

## **SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT IN STUDENTS' WRITINGS**

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### **Abstract**

In learning language, doing an error is normal for the learners in the beginning because it can make the student to understand an error for better improvement for the learners. They often do errors related to produce grammatical sentence in subject-verb agreement. It becomes the major difficulties faced by the language learners. Here, the writer is interested in analyzing the grammatical errors of subject-verb agreement in students' academic written works. This research aimed at identifying the grammatical problems are faced by the students in relation to subject-verb agreements. In doing this research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative method. Further, the rules of subject-verb agreement and the four principles of the grammatical error categorization such as omission, misformation, misordering and addition are used to answer the research question about subject-verb agreement error. The finding of this analysis showed that the students made errors related to subject-verb agreement in tenses based on the surface taxonomy of error of omission, error of misformation, error of addition, and error of misordering. The most common error happened in present tense in the form of verb and auxiliary verb. The errors are probably caused by lack of grammatical knowledge in language learning.

**Key words:** Descriptive Qualitative, Subject-Verb Agreement Error

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is an activity to put what people think in mind, what people want to share and how people use correct sentence (Aminatun, 2021; Nurmalia Sari & Aminatun, 2021). Writing is frequently useful as preparation for some other activities, in particular when students write sentences as a preamble to discussion activities (Gulö, 2014; Novawan et al., 2020). Writing can support someone to deliver a thought in his or her mind to give idea or opinion (Handayani & Aminatun, 2020; Wahyudin, 2018). As students who learn a foreign language, the understanding in writing skill, especially English is not something that can be underestimated (Aminatun et al., 2019; Samanik, 2018). Since, it is related with the use of word structure in making sentences. Thus, it is very natural if students will make some errors in writing at the beginning. An error is a deviation in learner language which results from lack of knowledge of the correct rule (Gulö, 2019; Puspita, 2019). Therefore, error becomes common phenomena produced by students in written form (Puspita, 2021b; Wahyudin, 2015).

Learners commit errors either because of inappropriate knowledge or false knowledge in the target language and learners needs to write correct sentences in English in order to convey their messages effectively to the readers (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020; Mandasari

et al., n.d.; Qodriani & Kardiansyah, n.d.). According to the explanation, the writer concludes that learners have to understand grammatical sentences when writing. Moreover, grammatical sentence means that the sentence should follow the rules of the language (Oktavia & Suprayogi, 2021; B. N. Sari & Gulö, 2019; Widianingsih & Gulö, 2016). Based on this, the writer also concludes that in forming a sentence, subject and verb have correlation. In writing, different tenses have different rules so that the use of verb will be changed according to subject. Learners especially English students have to comprehend the rules well. If the students lack of conceiving the explication, it can cause errors of grammatical sentences dealing with subject-verb agreements (Amelia, 2016; Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021; K. Sari & Pranoto, 2021). It can happen in a simple sentence like she run to the jungle instead of she runs to the jungle. Therefore, learners have to understand the rules to make a correct sentence because learners at the beginning often make errors that related to subject-verb agreements based on the information existed in previous studies (Afrianto et al., 2021; Puspita, 2021a; Samanik, 2019).

Many experts believed the importance of grammar also play role in achieving learners' educational and professional goals (Ayu et al., 2021; Kardiansyah, 2021; Kuswoyo & Susardi, 2016). In learning English, there are four types of proficiencies, they are listening, reading, speaking and writing (Skill, n.d.; Utami et al., 2020). Therefore, the importance of grammar will give many benefits that will encourage the knowledge of the students who are learning to foster their skill about English especially in writing correct sentences (Ahmad et al., 2019; Ayu & Zuraida, 2020; Mulyasari & Putri, 2020). Supporting that, this research will focus on writing because writing is one of English skills which often face grammatical errors made by students at the beginning (Mandasari & Wahyudin, 2019; Nadya et al., 2021; Sartika & Pranoto, 2021). Based on the writer's observation on the students' academic written works, when the writer learned subject of structure and writing, there were incorrect sentences caused by subject-verb disagreement produced by the first semester students of a university in Bandar Lampung. Therefore, the writer needs to investigate further study on the students' academic written works in order to make improvements in the next learning to make correct sentences.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Syntax and Grammar**

Syntax is one of the major components of grammar. It refers to the rules that construct the ways in which words combine to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax is the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages (Al Falaq & Puspita, 2021; Putri & Aminatun, 2021). It means that syntax is the study about how sentences are put together grammatically and how words grow out of each other. More simply, syntax can be defined as the arrangement of words in a sentence.

The relationships of words in making sentences correctly need the structure of grammar in syntax on how they are varied in their letters in order to accord with the variation in the context to which they apply (Ayu, 2019; Istiani & Puspita, 2020; Mertania & Amelia, 2020). Syntactic investigation of a given language has as its goal the construction of a grammar that can be viewed as a device of some sort for producing the sentences for the language under analysis (Amelia & Daud, 2020; Ivana & Suprayogi, 2020; Purwaningsih & Gulö, 2021). The term of grammar refers to the grammatical structure in syntax.

Grammar is the structural foundation of our ability in creating sentences in oral or written skill (Gulö & Rahmawelly, 2019). The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use language. It can help to foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression which is available in English.

### **Subject-Verb Agreement Rule**

Subject and verb are always related each other because the sentence cannot define the verb without subject and also if there is only subject but no verb, it cannot be called as a sentence (Chavez, 2000). The subject of a sentence is the noun that corresponds with the verb in the sentence. It means that the subject is the doer or as a noun when there is an activity done by subject that defines the verb. In relating subject and verb into correct sentences grammatically, the sentences need an agreement. Subject-verb agreement is a rule that states that all subjects must agree with their verbs in number (Kuswoyo & Susardi, 2017; Suprayogi & Novanti, 2021). Therefore, the writer says that an agreement in sentences depends on the number of subject that will influence the form of verb in sentences.

### **Tenses**

Tense is a verb base method to express the distinctions of time and indicate the action when taking place: past, present, future, or perfect. The form of a verb, the reader may find out the tenses as the rules of subject-verb agreement that cover subject, verb, numbers, etc.

In tenses, there are two possibilities to determine the verb in action: “person and number”. Person is who experiences the action that determines the subject as a noun in sentences. Number determines how many subjects act or receive the action (Kardiansyah, n.d.). Number agreement poses a problem in the present tense, where third person singular are explicitly inflected while others forms are not.

## **METHOD**

In analyzing the data, the method of the study used by the writer is qualitative method including to the students’ descriptive essays and library research related to the subject-verb agreements which to get and support the writer’s analysis (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Qualitative research method is concerned with developing explanation that focuses on description and interpretation (Setri & Setiawan, 2020). Based on the explanation, the writer concludes that descriptive qualitative is a method used to study and analyze the collected data by using some relevant approaches which structured or written as in descriptive. Since the data are in the form of sentences that exist in the students’ works, this method will describe the observed data in the form of words rather than numbers. The object of the research is the written works of the first semester students of a University in Bandar Lampung majoring English literature.

The writer imposes one kind of data. The data for this analysis is the data from written works of students’ descriptive essays because the students usually used basic rule in making sentence in simple form to describe something. The writer will categorize and examine the data by giving a mark to each sentence that contains grammatical errors of subject-verb agreements. The data sources in this study are the students’ works in the writing class. The writer chooses the first semester students of a university in Bandar Lampung majoring English literature because they are studying about argumentative, narrative and descriptive texts in their writing class and to investigate the student mastery of subject-verb agreement rule since they were in junior high school until they were in university.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Singular Verb Marker –s**

Present tense uses to be form or auxiliary verb; is, am, are and verb base or attaching ending *-s*, *-es* or *-ies* to verb. The students often have problem in this area because simple

present is the basic rule to create a sentence. They often omit item in verb that should be applied in well structure sentences.

No.	Data	Error
1.	My father always support me	Omission ending <i>-s</i>
2.	He wear glasses	Omission ending <i>-s</i>
3.	She always go to somewhere	Omission ending <i>-es</i>

The writer found some errors dealing with ending *-s* and *-es* but the writer took 3 examples of them. As shown in the example above, the students have problem with the base rule of subject-verb agreement, subject-verb agreement therefore refers to the matching of subjects and verbs according to their number. In the first data, the pronoun *my father* is singular form. Based on the rule of subject-verb agreement, the singular subject must agree with the singular verb and the plural subject must agree with the plural verb. In this data, the verb is in the plural form because it needs to add *-s* in the end of verb to make sure the rule of simple present dealing with subject verb agreement. The verb will be *supports*.

#### **Auxiliary Verb was**

The example of the data:

“She cooking when I was in Jogja”

The example of the data above shows error of omission in the auxiliary verb was. Based on the rule of past progressive, the auxiliary verb must be put before the verb. The subject in this data refers to the third person singular and need to add auxiliary verb was. The sentence should be she was cooking when I was in Jogja.

#### **Auxiliary Verb has**

The writer just found 2 examples data in present perfect that indicate error of omission in the auxiliary verb has. The students often faced ungrammatical sentence that happen in present perfect. One of the example data that related to error of omission in auxiliary verb is:

“I ever see”

This sentence does not have auxiliary verb have as the rule of present perfect. The subject I needs plural auxiliary verb have to have an agreement in subject and verb. The second case happens in the verb see that does not agree with the rule of present perfect. The verb should be in the form of past participle and should be seen.

### Omission in Ending *-ing*

There are 4 examples data related to error of omission in ending *-ing*

No.	Data	Error
1.	Now Elsa is study in Jogja	Omission of ending <i>-ing</i>
2.	If we are meet again	Omission of ending <i>-ing</i>
3.	She is watching TV and see Michael Jackson video	Omission of ending <i>-ing</i>
4.	She is always plays	Omission of ending <i>-ing</i>

The students faced error in four examples data above that indicate error of omission. The first and the second examples data need an agreement between subject and verb in the form of present progressive rule. The rule of present progressive needs ending *-ing*. The verb *study* in the first example should be *studying* and the verb *meet* in the second example data should be *meeting* to agree with the subject and its auxiliary verb.

### Error in Using Verbs

The students often use less precise of verb, auxiliary verb, or even improper tenses that should be applied in well structure sentences. The writer found errors data related to an error of misformation:

#### Misformation of Plural Verb

No.	Data	Error
1.	He <i>have</i> coffee plants	Misformation of plural verb
2.	Danu <i>have</i> brown skin	Misformation of plural verb
3.	She <i>have</i> a lot of assignment	Misformation of plural verb

In this three examples data analysis, the learner faced errors of misformation in the plural verb. The subject in the first example is the third person singular that must be followed by singular form of verb. The verb in the first data used plural subject as the rule of subject-verb agreement in simple present. The subject *he* needs the number of verb in singular form. The verb *have* can be changed into the singular form *has*.

### CONCLUSION

The researcher identified errors based on error of omission, error of addition, error of misformation and error of misordering. The total number of error in this research is 12 errors. In identifying errors, the researcher also gives a mark in order to make it easier for researcher to put errors into their categories. The biggest number of error faced by the

student is error of omission and the smallest error is error of misordering. Since, the data of this research is in the form of descriptive essays, most of student created sentences in simple form. Therefore, the biggest number of error faced by the student is in the rule of subject-verb agreement in simple present tense. Most of error in simple present conducted to error of omission in the ending –s, –es or –ies and the use of proper verb that agree with the rule of subject-verb agreement in simple present rule. Error of omission in the verb happened because the students produce the singular verb followed by plural verb, and the plural subject followed by singular verb. In the other tenses, error happened in the form of no auxiliary verb, adding the –ing in the end of verb that did not in the proper rule of subject-verb agreement, and the use of improper verb based on its categories in tenses that must follow the rule. Based on error that has been investigated in the data, this kind of error can be assumed that some were not aware the rules well or the students were lack of maintaining the grammatical sentences and the students must be more aware to this case.

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