

# ERROR ANALYSIS ON LEARNERS' PASSIVE SENTENCES

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## Abstract

This study focuses on error analysis on passive sentences of the third semester students of the FBIB (the Faculty of Language and Cultural Studies) of Unisbank, in the academic year 2009/2010. They consist of three classes with the total number of students 65. Therefore, the number of the data collected was 65, each consisted of 10 passive sentences. The writers took 20 data (30.76%) randomly, so the total number of passive sentences to be analyzed was 200.

Five types of errors were identified on a sentence level, namely: (1) *omission*, (2) *over conclusion*, (3) *misformation*, and (4) *misordering*, and (5) *Blends*.

The findings show that the misformation error is of the highest occurrence: 42.35%. The results will be of benefit for material development in the FBIB of Unisbank.

**Keywords:** error, omission, over conclusion, misformation, misordering, blends.

## A. INTRODUCTION

There is a proverb which says: "The more we study, the less we know." What does it mean? Different people might interpret it differently. Ones might say that this proverb is incorrect, because they think that more study will make a learner gains more knowledge, therefore he will also know more, not less. Others, however, might think that when one learns more about one thing, there are still many other things that he has not learned yet, so he feels that he lacks and needs to learn more. Hence, the writer would like to say that the more we study a

language, the less errors we make, and the less errors we make, the more aware of language we will be.

James (1998) states that language learners cannot correct their errors until they have additional knowledge on the topic. These errors occur in the course of the learner's study because they haven't acquired enough knowledge. Once they acquire additional knowledge, they will be able to correct their errors and the more errors the learners correct the more conscious of language they will become.

There are many studies on error analysis because error analysis helps to improve the teaching and learning process. Moreover, error analysis helps to direct the focus of the teaching and learning process. It will also improve the process of second language learning and develop more information for developing the second language acquisition theory (James,1998).

Ever since Corder (Corder, 1967 in Ho, 2003) highlighted the importance of considering errors in the language learning process, there has been a shift in emphasis towards an understanding of the problems learners face in their study of a language. Errors are indispensable to learners since the making of errors can be regarded as 'a device the learner uses in order to learn' (Selinker, 1992 in Ho, 2003).

In this study, the writers will focus the error analysis on passive sentences. This based on the fact that there were many third semester students of the Faculty of Language and Cultural Studies of Unisbank, who made errors in altering active to passive sentences. It was shown on results of the tasks and the mid-semester test on active-passive voice alterations.

The other reason of focusing the study on passive sentences is the fact that passive sentences are mostly used by the students to write their paper and thesis as one of the

requirements to gain their certificates. This is based on the writers' observation in the campus library where the students' paper and thesis are kept.

### **Statement of the Problem**

1. What are the types of errors made by the third semester students of FBIB (the Faculty of Language and Cultural Studies) of Unisbank?
2. Which error has the highest occurrence?

### **Objective of the Study**

1. To describe what types of errors made by the third semester students of FBIB (the Faculty of Language and Cultural Studies) of Unisbank.
2. To identify the error which has the highest occurrence.

### **Significance of the Study**

The result of this study will provide information about the students' errors on passive sentences, so that they can evaluate themselves and hopefully do not make the same errors when they are to make passive sentences in the teaching and learning process.

### **Scope and Limitation**

The scope of the study is error analysis on passive sentences. The study is limited to the written work on active-passive sentence alterations, done by the third semester students of FBIB (the Faculty of Language and Cultural Studies) of Unisbank in the academic year 2009/2010.

## **B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Language is a means of communication which people use to communicate every day. Hardly a day goes by when we do not talk, if only to ourselves! Apart from the spoken medium, language also exists in written form (Aarts, 1997). These two different forms of language, spoken and written forms, have *structures*. The linguistic ingredients that language is made up of are arranged in accordance with a set of rules, which we call the *grammar* of a language (Aarts, 1997).

Language consists of a function and a form. Common sense tells us that the main function of language is to help people communicate. The form consists of sounds, gestures, or other physical variations in the environment capable of being perceived by other people (Payne, 2006). The form of the language is the grammar of the language. And, passive voice is one part of the language grammar, which will be discussed in this study.

### **Passive Voice**

The passive voice occurs in both spoken and written English, and it is used very frequently in technical writing. Most verbs that take an object can be used in the passive voice. In sentences in the active voice, the primary focus is on the subject (the *agent or doer* of the action). To give primary focus to the object of the sentence, the sentence can be changed to the passive voice (Fleming, 2003).

After referring to the form and function of the passive voice, we will refer to the form and function of the *function words*, since some of the function words will appear in the analysis of the data.

### **Function words**

Function words are those that often have little meaning in the dictionary's sense, but which serve important functions in relating other words in the language to each other. Among the function words are articles, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, pronouns, substitute nouns, intensifiers and special expressions. (Rustipa, 2008)

In conducting this research, the writers use the theory of descriptive taxonomy written by Carl James, in his book "Errors in language learning and use: Exploring error analysis," in 1998, as the main theory.

### **Error Analysis**

Error is the failure of learner in using the appropriate rule of the language, which will help us to see how learners process the second language and develop

underlying systems of rules. (Littlewood in Hasyim, 2002), Thus errors need not be seen as a sign of failure because learners use errors as a tool to acquire the second language, as they apply strategies in dealing with errors.

One of the difficulties of error analysis is how to define and scope the ‘errors’ as there are many definitions of errors. Edge (1989) defines errors as forms that language users cannot correct by themselves even though they have been taught. James (1998) states that language learners cannot correct their errors until they have additional knowledge on the topic. These errors occur in the course of the learner’s study because they haven’t acquired enough knowledge. Once they acquire additional knowledge, they will be able to correct their errors and the more errors the learners correct the more conscious of language they will become. James (1998) studied Error Taxonomies and classified errors into two types.

#### **Linguistic category classification**

This type of taxonomy specifies errors in terms of linguistic categories and in terms of where the error is located in the overall system of the target language. First, it indicates at what **level** of language the error is located: in phonology, grammar, lexis, text or discourse and if it is at grammar level, what particular grammatical construction does it involve? Some possibilities they list are: the auxiliary system and passive sentence complements. Having established the level of the error, one next asks about its **class**. Given that it is a grammar error, does it involve the class of a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, or determiner? which leads to the assignment of a **rank** to the error, in terms of where it lies on the hierarchy of **units** that constitute its level.

#### **The surface structure taxonomy**

This is the second type of descriptive taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) who describe this taxonomy as being based on “the way surface structures are altered.” Errors can occur because of change in surface structure in

specific and systematic ways. There are four ways in which learners “modify” target forms in specific and systematic ways.

#### 1). Omission

Learners in the early stages of learning tend to omit function words rather than content words. More advanced learners tend to be aware of their ignorance of content words and rather than omit one, they resort to compensatory strategies to express their idea (Kasper and Kellerman, 1997).

#### 2). Addition

This manifestation of error, according to Dulay, Burt and Krashen, is the ‘result of all-too-faithful use of certain rules’ (1982, p.156) and they suggest there are subtypes. First is regularization, which involves overlooking exceptions and spreading rules to domains where they do not apply, for example producing the incorrect “buyed” for “bought.” Second, is double marking, defined as ‘failure to delete certain items which are required in some linguistic constructions but not in others’. Here is an example: *He doesn’t knows me.*

#### 3). Misformation

Dulay, Burt and Krashen define misinformation as use of the wrong form of a structure or morpheme, and give examples like: (a). I\* seen her yesterday. (b). He hurt\* himself.

#### 4). Misordering

This category is relatively uncontroversial. The learners can select the right forms to use in the right context, but they arrange them in the wrong order, for instance, adverbials, interrogatives and adjectives, yielding errors as in: (a). \*He every time come late home. (b). \*Tell me where did you go. (c). \*The words little.

As Dulay, Burt and Krashen observe, misordering is often the result of learners relying on carrying out ‘word for word translations of native language surface structure’ (1982, p.162) when producing written or spoken utterances in the target language.

James (1998) classified errors into five patterns as follows: (1). Omission; (2). over inclusion; (3). misselection (use wrong words not wrong forms; (4). Misordering; (5). blends: (Blending arises when two alternative grammatical forms are combined to produce an ungrammatical blend.)

The next language features that we are going to refer is the inflectional morphemes, since some of them will appear in the data analysis.

### **Inflectional Morpheme**

Inflectional morphemes are bound morphemes that alter the grammatical state of the root or stem. They do not carry any meaning on their own, as is the nature of bound morphemes, but serve a critical function in inflected languages such as English. (Vilk, 2001)

## **C. METHODOLOGY**

This research is a qualitative research. The writers divided the chapter into sub-chapters, namely: approach, data collection and data analysis to make the research systematic.

### **Approach**

In this research, the writers used a descriptive approach. So, they only described the data.

### **Data collection**

#### **1. Source of the data (Subjects)**

The subjects of the research were all the third semester students of the Faculty of Language and Cultural Studies Unisbank. They consist of three classes, two morning classes and one evening class. The total number of students was 65, and they all had taken and passed the subjects of Structure I, Structure II, and Structure III. Therefore, the total number of the data was 65, each consisted of 10 passive sentences. The writers took 20 data (30.76%) randomly to be analyzed. Thus, the number of sentences to be analyzed is 200 sentences.

## 2. Instrument

The data were taken from the students' written work. The only instrument used was test paper. There were ten active sentences written in three types of sentences (affirmative, negative, and interrogative), in various tenses (simple present, present continuous, present perfect, and simple past) and by using modal auxiliaries (can and could).

## 3. Procedure of data collection

The material of the test (the test paper) was embedded to the final examination of Structure III, FBIB Unisbank, in the academic year 2009/2010. One of the materials of Structure III subject is passive voice. The students are told nothing about the research, they thought that the research test was one part of the examination materials, so they did it seriously. The writers did this in order to get the natural data.

## Data Analysis

The data collected in this research were students' written work on passive sentences. In analyzing the sentences, the writers neglect the score. The writers identified all occurrences of errors and classified them using the combination of two theories as follows:

(1). Theory of descriptive taxonomy by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) and James (1998), which describes taxonomy as being based on "the way surface structures are altered," namely:

- 1). Omission (Omission of function words and content words)
- 2). Addition (First, regularization, which involves overlooking exceptions and spreading rules to domains where they do not apply, for example producing the incorrect "buyed" for "bought." Second, is double marking, defined as 'failure to delete certain items which are required in some linguistic constructions but not in others'. Here is an example: *He doesn't knows*



3). Misformation (misinformation as use of the wrong form of a structure or morpheme, and give examples like: I\* seen her yesterday. He hurt\* himself.

4). Misordering (The learners can select the right forms to use in the right context, but they arrange them in the wrong order, for instance, adverbials, interrogatives and adjectives, yielding errors as in: \*He every time come late home; \*Tell me where did you go; \*The words little.

(2). Theory of descriptive taxonomy by James (1998), namely: (a). omission, (b). over inclusion, (c). misselection (use wrong words not wrong forms), (d). misordering (e). blends: (Blending arises when two alternative grammatical forms are combined to produce an ungrammatical blend.)

The result of combining these two theories, based on the need of making complete analysis on passive voice, is as follows:

#### 1). Omission

Function words: (a). Article, such as: the, a... (b). Auxiliary verb, such as: is, am, do....(c). Preposition, such as to, by.... (d). Pronoun, including personal and possessive pronouns. (e). Substitute nouns, such as: all, many....

Content words:

The content words, namely nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, are not included in this classification, because the students are not expected to make errors by omitting content words. In altering active to passive voice, there is no need to drop any of the content words. So, if this occurs, the error is neglected and consider to be correct. Example: (Look at table 1-06 no. 4) The incorrect answer is: “*Money had\* been sent to me by my brother.*” The correct answer is: “*Money has not been sent to me by my brother.*” The adverb “not” is omitted, but it is neglected, so the sentence only has one error “*had*” should be “*has.*”

2). Over Inclusion (addition): (a). Overlooking exception. (b). Double Marking

3). Misformation, this concerns inflectional morphemes (a to d) and structure (e):

(a). Third singular present agreement; (b). Past tense; (c). Progressive; (d). Past participle; (e). Pronoun (This replaces the category of “plural marker,” which is not supposed to occur in active to passive alteration. In case this occurs, it is neglected and considered to be correct).

4) Misordering: (a). Adverbial; (b). Adjective; (c). Interrogative

5). Blends.

To answer the first research question, that is “What are the types of errors made by the third semester students of FBIB (Faculty of Language and Cultural Studies) Unisbank?,” the writers used Table 1 to classify the data, which is available in the appendix. The answer of the first question is stated in the types of error column.

To answer the second research question, that is “ Which error has the highest occurrence?,” the writers use the following table (table-2) which is available in the appendix.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **(1). Omission of Articles.**

The writer finds several incorrect sentences in which articles are omitted. Here is the example of the omission of articles which is followed by the correct answer.

*A new disease was not invented by\*doctor.*

*A new disease was not invented by the doctor.*

The articles which are dropped in all sentences above are *the*, The writer finds that the students tend to neglect the use of the definite article *the*.

#### **(2). Omission of Auxiliary Verb**

The writer finds several incorrect sentences caused by lacking of auxiliary verbs. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*The mice are\*killed by the farmer.*

*The mice are being killed by the farmer.*

The missing auxiliary in the example above is *being*. The omission of auxiliary in the sentence above breaks the rule of passive voice, namely: be followed by participle.

### **(3). Omission of Preposition**

The writers find several incorrect sentences caused by lacking of prepositions. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*Money hasn't been sent\*me by my brother.*

*Money hasn't been sent to me by my brother.*

There is one missing preposition in the sentence, i.e. to. The writer notices that the student ignores the use of preposition to, which breaks the rule of the grammar.

### **(4). Omission of Pronoun**

The writer finds several incorrect sentences caused by lack of pronouns. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*Money hasn't been sent to me by\* brother.*

*Money hasn't been sent to me by my brother.*

The writer finds that some students neglect the use of possessive pronoun my in the above sentence.

### **(5). Omission of Substitute Noun**

The writer finds several incorrect sentences caused by lack of substitute nouns. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*English can be spoken by\* people.*

*English can be spoken by many people.*

### **(6). Over Inclusion in Overlooking Exception**

The writers find several incorrect sentences caused by overlooking exception. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*Was that letter been writed by the secretary?*

*Was that letter written by the secretary?*

### **(7). Over Inclusion in Double Marking**

The writer finds several incorrect sentences caused by double marking. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*Did the letter was written by the secretary?*

*Was that letter written by the secretary?*

### **(8). Misformation in Third Singular Present Agreement**

The writer finds several incorrect sentences caused by the incorrect usage of the third singular present agreement. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*The hot soup is often spoils by the waiter.*

*The hot soup is often spoiled by the waiter.*

As can be seen in the above sentence, students do not always use the third singular present agreement correctly. The student uses the incorrect form of the word spoil, he/she

changes the word into spoils, instead of its correct past participle form spoiled.

### **(9). Misformation in Past Tense**

The writer finds several incorrect sentences caused by the incorrect usage of the past tense. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*The bread was ate all by the mouse.*

*All the bread was eaten by the mouse.*

### **(10). Misformation in Progressive**

The writer finds several incorrect sentence caused by the incorrect usage of the progressive –ing form. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*The mice are killing by the farmer.*

*The mice are being killed by the farmer.*

### **(11). Misformation in Past Participle**

The writer finds several incorrect sentence caused by the incorrect usage of the past participle form. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*My pen couldn't been found anywhere.*

*My pen couldn't be found anywhere.*

#### **(12). Misformation of Pronoun**

The writer finds several incorrect sentences caused by the incorrect form of the pronoun. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*Me hasn't been sent money by my brother.*

*I have not been sent money by my brother.*

#### **(13). Misordering of Adverbial**

The writer finds several incorrect sentences caused by the incorrect order of the adverb. Here is the example followed by the correct sentence.

*The bread was ate all by the mouse.*

*All the bread was eaten by the mouse.*

#### **(14). Misordering of Adjective**

The writer finds only one incorrect sentence caused by the incorrect order of the adjective. Here is the incorrect sentence followed by the correct one.

*The soup hot was spoiled by the waiter often.*

*The hot soup is often spoiled by the waiter.*

The adjective hot is a modifier, it should be inverted with the modified word soup. The rule is modifier modified, so the correct order is not *soup hot* (modified modifier), but *hot soup*.

#### **(15). Misordering of Interrogative**

The writer finds several incorrect sentences caused by the incorrect order of the words in forming questions. Here is the incorrect sentence followed by the correct sentence.

*Have been the present bought?*

*Has the present been bought?*

In the above sentence, the position of *been* is incorrect, it should be moved to its correct position between *present* and *bought*.

**(16). Blends**

The writer finds two incorrect sentences caused by the wrong combination of two grammatical forms. Here is the incorrect sentence followed by the correct sentence.

*English is can be spoken by many people.*

*English can be spoken by many people.*

The sentence consists of two different grammatical forms, it can be separated into two correct sentences:

(1). *English is spoken by many people,* and

(2). *English can be spoken by many people.*

In order to get clear result of the analysis, the writer summarizes the result of the error analysis based on the classification of errors in table 1, into another table which consists of the number and the percentage of errors found in the incorrect passive sentences made by the students, based on the five types of errors and their categories.(Look at table 2).

**Table 2.**

In this table, the errors made by the third semester students were put in order from the most frequent to the least frequent as follows:

<b>The Frequency of errors</b>			
<b>Types of error</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<i>OMISSION</i>	Auxiliary	25	12.76
	Preposition	15	7.65
	Pronoun	14	7.14

	Article	10	5.10
	Substitute Noun	6	3.06
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>70</b>	<b>35.71</b>
<i>OVER INCLUSION</i>	Overlooking Exception	12	6.12
	Double Marking	7	3.57
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>9.69</b>
<i>MISFORMATION</i>	Third singular present agreement	43	21.94
	Past tense	26	13.27
	Past participle	7	3.57
	Pronoun	4	2.04
	Progressive	3	1.53
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>83</b>	<b>42.35</b>
<i>MISORDERING</i>	Interrogative	15	7.65
	Adverbial	5	2.55
	Adjective	1	0.51
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>10.71</b>
<i>BLENDS</i>	Blends	3	1.53
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>1.53</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.00</b>

#### D. FINDINGS

The total number of all errors is 196 out of 200 sentences. It means that the occurrence of error from all sentences is 98%. From 196 error sentences found in the data, 70 errors belong to *omission error* (35.71%); 19 error sentences belong to *over inclusion error* (9,69%); 83 error sentences belong to *misformation error* (42.35%); 21 error sentences belong to *misordering error* (10.71%); 3 error sentences belong to *blends error* (1.53%).

The findings show that the area which mostly causes difficulty, as can be seen in the above diagram, is *misformation error* (42.35%). The *omission error* is on the second level (35.71%), *misordering error* is on the third level (10.71%), *over inclusion error* is on the fourth level (6.69%), and blends error is on the lowest level (1.53%).

The occurrence of errors according to the category can be explained as follows (table 2):

*Omission error:* This type of error occurs 70 times (35.71%). The highest percentage of error's occurrence based on the category in the *omission error* is *omission of auxiliary verbs*, it occurs 25 times (12.76%). The second level is omission of preposition, it occurs 25 times (7.65%), The third level is omission of pronoun. It occurs 14 times (7.14%). The fourth level is omission of article, it occurs 10 times (5.10%). And the lowest level is omission of substitute noun which occurs 6 times (3.06%).

*Over Inclusion:* This type of error occurs 19 times (9.69%). The highest percentage of occurrence based on the category of over inclusion error is overlooking exception error, it occurs 12 time (6.12%). Here, the students try to make an analogy on the rules they master, but forget that there are exceptions which must be obeyed. The second category of error here is the double marking error which happens 7 times (3.57%). Here the students try to apply different rules to alter a sentence, but forget to drop the existing word or morpheme.

*Misformation:* As mentioned before, this type of error is the highest in occurrence among the types of errors analyzed. It occurs 83 times (42.35%). The highest percentage of occurrence based on the category which belongs to this type is misformation in the third person singular. It occurs 43 times (21.94%). The second is misformation error in past tense, it occurs 26 times (13.27%). The third is misformation in past participle, it occurs 7 times (3.57%). The fourth is



misformation of pronoun. This occurs 4 times (2.04%), and the lowest occurrence is misformation in progressive –ing form, it occurs 3 times (1.53%).

*Misordering:* This type of error occurs 21 times (10.71%). The highest percentage of error's occurrence based on the category in the *misordering* is *misordering in interrogative sentences. The error occurs 15 times (7.65%), the second is misordering in adverbial which occurs 5 time (2.55%), and the least occurrence of error is in the ordering of adjective, it only occurs once (0.51%).*

*Blends:* Unlike the double marking errors, blends occurs when a student mixes two kinds of different forms of grammar rules to produce an ungrammatical sentence. There are three errors occurred and the percentage of occurrence is 1.53%. There is a popular example of this kind of error in interrogative form, namely: “*Where do you come from?*,” mixed with “*Where are you from?*” become incorrect question: “*Where are you come from?*”

## E. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This paper concludes that:

- (1) The types of errors and their occurrences which are found in the passive sentences made by the third semester students of the faculty of language and cultural study are as follows: omission, over-inclusion, misformation, misordering, and blends.
  
- (2) The highest occurrence of the type of error made by students is the error in misformation, it occurs 83 times (42.35%), and the highest error in category is the misformation of the third singular present agreement, it occurs 43 times and the percentage is 21.94%.

Based on the result of the analysis which shows that most students still do not have complete mastery of how to alter active to passive sentences, the writers would like to suggest to the English lecturers how to solve the problem when the student makes an error: (1). Identify the student's error. (2). Classify the type of error the student has made. (3). State the grammar rule which has been violated. (4). Give correct form to show contrast with the inappropriate form. (5). Give examples showing the rule in action.

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