

Students' Error Analysis in Using Pronouns: Translation Based-Test

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Abstract

Error analysis is an activity to reveal the errors found in writing and speaking. In the students error the writer choose pronouns because the students have known about the material. This present study was conducted under descriptive qualitative method study. The design is pre-experimental or case study. In which would explore students' ability in using personal pronoun through translation based-test. The population and sample research at English department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong on third semester and each class consists of 40 students. The research focused on personal pronouns on the subject, object, possessive adjective and reflexive pronouns. The aim of the research is to find out or explore the kinds of errors in pronouns that the students make most. After calculated the students score and percentage it, the result showed that the most of students make error in using reflexive pronouns with the percentage 42 %, the second level is possessive adjective 39. 5%, the third level is object pronoun 37. 6 %, and the last level is subject pronoun 11. 5%. The research found that the most errors that the students always do in reflexive pronoun.

Keywords: Error analysis; personal pronouns; translation based-test

INTRODUCTION

The students almost make errors in translating of a sentence. Meanwhile, using the language is not a simply as we think because there is a set of rules that must be followed, which is called grammar (Akib, et al 2022). Actually, grammar is used to know the structure of a language. It is essential part of the use of language process, both in spoken and written language. The grammar of language is a description of the ways in which the language uses patterns of structure to convey the meaning. It would be impossible to learn language effectively without knowing the grammar, because the grammar helps learns to identify grammatical forms, which serve to enhance and sharpen the expression of meaning (Saputra et al. 2022). Grammar can help students to improve the use of formal English (Wael et al. 2024).

Error analysis is an activity to reveal errors found in writing and speaking. Richards et.al (cited in Hasyim (2002: 43) state that error analysis is the study of errors made by the second and foreign language learners. Error analysis may be carried out in order to (a) find out how well someone knows a language, (b) find out how a person learns a language, and (c) obtain information on common difficulties in language learning, as an aid in teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials. This definition stresses the functions of errors analysis.

Another concept of error analysis is given by Brown (2007). He defined error analysis as the process to observe, analyze, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second language and then to reveal the systems operated by learner. It seems this concept is the same as the one proposed by Crystal (1997:112) i.e. error analysis is a technique for identifying, classifying. Systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a foreign language, using any of the principles and procedures provided by linguistic. The three definitions above clarify that error analysis is an activity to identify, classify, and interpreted or describe the errors made by someone in speaking or in writing and it is carried out to obtain information on common difficulties faced by someone in speaking or in writing English sentence.

However, it should be noticed, is the procedure of error analysis. Having a good grammar system of a language will be helpful in delivering ideas, messages and feelings either to the listeners or readers (Ibrahim et al., 2019). Language without grammar would be disorganized and causes some communicative problems, like an error in using pronouns. Therefore, learners need to know the grammatical system of language so they can communicate with each other in order to transfer the messages properly. Nowadays English becomes to essential language subject of education issues in Indonesia. Consequently, in learning English we have many problem to learn, its grammar or structure intensively the grammar of English is different from Indonesia grammar, for an example the use of pronouns in English there are many types of pronouns and they also have different positions and functions, (1) personal pronouns, (2) possessive pronouns, (3) demonstrative pronouns, (4) relative pronouns, (5) interrogative pronouns, (6) reflexive pronouns, (7) reciprocal pronouns, (8) interrogative pronouns.

In order to use English well, learners should learn the rules of a language or to know how they work. They cannot avoid errors because errors mostly occur in learning process. It happens because they use different forms to deliver ideas, feelings or messages so they need considerable amount of time to be able to master the target English well. According to Robert and Freida in Yulianti (2007), learning English is not easy the language learners may have difficulties. The difficulties that are encountered by every student will vary according to his / her native language. Because of these, there will be errors that can be found in their learning. The errors that give the most difficulty to the most people.

As stated by Wael et al. (2023) as a teacher in teaching, it is a must to have the ability to overcome the problems that exist in students. It does not mean that every individual makes all these mistakes. Because each of us learns the language differently at home and at school, you'll probably find some errors that you are surprised to learn are incorrect. In learning grammar, we still find many errors. The grammatically English have important role, whether in speaking, writing and reading, in formal context and academic. Based on the fact above in this research about Students' Error Analysis in Using Pronouns: Translation Based-Test. The writers choose Pronouns because the students have known about the material but sometimes, they still feel confused to use it. So, the writers want to conduct the research to find out whether the students master the material or not.

Literature Review

There have been many researchers conducted under some approach as this present study does. The following previous studies might be so helpful to serve as good comparative studies. Arjati, (2007) found that: the dominant error most often made by the students of the fourth semester of the English department of UNNES is the use of gerunds in the negative adjectives 'NO' which occurred 129 times (69.39%) caused by false concept hypothesized. Syarif (2011) on his study focused on the implementation of error analysis students in using adjectives clauses found that the second-year students' mastery of grammar most particularly in using Adjective Clauses was low.

Natalina (2011) found that: (1) the most errors that the students made were word order is 28.10%, singular plural is 25.58%, addition 12.94%, punctuation is 7.94%, omission is 5%, word

form is 4.44%, capitalization is 4.41%, diction is 3.52%, article is 3.52%, spelling is 3.23%, verb tense is 1.17%. (2) The causes of errors the students made in descriptive writing are the influence of their mother tongue.

The meaning of error analysis and mistake

The errors are systematic and making error is natural for the learner in learning of foreign language as natural as errors that occur in learning a first language. According to Norris, J (1987: 87) "Errors is systematic deviation, when a learner has not learned something and consistently gets it wrong" (Hartanti & Babikkoi, 2018). Brown, (2007) defines an error as "noticeable derivation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the inter-language competence of the learner".

Dulay. (1982) "Error is the flawed side of learner speech or writing". Sometimes errors are caused by differences between the native language of the learner and the language she is learning. Harmer, (cited in Khodijah, 2006: 8) said "mistake" is "less" serious since it is the retrieval that is faulty not the knowledge". Meanwhile Richards, (1971) gave different meaning that besides systematic and unsystematic errors, the learner, like the native speaker, seems to make unsystematic errors too.

Hubbard, (1983) stated errors called by lack of knowledge about the target language (English) or by incorrect hypotheses about it, and mistake caused by temporary lapses of memory, confusion, slips of the tongue and so on. Another way to differentiate between error and mistake is if the learners can correct themselves, it is probably mistake, but if they cannot, it is an error. According to Nelson (2002), pronouns are essentially special types of nouns and are the main word in a noun phrase or (more usually) the only word in a noun phrase. According to Nelson (2002) all the personal pronouns have distinctions in person (first, second, third). Most also have distinctions in number (singular, plural) and in case (subjective, objective, genitive).

Reflexive pronouns

Nelson (2002) said that the reflexive pronouns parallel the personal and possessive pronouns in person and number, but have no distinctions in case. There are separate forms for the second person singular (yourself) and plural (yourselves) whereas there is only one form of the second person for the personal pronouns (you) and the possessive pronouns (yours).

METHOD

The present study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method, aiming to gain in-depth insights into students' ability to use personal pronouns effectively. The research design employed is a pre-experimental design, which allows for the exploration of language acquisition in a controlled yet flexible environment. This design was particularly chosen to observe and analyze the practical application of personal pronouns in students' linguistic performance without the complexity of a full experimental framework. This research was conducted at English Language Education Department of a Private University in Sorong. The study draws on the theoretical foundations laid by Ellis (2008), who emphasized the importance of understanding grammatical structures in second language acquisition, and Brown (2007), who highlighted the role of practical application in language learning.

To achieve the objectives of the study, a translation-based test was utilized as the primary instrument. This test required students to translate sentences containing various forms of personal pronouns, enabling researchers to assess their understanding and application in context. The translation-based approach provided a clear indication of students' comprehension of pronoun usage while highlighting common errors and areas requiring improvement. Drawing inspiration from Larsen-Freeman's (2015) work on form-focused instruction and its effectiveness in language learning, the research integrates the principles of accuracy and meaningful

communication. The findings are expected to contribute valuable insights to the field of language education, especially in developing effective teaching strategies for mastering pronouns.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students often encounter difficulties when using personal pronouns correctly, leading to frequent errors that can hinder effective communication. These errors are typically influenced by factors such as inadequate grammatical understanding, first-language interference, and lack of exposure to proper usage in context. The following table highlights the sequence of student errors in using personal pronouns, arranged by the percentage of errors for each type. By identifying which personal pronouns have the highest and lowest error rates, educators can pinpoint specific areas where students struggle the most and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly.

The analysis of the data reveals significant trends in the types of pronouns that cause confusion. For example, subject pronouns such as he, she, and it often show a higher percentage of errors due to misuse in sentence construction. Similarly, possessive pronouns like their and its may be misapplied due to confusion with contractions or incorrect agreement. On the other hand, first-person pronouns such as I and we tend to have the lowest percentage of errors, likely because they are more frequently used and practiced in conversational settings. These findings underscore the need for targeted grammar instruction and contextual practice to reduce common errors and improve overall language proficiency.

Table 1. Students Errors in Using Personal Pronouns

No.	Personal Pronouns	Percentage
1.	Reflexive Pronouns	42%
2.	Possessive Adjective	39.5%
3.	Object Pronouns	37.6%
4.	Subject Pronouns	11.5%

The table illustrates the percentage of student errors across various categories of personal pronouns, shedding light on which forms pose the greatest challenges. Reflexive pronouns emerge as the most problematic, with a significant error rate of 42%. These pronouns, such as myself, himself, and themselves, often confuse students due to their unique function in reflecting the subject of the sentence. Errors may arise from incorrect placement or usage in contexts where reflexivity is either misinterpreted or unnecessary.

Following reflexive pronouns, possessive adjectives account for 39.5% of errors. Examples include my, her, and their. Mistakes in this category often stem from difficulties distinguishing possessive adjectives from possessive pronouns (e.g., their vs. theirs) or from contractions (e.g., its vs. it's). Object pronouns, such as me, him, and us, come next with an error rate of 37.6%. These errors likely result from confusion about their role in sentences, especially when object pronouns are mistakenly substituted for subject pronouns.

Subject pronouns, including I, he, and they, have the lowest error rate at 11.5%, reflecting greater familiarity and frequent usage in both written and spoken English. However, while the percentage is relatively low, errors still occur, particularly in agreement with verbs or in distinguishing between similar pronouns (e.g., he vs. she). This analysis underscores the need for differentiated instruction focusing more on reflexive pronouns and possessive adjectives, while reinforcing proper usage of subject and object pronouns to minimize residual errors.

DISCUSSION

The data offers a clear overview of the difficulties students face when using various types of personal pronouns. It reveals a significant disparity in the error rates across different pronoun categories, shedding light on the areas requiring focused intervention.

Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns, such as myself, himself, and themselves, stand out as the most challenging, with a staggering 42% error rate. This high percentage suggests that these pronouns are particularly confusing due to their specialized grammatical role. Reflexive pronouns are used when the subject and object of a sentence are the same, a concept that students may find abstract or difficult to apply consistently. Common errors include incorrect placement within sentences or misuse in contexts where reflexivity is unnecessary. For instance, students might write “He hurt hisself” instead of the correct “He hurt himself.” Addressing these challenges may require teaching strategies that emphasize the function and proper usage of reflexive pronouns through examples, sentence-building exercises, and error correction drills.

Possessive Adjectives

Close behind reflexive pronouns, possessive adjectives account for 39.5% of errors. Examples of these include my, her, and their. This category often trips students up due to its similarity to possessive pronouns (their vs. theirs) and contractions (its vs. it’s). Such confusion may stem from a lack of clarity about how possessive forms function within sentence structures. Students may, for example, write “This is her’s book” instead of “This is her book.” Effective interventions could involve visual aids and practice exercises that contrast possessive adjectives with possessive pronouns and contractions, helping students internalize the distinctions.

Object Pronouns

Object pronouns, including me, him, and us, are the third most error-prone category, with a 37.6% error rate. These mistakes often occur when students confuse the roles of subject and object pronouns. For instance, they might incorrectly substitute I for me in a sentence like “He gave the book to I” instead of the correct “He gave the book to me.” Such errors highlight a need for clarity in teaching pronoun functions and their placement within sentences. Role-playing activities or sentence diagramming could be particularly useful in addressing this issue by making abstract grammar rules more tangible and relatable.

Subject Pronouns

Subject pronouns, such as I, he, and they, show the lowest error rate at 11.5%. This suggests that students are relatively comfortable using these pronouns, likely due to their frequent occurrence in both written and spoken language. However, errors persist, particularly in subject-verb agreement (e.g., “He don’t know” instead of “He doesn’t know”) or when distinguishing between similar pronouns, such as he and she. While the error rate is low, these mistakes could hinder communication if left unaddressed. Reinforcing these fundamentals through regular practice and feedback could further reduce errors in this category.

Implications for Instruction

The data clearly underscores the need for differentiated instruction tailored to the specific challenges students face with each category of pronouns. Reflexive pronouns and possessive adjectives should receive the most attention, given their high error rates and the unique difficulties they pose. Teachers might consider employing targeted strategies, such as focused grammar lessons, error analysis activities, and contextualized practice.

In the pursuit of refining students' linguistic competence, it is crucial to recognize the importance of both subject and object pronouns. By cultivating a deeper understanding and reinforcing their correct application, we can alleviate persistent errors while fostering broader grammatical proficiency. When these challenges are approached methodically, educators pave the way for students to internalize the nuances of personal pronouns, enhancing not only their writing but also their overall communication abilities. A carefully constructed framework, one

that emphasizes commonly problematic areas such as reflexive pronouns and possessive adjectives, can play a transformative role in boosting students' confidence and precision.

Furthermore, by infusing the learning process with interactive and engaging strategies – such as collaborative games, group discussions, and authentic real-world examples – we make the acquisition of these linguistic forms both enjoyable and memorable. As students refine their understanding of pronoun functions, their ability to use them accurately in diverse contexts, both academic and every day, becomes increasingly natural. Over time, through sustained practice and thoughtful feedback, these lessons will be etched more firmly into their linguistic toolkit, allowing for clearer and more effective communication. In the end, addressing these grammatical hurdles with intention and care not only enhances students' structural expertise but empowers them to articulate their thoughts with greater clarity and confidence in English.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of student errors in personal pronouns highlights significant variations in the challenges posed by different pronoun categories. Reflexive pronouns and possessive adjectives emerge as the most problematic, with error rates of 42% and 39.5%, respectively. These difficulties stem from their unique grammatical functions and the frequent confusion between similar forms, such as possessive pronouns and contractions. Object pronouns, with a 37.6% error rate, also present challenges, particularly when students confuse their role with subject pronouns. Meanwhile, subject pronouns, which have the lowest error rate at 11.5%, still reveal areas for improvement, such as subject-verb agreement and distinguishing between similar pronouns. The data underscores the need for focused and differentiated instruction to address these specific challenges. By systematically targeting these error-prone areas, educators can help students improve both their grammatical accuracy and their overall communication skills. Prioritizing reflexive pronouns and possessive adjectives, while also reinforcing subject and object pronouns, can create a balanced approach to learning. Combining explicit grammar instruction with interactive and contextualized practice will make the learning process more effective and engaging. Ultimately, addressing these pronoun-related challenges not only enhances students' writing abilities but also equips them with the tools to communicate clearly and confidently in English, both academically and in everyday interactions.

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