

THE LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND INDONESIAN ESSAYS MADE BY EFL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract: Linguistic features of English and Indonesian essays made by EFL (English as Foreign Language) undergraduate students were analyzed by using content analysis. The objective was to identify the similarities and differences in sentence complexity, grammar, and mechanics of the essays. Errors in the forms of incomplete sentences, run-on and stringy sentences were found as well as grammatical and mechanical errors. The results showed that in the area of grammar, the essays indicated that the students had more proficiency on their first language (L1), but relatively poor on their second language (L2). More grammatical errors were found in English essays, whereas more mechanical errors were found in Indonesian essays. The research showed that the students had not sufficient English mastery in performing a scholarly writing.

Key words: linguistic features, sentence complexity, grammar, mechanics, academic writing.

Linguistic features refer to the use of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanical aspects of writing. A text with good linguistic features uses characteristics of language of science. The text conveys statement that is accurate and exact, supporting the logic of the statement. The use of proper sentence structure and precise vocabulary help reader identify proposition in the text more readily. Linguistic features in this study are identified through the use of sentence complexity, that is, simple sentences, complex sentences, and compound sentences; the use of grammar and mechanics in English and Indonesian essays.

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The linguistics features of this study rely on theories of English academic writing. The theory mainly focuses on the syntactic and mechanic quality of writing. Therefore, the essay is evaluated on the basis of the use of sentence complexity, grammar, and mechanic quality (Raimes, 1985). In this regard, theories concerning the process of developing academic writing (Hogins and Lillard, 1972; Andrew and Gardner, 1979; Krashen, 1984) that specifically deal with characteristics of academic writing, writing process, and analysis of an essay into pieces of traits are applied. The syntactic quality refers to the types of sentence construction: simple, compound, complex, or compound complex sentences. In addition, the grammar and mechanic quality refers to the characteristics of grammatical and mechanical errors found in each sentence. The grammatical errors include awkward constructions and agreement errors. The mechanical errors include punctuation errors, spelling errors, and capitalization errors (Andrew and Gardner, 1979; Latief, 1990; Oshima and Hogue, 1991).

With regard to the linguistic aspects, a study on assessment on English writing skills for EFL students conducted by Latief (1990) indicates that students taking more writing courses do not improve the rhetorical and coherent qualities in their writing. The students did not write with greater complexity of sentence construction, did not write longer papers, and did not make fewer errors.

Focusing on the linguistic aspects of writing (i.e. coherence, syntax, grammar, and mechanics), Sabilah (1999) identifies that erroneous linguistic aspects in writing are frequently performed by the students, implying that insufficient exercises on the scientific writing are lacking. The study suggests that the writing process is not learned well by students. Some high group students (Grade Point Average is 3.0 and up), all of middle group students (GPA is 2.5 to 2.9), and all of the low group students (GPA is less than 2.0) write draft of their English essay in Indonesian before they write the final copy in English. Most students also lacked the coherence of an essay; for instance, a thesis statement is not clearly stated or additional sentences irrelevant to the thesis statement are added.

Involving 10 participants as subjects, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How does the sentence complexity of the English essays and Indonesian essays made by the same EFL undergraduate students of MUM indicate similarities and differences?

2. How do the grammars and mechanics of the English essays and Indonesian essays made by the same EFL undergraduate students of MUM indicate similarities and differences?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is qualitative in nature, trying to describe narrative data represented in the form of words. Specifically, this study used content analysis (Holsti, 1969:42-43) that aimed at analyzing the content of corpus of academic written discourse. Content analysis was appropriate in this study because it described the characteristics of content and made inferences about the causes of content and the effect of content. This technique was used to determine linguistic features of the English and Indonesian essays that shared similar and different characteristics of the essays (Krippendorff, 1980; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Specifically, this study attempted to compare how the linguistic features of English and Indonesian essays of the same writer indicated similarities and differences. In the attempt of comparing the similarity and the difference of the linguistic features between an English essay and an Indonesian essay, evaluation was based on the essay products. Analysis was focused to see the sentence complexity, the grammar, and the mechanic quality (Connor, 1996; Latief, 1990).

Data Collection and Analysis

The data of this study were documents consisting of English essays, Indonesian essays obtained from the same 10 students of the English Department of MUM. They were participants of the study learning in the tenth semester of MUM. They were preparing to write a research report of an undergraduate thesis in English. Of 10 participants, 7 came from class A and 3 from class B. As the policy of MUM, the students of class A achieved GPA 3.0 and up and students of class B achieved GPA 2.74 to 2.29.

The participants were selected as the research subjects for two reasons. First, the participants had been equipped with formal writing exercises, e.g. Writing I, Writing II, Writing III, Writing IV, and Scientific Writing, i.e. a course on Thesis Writing. Second, the participants had been involved in the process of writing a thesis report in English, where a supervisory process in-

volving library exploration and intensive writing correction are served accompanying an imperative formal consultation with thesis supervisors. The supervisory process aims at improving the thesis content and language.

In addition, the same participants were also equipped to write an academic writing in Indonesian for various purposes.

The 10 students were selected mainly because of the availability of the participants in the field. In addition, 10 participants were quite representative for the qualitative research where the focus of investigation was to describe an in-depth understanding of the linguistic features of an essay (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993). Besides, the characteristics of the participants represented the EFL undergraduate students of MUM who wrote a thesis.

Procedures to collect the essay data were described in the following steps. First, the participants were assigned to write an English essay in the classroom. The essay was done in terms of a five-paragraph composition for 120 minutes. Participants were allowed to choose the available suggested topics of the essay as shown in the writing prompt of the English essay. After the participants completed their essays, the researcher administered the handwriting drafts and gave a code to each paper. At the same time, the researcher returned each essay to the participants for home revision, compromising participant's wish and thesis advisors' suggestions. In this revision procedure, participants refined the grammar and mechanics of the papers by computerizing or typing the paper for convenience. Topic shift and modification of ideas were not allowed to do. To do this, the participants considered 2 x 24 hours as a reasonable time for home revision. To preserve the originality of the essays, the handwriting papers that had been coded were submitted to the researcher together with the computerized papers.

Second, in the fourth day after the English essay was done, the same participants took another classroom test, writing Indonesian essay. The Indonesian essay was done in 120 minutes relying on available suggested topics shown in the writing prompts of Indonesian essay. The length of the paragraphs was not limited, but ideas should have been shared in three to five paragraphs. Similar to the English essays, participants were allowed to refine the grammar and mechanics of their papers and computerize or type them at homes for 2 x 24 hours. For this purpose, the handwriting papers were administered and coded by the researcher before they were returned to the students for home revision. Together with the original handwriting pa-

pers, the computerized or the typed papers were submitted to the researcher on the fourth day at the MUM campus. The students as identified from the codes made by the researcher and the computerized papers modified no handwriting papers, English or Indonesian.

In the attempt of comparing the similarity and the difference of the linguistic features between an English essay and an Indonesian essay, evaluation was based on the essay products. Analysis was focused to see the sentence complexity, the grammar, and the mechanic quality (Connor, 1996; Latief, 1990). More specifically, using the types of sentence construction the sentence complexity was identified into: simple, compound, complex, or compound complex sentences. The grammar and mechanic quality is evaluated on the basis of the ways the writer handled basic rules of writing such as parallelisms, pronoun-reference, double negatives, agreement errors, and basic conventions of writing such as punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.

In addition, the linguistic features of an essay were analyzed on the basis of the word choice and sentence complexity of an essay. Each text of an English essay and an Indonesian essay originating from the same writer was evaluated to see the use of its sentence complexity, grammar, and mechanics.

To obtain the deliberate similarities and differences of the linguistic features used in an English essay and in an Indonesian essay, each paper was matched. With this procedure, characteristics of the English essays and the Indonesian essays of all participants were contrasted. Thereby the similarity and the difference of the linguistic features of both essays were described.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sentence Complexity

This section deals with analysis on the sentence complexity of the essays. Description is directed to answer the question: How does the sentence complexity of the English essays and Indonesian essays made by the same EFL undergraduate students of MUM indicate similarities and differences?

With regard to the sentence construction, the students did not write with greater complexity of sentences both in the English essays and in Indonesian essays. They mostly wrote simple and compound sentences. Complex sen-

tences and compound complex sentences also appeared in the essays. Sentence constructions in linear English and Indonesian essays did not indicate a better quality than sentence constructions in non-linear English and Indonesian essays.

The sentence construction of the essays under study was mainly colored with syntax problems, giving three error variations of sentence problems normally made by EFL students in writing (Kirszner and Mandell, 1978; Oshima and Hogue, 1991). The error variations dealt with sentence fragment, run-on sentences, and stringy sentences. The errors were dominantly made in complex sentences and compound complex sentences. No matter what kinds of sentences (i.e. simple, compound, complex, or compound complex sentence) were analyzed, error variations were revealed in each type of the sentence constructions. The following examples illustrate error variations in English essays followed with the possible correction of each sentence.

Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments under study were colored with the presence of a subordinate clause. A part of a sentence was punctuated as if it were a complete sentence. For example,

Incorrect : Then will decides the suitable advisor

Correction : She will decide the suitable advisor

Or : She decides the suitable advisor

Incorrect : Every students study in university have responsibility

Correction : Every student of the university has responsibility ...

Or : Every student of the university is responsible to ...

Incorrect : Many problems that faced by students.

Correction : Many problems are faced by students.

Or : Students face many problems.

Incorrect : It means the requiring mastery not only one mechanic but also many mechanics.

Correction : Not only do students require to master one mechanic but also

many mechanics.
Or : It means students are required to master not only one mechanic but also many mechanics.

Incorrect : In their mind may be had ordered
Correction : In their mind, they may have ordered their ideas.
Or : They may have ordered ideas in their mind.

Run-On Sentences

While a sentence fragment is a sentence, which is not complete; a run-on sentence is a sentence, which is too much. The run-on sentences under study showed the use of two or more independent clauses written one after another with no punctuation (Oshima and Hogue, 1991:175). There were two kinds of run-on sentences: fused sentences, in which two sentences were run together without any punctuation, and comma splices, in which two sentences are linked with only a comma (Kirszner and Mandel, 1978:141). The following examples describe kinds of run-on sentences the students produced in their English essays. Error corrections of each incorrect sentence quoted from the essays were given following the incorrect sentences.

Incorrect : Many kind of ideas from our mind, even we master the statement that we do to develop becomes thesis.

Correction : We have many kinds of ideas in mind that make us possible to develop a thesis.

Or : Many ideas appearing in our mind make us possible to develop a thesis.

Incorrect : Besides, it is needed trying hard to develop their mind and didn't depend with other.

Correction : Students need to work hard to develop their own mind so that they do not depend on each other.

Or : Besides, they need to try hard to develop their mind without depending to others.

Incorrect : About their grammar is very important to write the thesis because grammar is the basic writing.

Correction : In addition, their grammar is very important as the basic of writing.

Or : Students' competence in grammar is very important because, grammar is the basic competence on writing.

Incorrect : Although the head of English Department has policy to determine the appropriate counselor due to the title of the thesis, but the students often get inappropriate lecturer.

Correction : Although the head of the English Department has a policy to determine the appropriate advisor relevant to the title of the thesis, students often get inappropriate advisors.

Or : A policy to determine the appropriate advisor relevant to the title of the thesis has been determined by head of the English Department, but students often get unexpected advisors.

Stringy Sentences

Other types of sentences that were awkward in the essays under study were stringy sentences. The characteristics of stringy sentences referred to sentence constructions given by Oshima and Hogue (1991:177). These sentences were colored with too many (e.g. two, three, or four) clauses usually connected with and, but, so, and because forming one very long awkward sentence. A long sentence connected with and, but, so, and, because, linking a logical sequence of idea is considered as a correct sentence. For example,

Incorrect : It means that they do the thesis under the guide who does not comprehend deeply about the thesis that will be discussed.

Correction : It means that they do the thesis under the guidance of an advisor who does not understand deeply about the thesis area that they will discuss.

Or : It means that students write the thesis under the guidance of an advisor who does not understand deeply on the topic they discuss.

Incorrect : Thus, the writer catch this phenomenon and recommend that reading actually can add the new references of information and enlarge the capacity of knowledge.

Correction : Thus, the writer catches this phenomenon and recommends that reading can add the new references of information and enlarge the capacity of knowledge.

Or : Finding this phenomenon, the writer recommends that reading can add new information and enlarge the capacity of knowledge.

Incorrect : We know that English is an international language that is used for communication in the world become very important for us as the basic requirement to face free market era, so that we are demanded to overcome English well whether in oral or writing.

Correction : We know that English as an international language is the world communication that becomes the basic need for us to face free market era. Therefore, we must master English in both oral and written forms.

Or : Realizing English as an international language used for communication in the world, we must master English in oral and written form for our basic skills to face the free market era.

Incorrect : Writing thesis need many books but in the library of MUM is very limited numbers of books, and a kind of books very difficult to get in MUM library.

Correction : Though writing thesis needs many books for references, there is a limited number of books available and even are not available in MUM library.

Or : To support writing a thesis, students need many books for reference, but MUM library provides a very limited number of books, and even some books of a certain topic are not available in the library.

With regard to the Indonesian essays, a main difference of sentence constructions between English essays and Indonesian essays was obtained in terms of error variation. Error variations of the English essays were indicated by the use of simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences; while the Indonesian essays were dominated by the use of stringy

sentences. The development of sentence complexity of the Indonesian essays under study referred to the similar way of the English essays. Simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences appeared simultaneously in the Indonesian essays, with limited errors evaluated using the Indonesian rules. The following examples describe the sentence complexity and the error variations obtained in the Indonesian essays.

Sentence Fragments

Incorrect : Akan tetapi lebih bersifat internasional. (Dependent clause, missing independent clause).

Correction : [Jaringan kerja yang dibuat UMM bukan hanya bersifat nasional], akan tetapi lebih bersifat internasional.

Incorrect : Demikian pula dalam peningkatan kualitas pengajaran terutama bahasa Inggris. (Introductory clause, missing predicate).

Correction : Demikian pula dalam peningkatan kualitas pengajaran terutama bahasa Inggris, [UMM harus membuat program yang lebih jelas].

Incorrect : Ketiga anggapan atau respon masyarakat semua lulusan FKIP seharusnya menjadi guru. (Phrases, missing predicate and that clause).

Correction : Yang ketiga ialah anggapan atau respon masyarakat yang mengatakan bahwa semua lulusan FKIP seharusnya menjadi guru.

Incorrect : Masih banyak anggapan masyarakat Indonesia bahwa PTN lebih baik daripada PTS. (Missing that clause).

Correction : Masih banyak masyarakat Indonesia menganggap bahwa PTN lebih baik daripada PTS.

Incorrect : Dan pada saatnya mampu menghasilkan alumni-alumni yang benar-benar handal. (missing subject).

Correction : Pada saatnya, UMM mampu menghasilkan alumni-alumni yang benar-benar handal.

Run-On Sentences

Incorrect : Tentunya jika kita masuk dunia tersebut akan kalah bersaing dengan mereka yang kuliah di perhotelan dan ekonomi. (missing comma and subject in the independent sentence).

Correction : Tentunya jika kita masuk dunia kerja, kita akan kalah bersaing dengan lulusan perhotelan dan ekonomi.

Incorrect : Pihak jurusan sudah memberikan beberapa pilihan bidang pekerjaan kepada mahasiswanya dan lulusannya bisa berkembang dan bersaing dibidang yang menjadi minatnya. (missing semi colon, that clause, and subject of dependent clause).

Correction : Pihak jurusan sudah memberikan beberapa pilihan bidang pekerjaan kepada mahasiswa; selanjutnya, bagaimana mahasiswa mengembangkan diri dan bersaing di bidang yang diminatinya setelah lulus kuliah.

Incorrect : Apalagi di era reformasi yang banyak membutuhkan “komunikator” untuk berbaur dengan bangsa lain. (Phrase, missing subject and that clause).

Correction : Apalagi di era reformasi, kita banyak membutuhkan “komunikator” yang bisa berbaur dengan bangsa lain.

Stringy Sentences

Incorrect : Sebenarnya hal ini tergantung dari individu setiap orang, meskipun kita lulus PTS tapi kalau “capable”, image seperti ini akan hilang dari pemikiran masyarakat. (missing predicate).

Correction : Sebenarnya hal ini tergantung dari individu setiap orang. Meskipun lulusan PTS, kalau kita “capable”, kita akan bisa menghilangkan image jelek seperti ini dari pemikiran masyarakat.

Incorrect : Tetapi jangan berkecil hati, jika kemampuan bahasa Inggris kita bagus, pasti kita bisa menerobos dan tentunya harus diimbangi dengan rasa percaya diri. (inappropriate parallel-

- ism and order of importance and missing subject).
- Correction* : Tetapi jangan berkecil hati, jika kemampuan bahasa Inggris kita bagus dan kita imbangi dengan rasa percaya diri, pasti kita bisa menerobos.
- Incorrect* : Maka, jalan keluar yang laik adalah barangkali saat proses penerimaan pembelajar baru harus selektif dan memperhatikan kuota yang ideal tanpa melampaui batas. (incorrect use sentence connectror, missing subject, comma, and missing sentence connector).
- Correction* : Nampaknya, jalan keluar yang baik adalah saat proses penerimaan pembelajar baru, lembaga harus selektif dan memperhatikan kuota yang ideal agar jumlah siswa yang diterima tidak melampaui batas.
- Incorrect* : Meski UMM sebagai perguruan tinggi (PT) non-negeri yang tidak begitu terpengaruh dengan otonomi PT, sebab universitas ini telah lama mandiri melakukan pendanaan operasional secara swadana. (Missing independent clause).
- Correction* : Sebagai perguruan tinggi (PT) non-negeri, UMM tidak begitu terpengaruh dengan otonomi PT. Universitas ini telah lama mandiri, misalnya melakukan pendanaan operasional secara swadana.
- Incorrect* : Tetapi, memperhatikan problem kondisi semangat pembelajar atau mahasiswanya, kuantitasnya, dan fasilitas pembelajarannya untuk merubah serta melengkapinya merupakan program yang semestinya. (confusing sentence: incorrect use of possessive pronoun and missing independent clause).
- Correction* : Tetapi, memperhatikan kondisi semangat mahasiswa, kuantitas dan fasilitas belajar yang kurang, sudah semestinya lembaga membuat program untuk mengubah dan memperbaiki kelemahan tersebut.
- Incorrect* : Maka, jurusan bahasa Inggris di UMM sebagai salah satu lembaga pengajaran bahasa Inggris berupaya melakukan pengembangan dalam berbagai hal untuk meningkatkan mutu

pendidikannya antara lain: meningkatkan profesionalitas guru, menerapkan kurikulum yang sudah ada dengan baik dan benar, dan menyediakan fasilitas yang memadai. (incorrect sentence connectors).

Correction : Karena itu, jurusan bahasa Inggris UMM berupaya melakukan berbagai pengembangan untuk meningkatkan mutu pendidikan melalui peningkatkan profesionalitas guru, penerapan kurikulum secara baik dan benar, dan penyediaan fasilitas yang memadai.

Incorrect : Teknologi yang sekali tekan dapat menampilkan berbagai ragam informasi dan tanpa ada tabir penutup hal-hal yang semestinya belum waktunya diketahui anak didik dituntut lebih optimal dalam pembentukan moralitas anak bangsa. (missing comma and that clause).

Correction : Sekali tekan teknologi ini dapat menampilkan berbagai ragam informasi yang serba terbuka dan belum semestinya diketahui anak didik. Karena itu, teknologi ini harus dikelola secara hati-hati dalam pembentukan moralitas anak bangsa.

Grammar and Mechanics

Features of grammar and mechanics of the essays are described in this section. The description is directed to answer the question: How do the grammar and mechanics of the English essays and Indonesian essays made by the same EFL undergraduate students indicate similarities and differences?

In the area of grammatical features of English essays, the students made few errors in the English essays. The grammatical errors frequently made were in terms of shift of pronoun substitutions and agreements. A possible reason supporting the evidence was that students computerized their essays whose spelling checkers automatically worked to correct the punctuations in the essays. The following examples describe the features of the grammatical and mechanical errors in the English essays.

Shift of Pronoun Substitutions

- a. Shift from they into he (e.g. ... when they are doing the writing exercise, they feel so hard to continue his idea systematically in the worksheet).
- b. Shift from us into he (e.g. Writing is the activity that cannot separate from us whether he is student, employee,).
- c. Shift from possessive adjective of we into possessive adjective of they (e.g. All the problems depend on ourselves to face their problems).

Agreement Errors

- a. Confusion of using modal and verb inflection (e.g. then she will decides the suitable ...;
- b. Incorrect use of double auxiliary (e.g. Here, teacher should can stimulate and give encouragement ...; Sometimes, the counselor haven't read ...).
- c. Missing noun pluralization (e.g. ... they should join many seminar).
- d. Missing verb inflection (e.g. Every student of university want to finish ...; Every students who study in university have responsibility; Actually, the problem come from ourselves; Writing thesis need many books).
- e. Missing verb 'be' (e.g. The student who capable in English ...; We are difficult to find out our literature which suitable with ...; ... we have to careful in selecting vocabularies; the students is able to consult ...).
- f. Confusing mass noun with count nouns (e.g. Much of the students got difficulties ...; ... many informations).
- g. Incorrect use of WH question (e.g. Why they must be postponing their thesis?)
- h. Incorrect use of gerund after preposition (e.g. We should study hard and solve the problem within do the best and trying hard; ... the students must have good preparation by reads, or learn from the beginning of thesis).
- i. Confusing use of adverb -ly (e.g. They confuse which one must be put on firstly and which one is secondly).

Mechanical Errors

- a. Spelling (e.g. reset for research, se for she, exposdefacto, in coomon case ...).
- b. Comma and colon (e.g. ... in the following points, are: reading ...; ... the

suitable method:descriptive, ...).

Unlike in the English essays, in the Indonesian essays the students made few errors on grammar, but they made more in mechanics. Errors on grammar consisted of confusing use of adjectives, nouns, and shift on pronoun substitution. Grammar errors, such as agreement, incorrect inflection, tenses, incorrect use of 'be' and modal auxiliary did not appear in the essays. Error in using preposition "di" that indicates a place was frequently made.

The finding apparently indicates that Bahasa Indonesia does not have the grammar rules of "to be, tenses, and auxiliary". Students' errors on mechanics dealt with spelling, capitalization, and comma. Errors on spelling and punctuation in the Indonesian essays were mostly made, because the computer did not provide speller checks for Bahasa Indonesia. The following examples describe errors of grammar and mechanics obtained in the Indonesian essays.

Grammatical Errors

- a. Shift they to we (e.g. Lulusan bahasa Inggris FKIP UMM dipersiapkan menjadi tenaga pendidik yang harus siap mengajar di manapun kita dibutuhkan).
- b. Confusing adjective and noun (e.g. ... tenaga pengajar yang profesionalisme).

Mechanical Errors

- a. Spelling (e.g. dibutuhkan...; kesulitan; tehnik; dikatakan; akan).
- b. Preposition di (e.g. ... mahasiswa dijurusan, diantaranya, dipasaran kerja, dibidang lain ...; diatas; disuatu perusahaan; disamping, etc).
- c. Capitalization (e.g. SDMnya SDAny; ... study in a University).
- d. Missing question mark (e.g. Akankah kita berhasil jika manusia dalam negeri (Indonesia) lengah akan perubahan tersebut.).
- e. Missing comma after sentence connectors (e.g. Akan tetapi pada masa perkuliahan mahasiswa akan ...; Selain itu mahasiswa juga diwajibkan ...; Dengan demikian bisa dikatakan bahwa ...; Oleh sebab itu kita sebagai mahasiswa PTS ...).

DISCUSSION

Elaborate evidences in grammatical errors supported the above findings. In English essays, the students made more grammatical errors in the level of word structure, which apparently indicated that students' mastery on English grammar was in a transition continuum. Error variations occurred to using agreement, verb be, auxiliary, mass noun, pluralization, inflection, and pronoun substitution. Conversely, grammatical errors in Indonesian essays were limited to the use of pronoun substitution and word classes that were confused (e.g. *profesional and profesionalisme*).

This finding confirms studies by Krashen (1984), Latief, (1990), and Mukminatien (1997). Krashen (1984:42) contended that L2 writers, would of course make more errors in grammar and lexical choices than would L1 writers. In writing, the mastery in grammar did not guarantee a proficient use of the language. The students under study learned to write beginning with analysis of the structures of sentences. When they were forced to write sentences in an essay, they were made aware of the grammatical rules. They tended to concentrate on the form rather than on the content of the essays, that was colored with errors on grammar (Mukminatien, 1997).

The developmental errors the students made also indicated that the students were still in their transitional competence in the continuum of approaching the L2 rule system. The errors reflecting the structure of L1 were simply the result of lacking of L2 competence. Adult L2 learners already had the basic rules of L1 to express complex ideas; when they produced their complex thought with insufficient L2 rule system, they tended to use the available L1 rule system. The more they concentrated on the content of ideas, the more they forgot everything about their L2 rule system they had learned. Confirming Mukminatien (1997) this study asserted that as students did not have enough acquired rules to write, they shared a piece of writing which was dominated by interlingual errors such as subject-verb agreements, articles, plurals, and syntax, showing a premature use of English.

CONCLUSION

Typical problems relating to sentence complexity in English and Indonesian essays are similar. Students produce awkward sentences, e.g. fragment, run-on, and stringy sentences. The students evidently show to use

similar strategies in developing English and Indonesian sentences.

A discrepancy is revealed in the grammatical and mechanical errors. Errors on agreements, pronoun substitutions, and mechanics are dominant in English essays. In addition, errors in using *'be, auxiliary, modal, inflection'*, etc. also frequently appear, indicating students' imperfect mastery of English grammar. Grammatical errors in Indonesian essays do not reflect the imperfect mastery of Indonesian grammar. Errors in using pronoun substitution frequently appear and mechanical errors such as spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are dominant. However, errors in using *"be, auxiliary, modal, and inflection"* do not exist, as Indonesian grammar does not have the rules.

In the English essays, students make more grammatical errors in the level of word structure that vary on agreement, verb be, auxiliary, mass noun, pluralization, inflection, and pronoun substitution. Grammatical errors in Indonesian essays are present in terms of pronoun substitution and word classes. It is concluded that L2 writers, will of course make more errors in grammar and lexical choices than will L1 writers. The mastery in grammar does not guarantee a proficient use in writing. The students under study begin to write with structures of sentences. Because they do not have enough acquired rules to write, when writing they share a premature use of grammar in the essays. Interlingual errors such as subject-verb agreements, articles, plurals, and syntax are dominant.

In the area of writing practices, there is some evidence that practice in writing, especially expository writing, relates to improvement in writing ability. Practice makes students able to learn some aspects of the writing skills, especially the form and organization of an essay. Besides, reading gives more influential writing competence. For instance, to learn how to write for newspapers, one must read newspapers; textbooks about them will not suffice. This study also concludes that good writers adhere to composing process, specifically in planning, rescanning, and revising. Good writers focus on content in revision. Poor writers use revision to clarify the meaning contained in the first draft, mechanics, grammar, and spelling.

This study contends that the students' maturity of styles in English essays reflect their incomplete mastery of English knowledge; and the students' maturity of styles in Indonesian essays show the good mastery of Indonesian rules. However, the students perform immature styles in both English and Indonesian essays.

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academic writing, 1, 2, 4
grammar, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13, 15,
16, 17
linguistic features, 1, 3, 4, 5

mechanics, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 15,
17
sentence complexity, 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 16