ERRORS MADE BY ACADEMICIANS IN WRITING JOURNAL ARTICLES

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ABSTRACT

Writing and publishing journal articles is challenging and yet developing the academicians' way of thinking to get not only the value of writing process but also recognition from others. However, there are a lot of difficulties encountered including grammatical and syntactical problems. This study focused on analysing the errors made by academicians when writing journal articles and identifying the influencing factors for the errors made. This case study was conducted by examining ten journal articles written by non-English Department lecturers. The error analysis on the journal articles included the sentence types, the sentence logic, and the sentence errors. Then, further analysis was made regarding the possible influencing factors on the errors made. Findings show that the most frequent sentence type was complex sentences. In terms of sentence logic, the numbers of sentences written correctly were in a high percentage and the most of sentences were also well structured. In other words, the sentence logic in the journal articles was considered as good. In addition, the most common errors found in the journal articles were more related to the use of conjunctions. The influencing factors for the errors included the lack of assessment of the writing quality and lack of extensive editing on the part of the journal editor. In conclusion, the authors were suggested to take editing services for reviewing process or to ask for assistance from experienced colleagues for several revisions in order to improve the quality of journal articles and avoid unnecessary errors.

Key words: *Sentence Types, Sentence Logic, Sentence Errors, Peer Review*

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing academically is often viewed as a difficult task. There are several difficulties that commonly should be dealt by academicians such as making grammatical and logic sentences, creating good contents, presenting the whole research or essays engagingly, understanding certain ways of academic writing, and allocating time for revising. In spite of those difficulties, all academicians should write all academic writing in different forms in order to fulfill their assignments or their final requirement for graduation. In addition, they share the same duty which is publishing a journal article.

Writing and publishing journal articles is challenging and yet developing the academicians' way of thinking to get not only the value of writing process but also recognition from others. It is challenging because the academicians as authors attempt to prove their ability in integrating knowledge and information in their writing and persuade readers to believe in what they write (Bruce, 2008; Richards, 2008). It also gives an opportunity for the authors in developing their multiple skills. Moreover, if the journal articles contain important and interesting results, it has high probability that other authors will cite the author's works. In other words, authors as researchers are able to be recognized by other

researchers. Hence, Thyer (2008) stated that publishing journal articles is viewed as a rapid medium of disseminating the results of research because it is able to be accessed from all over the world. It is in line with Murray (2005) who emphasizes on the importance of writing for others through journal articles. In publishing journal articles, lecturers and students might work individually or collaboratively. In addition, if they work separately, it will have a lot of works that should be done by themselves but if the work together, they will share some works.

In order to publish journal articles, the academicians should understand how to create good journal articles is but some of them are not able to meet such an expectation. They realize that their writing should follow some characteristics of academic writing such as formality, detachment, tentativeness, objectivity, rigor, and clarity (Monippally & Pawar, 2010). However, they frequently make some errors in writing. The common errors usually found in writing are sentence fragments, parallelism, and run-on sentences as cited in Oshima and Hogue (2007).

Some studies have been conducted focusing the most frequent sentence type used and errors found in varied academic texts such as essays, theses, journal articles and so forth. Cahyono, Mukminatien, and Amrina (2016) investigated Indonesian undergraduate students' argumentative essays that found complex sentences as the most frequent sentence type used in the essays. Jalal (2012) also analyzed sentence errors made by English Department students. He identified that the sentence errors found in the bachelor theses were coherence, sentence structure and sentence logic. Another study by Wilcox, Yagelski, and Yu (2014) shows that the most common errors were spelling, capitalization, and some punctuation errors. Then, Napoles, Cahill, and Madnani (2016) analyzed essays written by English-language learners taken from corpus and evaluated them in order to find some errors and some distance between errors in sentences using Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools. The findings were multiple grammar errors in ungrammatical sentences found in the essays. The focus of the

last study was examining language errors made by Thai EFL students who joined the Writing II course (Sermsook, Liamnimitr, & Pochakorn, 2017). The results showed that a certain tendency of errors such as punctuation, articles, subject-verb agreement, spelling, capitalization, and fragment found in their writings.

All the previous studies mentioned above analyzed sentences errors made by English Department students as the subject of the study. Also, all the academic texts that had been analyzed were in English. However, this present study attempts to analyze journal articles written by non-English Department lecturers in Indonesian Language. Furthermore, the major objectives of this study were to evaluate the quality of sentence structures in terms of sentence types, sentence logic and sentence errors and seek the influencing factors for the errors made in the journal article writing.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE
2.1 Definitions and Purposes of Academic Writing

Academic writing is defined as a set of conventions that should be followed by academicians and it is also considered as a tool for integrating knowledge to readers (Murray, 2005; Monippally & Pawar, 2010). Academic writing is also viewed as a special genre of writing that has its own set of rules and practices (Browker, 2007). The general aim of academic writing is to disseminate research information and persuade readers to believe in their research information (Richards & Miller, 2008; Thyer, 2008). It is in line with Monippally and Pawar (2010) that state academic writing as a medium of communicating scientific knowledge. Meanwhile, a specific purpose for writing journal articles for lecturers and students is to develop career, gain recognition for their works, increase personal satisfaction, contribute knowledge, and build university's status (Murray, 2005).

2.2 Characteristics and Structure of Journal Articles

In order to create good academic writing, the characteristics of academic writing should be thought carefully namely audience,

purpose, organization, style, flow, and presentation based on Swales and Feak (2004). After considering those characteristics, the structure of academic writing should be followed; journal articles typically have a standard structure which are called as IMRAD that stands for Introduction, Method, Result and Discussion (Swales & Feak, 2004). In addition, Hall (2003) highlights titles, abstracts, and conclusions as important sections for accompanying IMRAD as a standard structure. Furthermore, the journal articles are mostly presented with more terminologies, long noun phrases, and complex sentences, hence the language used in the journal articles becomes denser as cited in Monippally and Pawar (2010) and Buckingham (2015).

2.3 Sentences

In order to identifying sentences in the journal articles to each sentence type, this present study can be classified into four sentence types, which are simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences, according to the framework of Oshima and Hogue (2007) and Alwi et al. (2003). The definitions of the sentence types: 1) simple sentences consist of subjects and verbs or one independent clause; 2) compound sentences contain at least two independent clauses combined with coordinators; 3) complex sentences are composed of one independent clause and one or more dependent clause(s) connected by subordinators; and 4) compound-complex sentences has at least three clauses that consist of any combination of dependent and independent clauses. Furthermore, some sentence structures in the sentence types are viewed as the most difficult sentence structure because those have complicated constructions such as sentences with three or more clauses, sentences with adverbial clauses with temporal and causal conjunctions, and sentences with center-embedded relative clauses according to Zipoli (2017). After categorizing sentences, the sentences will be categorized into logical sentences or illogical sentences. Sentences will be categorized into illogical sentences if the sentences are detected having one or more errors. The errors are classified into four sentence errors namely syntactical errors,

errors in parallelism, conjunction errors, and punctuation errors based on Oshima and Hogue (2007). Syntactical errors are related to sentence fragments; it occurs when a sentence does not have a subject or a verb or does not express a complete thought (an incomplete thought). Errors in parallelism are related to listing, comparing or contrasting items of clauses in sentences (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). It occurs when the grammatical patterns of each clause do not have the same patterns or do not have the same parts of speech (e.g. noun, verb, prepositional phrase). Errors related to the use of conjunctions occur when words, phrases, clauses or sentences are joined incorrectly. Errors in the use of punctuations are highlighted as follows: 1) a sentence is not ended by a full stop (.) or no punctuation mark in the end of sentence; and 2) sentences are joined incorrectly.

2.4 Peer Review of Journal Articles

In submitting the journal articles, an important process should be followed namely peer review. Peer review is defined as a process when a manuscript is thoroughly read and constructively criticized by knowledgeable experts in a specific field before publication (Chichester & Wool, 2017). Souza, Kulkarni, and Cerejo (2018, p.3) state that "every journal has its own specifications about submission requirements, formatting style, and presentation". In addition, Chichester and Wool (2017) also highly suggest that authors to ask help trusted and experienced colleagues to read the manuscript draft of their journal article and give constructive criticism on it before it is submitted to a journal. A series of criteria should be fully comprehended by the authors. The criteria are divided into two main categories namely assessment of article and assessment of the report (Sizo, Lino, Reis, & Rocha, 2018). The following description of the two categories are below.

1) Assessment of Article

This category evaluates the content and the format of articles that is consisted of four other criteria. Each criterion has its own focuses and aims.

a. Content quality

It is related to the content of the journal articles. Identifying inconsistency and

ambiguities in all parts of the journal articles (e.g. review of literature, methods, findings and discussion) is the main purpose of this criterion.

b. Impact Quality

The impact quality is a reviewer direct judgement towards the journal article regarding the relevance and significance of the issues that should give positive impact to certain field of study. This criterion also evaluates research questions, research design, and statistical analysis.

c. Ethics Aspects

Ethical issues are assessed by reviewers and managed by editors in order to keep the credible reputation of the journal. It focuses on references, conflicts of interest, plagiarism and redundancies or duplicate content.

d. Writing Quality

Clear and succinct organization of the journal articles will help the readers to understand the content of journal articles. The writing style including lexical and grammatical errors also will assessed by the reviewer in order to decide whether the journal articles have good flows or not. However, several journals do not actually concern with spelling or grammar.

2) Assessment of Review Report

a. Written in a positive tone

The reviewers will give constructive criticism and maintain it in a positive tone in order to respect the authors and avoid the damage of the credibility of the journal.

b. Well-presented and organized

The reviewers and editors will easily identify, assess, decide the well-structured review report. There are "major points", which correct the important issues in the study and "minor points", which highlight minor correction that should be revised by the authors. (Chichester & Wool, 2017).

2.5 Authors' Perspective on Academic Publishing

The perspectives of authors on publishing journal articles have significant roles since those are able to provide some considerations for other authors, who will submit and publish their work to certain journals. According to Souza et al. (2018), there are several difficulties faced by the authors in submitting and publishing their journal articles; the difficulties are the preparation for the manuscript, the incomplete guidelines or unclear instructions, and their awareness of citing is high but their awareness of practices is low. In addition, authors should wait 6 to 9 months after their journal articles are accepted because some of journals might do extensive editing (Kennedy, 2018). However, he emphasized that some of journals do not do extensive editing. The extensive editing itself contains ensuring logical organization, language and terms, clarifying meanings, correcting grammar and sentence structure that is occupied by developmental editors as cited in Kennedy (2018). Furthermore, Sizo et al., (2018) empathized some problems in peer review process such as 1) diversity of review evaluation system, which are specific to certain journal and discipline and 2) an absence of certain reference that possibly weakens the quality of assessment report.

III. METHOD

The case study was employed in this present research that focused on identifying sentence types, sentence logic, sentence errors found in journal articles. Several possibilities of the influencing factors in making the errors were furtherly discussed in the study.

As cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), they argue that a case study is used to show a more general principle and give a real example that aims to make readers understand ideas clearly. In other words, this study attempted to show the general principle of sentence structure and presented real sentence errors made by academicians when writing journal articles. There were ten journal articles written by non-English Department lecturers taken as the samples. Five journal articles were taken from Mathematics Department and the others were taken from Engineering Department. All the journal articles were written in Indonesian language. Some data were the findings of a study by Analisti, Riesky, and Imperiani (2011).

This study was also supported by a descriptive qualitative method. According to Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge (2009), a

qualitative method focused on description and interpretation. Specifically, this study focused on the description and the interpretation of the quality of sentence structures including sentence types and sentence logic and the influencing factors for errors made in the writing of journal articles. In addition, simple descriptive statistics was also used in this study to simplify the process of interpreting the data. As stated in Schreiber (2008, p.1), descriptive statistics is able to be joined with qualitative design because "it constitutes a mathematical summarization of the data where a large number of observed values are mathematically converted to a few numbers". In this case, the large number of sentences were converted into percentages.

Four steps of analysis were followed, including identification, categorization, mapping, and synthetizing. The identification occurred when all sentences in the journal articles were given a number that aimed to show the number of sentences appearing in all journal articles. After doing identification, the categorizing step was begun by classifying sentences into four sentence types (simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences) as based on the framework proposed by Alwi, Dardjowidjojo, Lapoliwa, and Moeliono (2003) and Oshima and Hogue (2007). In terms of sentence logic, sentences were categorized into logical sentences and illogical sentences, then the illogical sentences were divided into four categories, which were syntactical errors, parallelism errors, conjunction errors, and punctuation errors. The third step was the mapping step in order to seek particular patterns regarding sentence structure. The last step of the data analysis was synthetizing; the steps included elaborating, explaining, interpreting certain patterns with some related theories and relevant previous studies and found in the mapping step. The last step has the major aim to answer the research questions in this study.

Finally, upon the completion of analysing the articles, possible causes or factors of the errors made were drawn, with the basis of several underlying theories of error analysis.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings show that most sentences made by respondents were complex sentences (67.2%). Simple sentences positioned the second with the percentage of occurrence of 21.5%. The use of compound sentences was quite low with the percentage of occurrence of 6.5% while compound complex sentences was the least frequently used (4.8%). That complex sentences were mostly used by the respondents may indicate the language used was quite dense. This was in line with Buckingham (2015) who identified that the language used in journal articles becomes denser when journal articles have more terminologies long noun phrases and complex sentences. In addition, the frequent use of complex sentences may also indicate that the respondents tended to follow academic writing style to use longer and complex sentences (Monippally & Pawar, 2010). This finding is similar to the findings of several studies (for example, Mukminatien & Amrina, 2016; Jalal, 2016) that complex sentences were the most frequent type used by students in their academic writings. Furthermore, the varied use of sentences types in the journal was very good, following the general rule of academic writing. This could maintain the flow of ideas to intensify the points and sustain the interest of the readers.

Regarding the sentence logic analysis, findings show that most sentences (86%), which were 1033 sentences, were logic while 14% or 171 sentences were illogical. Respondents could correctly combine clauses and sentences, creating compound and complex sentences. The subject-verb agreements were mostly found correct as well. The same was true with the use of correct and appropriate complements, adverbs, subordinate conjunctions, and coordinators. Parallelism could be maintained very well, and this may be used in expressing ideas of equal weight and emphasizing important information or ideas in correct ordering. This was done following academic writing theory, such as the one stated by Aaron (2015).

The error analysis on the illogical sentences shows that the most frequent sentence error made was the one related to the use of

conjunctions; this error occurred 79 times or 41% of all occurring errors. The second most frequent error was the errors in using punctuations with the percentage of 28%. This was followed by syntactical errors with the percentage of 21%. The least frequent sentence error was that related to parallelism with the percentage of 10%.

The result indicates that conjunctions were still used inappropriately in sentences, it means that two or more clauses failed to be combined by coordinators or subordinators. It is in line with Zipoli (2017) that states sentence structure with complicated constructions such as sentences three or more clauses, sentences with adverbial clauses with temporal and causal conjunctions, sentences with center-embedded relative clauses are considered as the most difficult sentence structures. In other words, the error in using conjunctions possibly occurs since the use of conjunctions in sentences has a certain difficulty. However, it can be avoided by practicing writing. The result of this present study is also similar to the result of research conducted by several researchers (Wilcox et al., 2014; Napoles et al., 2016; Sermsook et al., 2017) that found the error use of conjunctions were commonly found in academic writings.

Regarding the influencing factors for the errors made in the journal articles, several possibilities are presented in this study based on studies focusing on peer review process since all the journal articles had been published in certain journals. In peer review process, every journal has its own specifications related to submission requirements, formatting style, and presentation (Souza et al., 2018). It will be the same for the journals chosen by the lecturers for both Departments. However, the results of errors in sentences made in the journal articles indicate that some problems should be detected in peer review process because those errors could be corrected by the authors if there were assessment of article and review report given by reviewers according to Chichester & Wool (2017). They also explain that writing quality including lexical and grammatical errors is one of the aspects assessed by the reviewers in article assessment but some journals do not actually concern with

spelling or grammar; after finishing the assessment of article, the reviewers will give the assessment of review report including notes related to the major and minor mistakes that should be corrected by the authors. In other words, the journals might not have the process of assessment of article specifically in the writing quality assessment or the journals do not focus on the assessment of writing quality. In addition, it is possible that there was no assessment report written by the reviewers for the authors. It is in line with Kennedy (2018) who argues that some of journals do not do the extensive editing, which contains ensuring logical organization, language and terms, clarifying meanings, correcting grammar and sentence structure, occupied by developmental editors. In short, two factors might influence the errors made in the journal articles related to the issue of assessment of article in this case writing quality and the journal articles are lack of the extensive editing.

V. CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be concluded that the occurrence of complex sentences as the most frequent sentence type indicates that the respondents had attempts to follow academic writing style that suggests the use of longer and complex sentences in order to present a complete presentation of an idea. In terms of sentence logic, the quality of sentences in the journal articles is quite good since most of sentences are written correctly and well structured. Meanwhile, the occurrence of some illogical sentences reflects weaknesses in terms of the use of correct conjunctions and punctuation as well as shows syntactical errors and parallelism errors. Furthermore, these errors might be caused by two influencing factors which included lack of assessment and evaluation and lack of extensive editing. Thus, it is highly suggested that the authors take editing services for the reviewing process or ask experienced colleagues for several revisions in order to improve the quality of journal articles and avoid unnecessary errors.

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