempati posisi tertinggi dari kesalahan tata bahasa dan kata benda tak dapat dihitung menempati posisi terendah dari kesalahan tata bahasa yang ditemukan pada karya tulisan siswa dari teks deskriptif. 2) Untuk mengetahui pengaruh bahasa ibu terhadap karya tulisan siswa. Ditemukan 66 atau 15,83% disebabkan pengaruh bahasa ibu atau kesalahan interlingual. Kesalahan karena pengaruh bahasa ibu dikelompokkan menjadi tiga: (I) terjemahan per kata, ditemukan 14 atau 21% kesalahan, (II) menggunakan konstruksi bahasa Indonesia dalam bahasa Inggris, ditemukan 21 atau 32%, (III) menggunakan kata sifat sebagai kata kerja utama, 31 atau 47% kesalahan yang ditemukan. 3) Dalam mengungkapkan mengapa kesalahan tersebut terjadi dalam karya tulisan siswa. Peneliti menemukan dua penyebab umum dari kesalahan dalam karya tulisan siswa. Total kesalahan tata bahasa yang ditemukan dalam karya ditulisan siswa dari 417 kesalahan, 351 (84,17%) kesalahan disebabkan kesalahan intralingual dan 66 (15,83%) kesalahan disebabkan interlingual. Jadi, dapat disimpulkan bahwa kesalahan tata bahasa dalam karya tulisan siswa disebabkan kurangnya pemahaman tata bahasa, dan siswa menterjemahkan bahasa Indonesia ke dalam bahasa Inggris tanpa memperhatikan tata bahasanya.

Keywords   : kesalahan tata bahasa siswa, karya tulisan siswa,
                  kesalahan interlingual dan intralingual

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

A language unifying countries in the world is English. It is the most widely used in the world. It means that mastering English well is very important. English is one of a means of international communication, people have been using English either informal or formal situation. We know that some countries in the world use English as their mother tongue such as England, America, New Zealand, Australia, and etc. Some countries such as Singapore, France, China, India, Philippine, Malaysia, and etc use English as their second language. But in Indonesia English is as a foreign language. Richards (1985, 108) points out "Foreign language is a language which is taught as a school subject but which is not used as a medium of instruction in schools nor as a language of communication within a country". Based on its theory, we can say that English which students learn in schools is as a foreign language, they do not use it in their daily communication or life, it is only as a compulsory subject which they have to learn.

In Indonesia, English is taught to students from junior high schools to universities. Like or dislike they have to study it because it is one of compulsory subjects in schools or universities. English has been being studied from junior high schools to universities for more about ten years. In other words, it does not guarantee that the students will absolutely be able to use English as good as possible, either spoken or written. It is certain that the students still get some

difficulties. They still get confused in mastering English language, spoken or written, because learning English language as a second language is different from learning their native language. As we know that English has an important role in an international relationship and as an international language, English is used in a lot of countries in the world.

Since English is a foreign language, it is realized that most Indonesian students generally get some difficulties in learning it. The difficulties occur when the students lack of knowledge about vocabularies and grammars. They are claimed to master the language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Teachers and students should realize the importance of English language development, particularly in the part of writing skill. The reason is that writing is one of the language skills used to express ideas and thoughts. Thus, being able to express ideas and thoughts using appropriate grammars is very essential for the skillful writers in order to share their opinions and thoughts to the readers as they intend to convey. Nowdays, almost every career path requires its employees to write notes, memos, email, and reports. All of which require a good writing skill to effectively communicate a certain set of ideas or thoughts. A poor writing skill can indicate that they are not suitable for management positions and are often implied as signs of lower performance.

Writing is a difficult process even in the first language. It is even more complicated to write in a foreign language. Many studies indicate for the beginning English foreign language students, there tends to be interference from their first language in the process of writing in English. Writing in a foreign

language often presents the greatest challenge to the students at all because it is integral to the learning process and it can improve the students' academic performances. Vallete (1985,81) states that writing skill requires more capabilities than other language skills and needs special preparation. Writing requires students to understand the spellings, the punctuations, the grammar rules, the vocabularies, and paragraph development. Because of that, writing is one of the four skills which have a high status as a part of the culture of society or institution. It means that writing is one of the communicational means by which the students can communicate their ideas and thoughts. It involves composing which implies the abilities either to tell or to retell pieces of information in the forms of narration, description, or transform information into texts.

Haffernan and Lincoln (1986: 4) say "Writing has big advantages over speaking. Through writing, it gives us time to think, to try out ideas on pieces of paper, to read what has been written, to revise and arrange. The most importance is to find what the writer means". It means that the students should choose suitable words to be arranged into sentences and determine the right verb that is suitable to the tense. It also means that the students have time to prepare their writing then they are going to write, revise, and arrange into a good composition. Although writing is easier than speaking but the students still say that writing is difficult because English rules are very complicated and they differ from their native language. They often make incorrect structures or break the language rules. They still use Indonesian English in their sentences. In fact, a wrong sentence can disturb the meaning of the sentence.

Moreover, it was found in many prior papers that writing is the main obstacle that English foreign language and English second language students encounter. These include environment, age, teacher's motivation, students' attitude, and parents' attitude. Due to the fact that English foreign language and English second language students encounter a syntactic problem in writing, it is difficult to convey their ideas and thoughts accurately and appropriately. For Indonesian students, vocabularies and grammatical rules seem to cause a great deal of difficulties in their academic writings. Hence, the study of syntactic errors is necessary, it would be benefit for English foreign language and English second language teaching in order to develop the students' English writings and raise their awareness, especially when the native language has influenced on the productions of students' academic English writings in terms of negative syntactic transfer.

Writing in general and essays in particular forms makes some problems to the senior high school students of Al Abidin Bilingual Boarding School Surakarta (ABBS). English teachers in ABBS are generally faced with students who have memorized a good amount of vocabularies and grammatical rules. In many cases, the majority of these students are still translating words, phrases, and sentences from Indonesian into English with often very strange results. The challenge of English teachers is to find methods to activate in a meaningful way the passive knowledge that the students possess in terms of the writing skill. As well as to help students become more proficient while working to eliminate some of their common errors. A better understanding of the first language influence in the

process of English foreign language writing helps teachers know students' difficulties in learning English. It also aids in the adoption of appropriate teaching strategies to help English foreign language students learn English writing skill better. Writing is one of four language skills which has to be mastered by students well and writing is also an essential skill in this era, so that the students are claimed to master the writing skill fluency and accuracy. Nowadays, a lot of information from other countries is given in the written forms and we have to reply them in written forms too. There are some reasons why mastering writing skill is very important. First, when the students master the writing skill well, fluency and accuracy, it will improve their English fast and also improve their careers in the future. Besides, when students are good at writing skill, what they want to deliver in the written form will be understood well and clearly by the readers. Moreover, when the students do some academic writings (papers, essays, compositions, theses, and etc), job-related writings (messages, letters, reports, advertisements, and etc), and personal writings (notes, invitation, personal letters, medical reports, and etc), their work can be understandable clearly so everything will run well.

However, most students of ABBS say that it is difficult to write essays, some of various types of errors are found though they have had a great deal of vocabularies and grammatical rules. Therefore, English teachers need to anticipate certain common types of errors. They may also find other types of errors, which can be revealed by analyzing the written products or essays of the students. These are the conventions, which are usually followed by the English teachers when

analyzing students' errors. Writing skill involves many other sub-skills such as the general knowledge about the subject in the question and ability to translate ideas into grammatical sentences. English foreign language students have to think all of those that they need to apply or use. English foreign language students are more prone to committing errors. English teachers are currently feeling the challenge of adopting and developing a wide range of methods to accomplish effective teaching of English writing. This, of course, is not an easy task, a large number of students in ABBS continue to fail to master the basics of English writing even after a long year of formal education. English teachers feel satisfied to have students who speak and write correct English. This has been ambition of all English teachers. Students in senior high school of ABBS Surakarta have been starting learning English since they were in the first junior high schools even some in elementary schools they have spent more than four years of learning English language. So they are expected to have understood intermediately even advanced English, to communicate with English speaking people within certain reasonable areas, to read simple English with ease, fluency and understanding, and to write a paragraph in English using basic structures of the language.

Researcher chooses senior high school students of Al Abidin Bilingual Boarding School (ABBS) Surakarta with some reasons. Firstly, students of ABBS are claimed to use English, either spoken or written, in their daily communication in school. Hopefully their English is competent or well-formed, either spoken or written, and the students get an English subject 6 hours a week in order to improve their English faster and better. Most of ABBS students have ever joined

English courses or English trainings in some places. It means their English should be more competent or well-formed than other students in other schools. Besides, almost all information, subject books, and tests use English. In this research, researcher chooses class XI as the sample research. Class XI is used to using English in their daily communication, spoken or written, in school at least one year. And they are able to express their ideas and thought in the form of writing based on English teachers' suggestion. English teachers did not suggest to take the sample research from class X because the students are not used to using English yet and most of them are not confident to communicate in English yet, either spoken or written, because they came from different school backgrounds and their English is varying. They are learning to get accustomed to using English in daily communication. So researcher takes sample research from class XI.

In spite of the fact that they have been studying English for more than four years and their vocabularies are expected to be massive and their knowledge of grammatical rules are satisfying, most of students are still not able to write a correct paragraph using adequately basic structures of the English language they have learnt. On the light of this introduction the main aim of this study is to explore and analyze the common grammatical errors in students' written works in the eleventh grade of senior high school of ABBS Surakarta.

B. Identification of the Problems

Senior high school students of ABBS Surakarta still make some errors in their writings, especially students who have a lot of ideas but not have enough

knowledge of language to express what they think in their minds. They find it difficult to make English writing that are grammatically correct and acceptable. The main cause is that foreign language writing is linguistically different in many ways from native language writing. Besides, writing skill also cannot be acquired, in short time. It requires students to understand the spelling, punctuation, grammatical rules, vocabularies, and paragraph development. Because of those, they still make some errors when they have to express something in English writings. Researcher took some samples of errors of ABBS students made in the previous assignment. The following are examples of errors:

1. Errors in base forms

    a. We can't <u>following</u> globalization era   (follow)

    b. You may <u>listening</u> to English music   (listen)

    c. We must <u>applied</u> English in our conversation   (apply)

2. Errors in gerund

    a. <u>Speak</u> English is not hard   (speaking)

    b. <u>Study</u> English is very beneficial for us   (studying)

    c. We must improve our English by <u>practice</u> it   (practicing)

3. Errors in plurality

    a. All <u>student</u> in the world use English language to study   (students)

    b. We know so many <u>language</u> in this country   (languages)

    c. From those <u>reason</u>, we must show our enthusiasm   (reasons)

4. Errors in subject verb agreement

    a. English <u>become</u> international language   (becomes)

b. Many people <u>has</u> so many questions   (have)

c. When a person <u>meet </u>another person from other country   (meets)

From examples above, students still make a lot of errors in their written works. Hence, they need to be explored deeply and also to find out why those errors occur.

Errors play an important role in learning foreign language. From the errors that students make, one can determine their level of mastery of language system and discover what they still have to learn. English teachers should realize errors made by students. In an error analysis, there should be at least two stages of activities that should be carried out. They are identifying and describing errors. Based on the five terms:

1. Grammatical error. It is grammatical deviation from the norms of the target language. In the language acquisition, an error is a systematic failure to conform to a rule of the language being learnt.

2. Error analysis. It is the method to analyze errors by comparing between the inter language of student's native language and the target language. Importantly in foreign language learning, an error analysis is a technique for interpreting errors as an indicator of the students' competence.

3. Global error. It refers to the kind of serious errors which usually impede understanding. In this study, global errors are sentence structure, word order, and connecting word error.

4. Local error. It refers to less serious errors which may distract, but most often do not impede understanding. In this study, local errors are subject verb agreement and word choice errors.

5. Mother tongue interference. It is the situation in which language students attempt to employ the grammatical structures of the mother tongue into the target language.

From those five terms, researcher focuses on the grammatical errors by which students make in their written works.

C. Limitation of the Problems

Students often make errors in their written works, especially related to grammatical errors. In this study, researcher focuses on grammatical errors in English written works of descriptive text of eleventh year students of ABBS Surakarta in the first semester of the academic year 2015.

D. Problem Statement

The data are analyzed by focusing on the types of errors found in 20 written sheets of students' descriptive text given as a part of assignment of the eleventh year students of ABBS Surakarta in the first semester of the academic year 2015. The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What types of errors are found in students' written works?

2. How does language transfer or mother tongue interference affect to students' written works?

3. Why does each error occur in students' written works?

E. Objective of the Study

This study aims to investigate grammatical errors in English written works made by eleventh grade students in the first semester of ABBS Surakarta in the academic year 2015. There are main objectives for this study:

1. To investigate types of grammatical errors found in students' written works.

2. To figure out how mother tongue interference affects to students' written works.

3. To reveal why such errors occur in students' written works.

F. Significance of the Study

This study investigates types of errors mostly found in students' written works of descriptive text, explore how mother tongue interference causes these types of errors, and also reveal why the errors occur in students' written works. Findings of this research are expected to be useful for students, teachers, and further researchers.

1. Students

This research can help students to be aware of the errors that they make and the causes of the errors. It is also expected that they will be more careful and accurate in writing to avoid the same errors and they can correct themselves when making errors. So students

master the grammatical rules and they can use the language correctly especially in writing.

2. Teachers

It can help the teachers to prepare the English writing materials and can be used to give more attention to errors made by students in writing. Then teachers explain the grammars comprehensively and find the best method in teaching writing.

3. Further Researchers

The result of the study hopefully can be used by further researchers as one of the references when they study the same topic or similar topic.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, AND RECOMMENDATION

Having described the research finding and discussion in Chapter IV, researcher would like to give the conclusion, implication, and recommendation based on the research finding and discussion which related to the research result.

A. Conclusion

In investigating types of grammatical errors in students' written works, it can be inferred that there are 417 errors which occurred in students' written works and those errors were classified into categories. It was found 40 types of grammatical errors in this study. It can be known that the plural nouns were the highest frequency of grammatical errors and uncountable nouns were the lowest frequency of grammatical errors which occurred in students' written works of descriptive text.

Besides, in figuring out how mother tongue interference affects to students' written works. It was found 66 or 15,83 % was caused of mother tongue interference or interlingual errors. Errors due to mother tongue interference were categorized into three: (I) word-by-word translation, it was found 14 or 21 % errors, (II) using Indonesian construction in English, it was counted 21 or 32 %, (III) using adjectives as main verbs, 31 or 47 % errors were found.

Meanwhile, in revealing why such errors occur in students' written works. Researcher found two general causes of errors in students' written works. The total grammatical errors found in students' written works were 417 errors, 351

(84,17 %) errors were caused of intralingual errors and 66 (15,83 %) errors were caused of interlingual errors. So, it can be inferred that the grammatical errors in students' written works were caused of lack of grammatical understanding, and students more likely translated Indonesian into English without taking notice of the grammars.

B. Implication

The finding in this research has suggested some implications which are significance to English teachers. The research of the participants' errors helps English teachers identify the problematic areas of headline language at different levels of instruction. English teachers are able to infer the nature of the students' knowledge of the headlines at a given stage in their learning and discover what they have still to learn. Furthermore, knowing the frequency of grammatical errors enables the English teachers to teach the point of grammatical errors and to emphasize on those grammatical errors where the grammatical error frequency is higher.

On the other hand, English teachers can draw their students' attention to the differences between native and foreign languages. In this case, second or foreign language students' sensitivity and awareness of these differences are risen, and that might help students reduce their interference errors. There is no doubt that the native language plays an important role in learning and using another language, especially in foreign language situations where students' exposure to the target language is confined to a few hours per week of classroom instruction.

When teaching writing, English teachers must look for ways to help students learn how to express themselves clearly and how to organize their ideas logically. English teachers must show them how to make their writing vivid, interesting, and well-formed.

Interlingual transfer is a learning strategy that most foreign language students fall back on, especially in acquisition-poor class room situations where exposure to the target language is confined to a few hours per week of formal instruction. Making use of the mother tongue in foreign language teaching makes for a psycholinguistic technique based on students' tendency to rely on their previous linguistic knowledge in formulating hypotheses about the target language. One of the most widely suggested uses of the students' mother tongue is the presentation of contrastive comparisons of the two languages to make the students aware of the differences and similarities between them. This technique is believed to be helpful in that students know when to transfer from their native language and when not to.

C. Recommendation

Based on the conclusion, researcher would like to give some recommendation which would be useful for students, English teachers and other researchers.

1. Students

Based on the conclusion, it can be found that students must learn more about English grammatical rules. It is expected that students write more often. By doing so, students' writing skill is getting better.

2. English teachers

Based on the investigation, researcher concludes that grammatical errors occur because students consider that English is very complicated. Therefore, it is very important for English teachers to be able to present grammatical items in a communicative and interesting way, such as using games, pictures, multimedia etc. In order to make learning grammars interesting, English teachers must be creative. And in this way the grammatical errors can be reduced or minimized.

3. Other researchers

Researcher realized that there are a lot of weaknesses in this research, so it is expected to other researchers to do further investigation, so that they can find other research finding related to this problem.

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