

Grammar Mistakes in Writing Short Stories by Second Semester Students of German Language Education Study Program of Universitas Negeri Medan

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Abstract. The study aims to analyze the grammatical errors of the second semester students in writing short stories (*Kurzgeschichte*). The research used qualitative techniques and the data collection instrument was a short story writing test. The research subjects were 24 students of the German Language Education Study Program, FBS Universitas Negeri Medan who took the *Schreiben A2* course. The results of the research showed that the students made German grammatical mistakes in writing short stories. The German grammar mistakes were caused by students' lack of knowledge of German grammar and vocabulary. It is recommended that students enrich their German vocabulary (*Deutsche Vokabeln*) and improve their mastery of German grammar (*Deutsche Grammatik*).

Keywords: grammatical errors, short stories, writing

1 Introduction

Language skills that are less popular with learners and need attention are writing skills (Pratiwi and Rosadi¹, 2023:7358; Ansar & Oktavia², 2021:87; Utami³, 2019:74), in fact, writing is the most difficult skill to master; when compared to aspects other language skills (Puspitasari⁴, 2017:249). In reality, students have difficulty learning to write and are not interested in learning how to write literature, such as writing short stories (Rohayati⁵, 2018:65).

Student's difficulties in writing are known from a large number of grammatical errors in German short story texts written by students (Perdamean, Sari, and Kudriyah⁶, 2019:74-76). When writing essays, students also make mistakes. The grammatical errors found in student essays include morphological, syntactic, and orthographic errors (Perdamean⁷, 2017:34).

Mistakes made by students must be studied. To study errors, they must be analyzed first (Prediger and Wittmann⁸, 2018:1). Likewise, to find out students' mistakes in writing short story texts, they must be analyzed using the error analysis method (Fehleranalyse). In error analysis, students learn to recognize, correct, and improve errors. This is done by the opinion of Nababan⁹ (1994:106) who states that, apart from language teachers, target language students can also be asked to correct their work (self-correction) or correct the work of their classmates (peer-correction). Through error analysis, data is obtained about the language learning process and as a guide for teachers/lecturers and curriculum developers, which parts of the target language are most difficult for students to produce properly and correctly, as well

as which types of errors are the most difficult or reduce the students' ability to produce good short story texts (*Kurzgeschichte*).

To reduce, or even avoid, basic mistakes made by students in writing, efforts need to be made to improve by implementing project-based group learning. In project-based learning, the error analysis method (*Fehleranalyse*) is applied. Project-based group learning is highly recommended to be implemented (Kasih¹⁰, 2021:1) and is part of the main performance indicators (IKU) of higher education (Kemdikbud¹¹, 2020:16), therefore this research design was implemented.

The research objectives are:

- a) to describe the basic types of errors made by students in writing short stories in German (*Kurzgeschichte*).
- b) to describe the causes of students making basic mistakes when writing short stories in German.

The problems in this research are:

- a) What are the basic types of errors made by students in writing short stories in German (*Kurzgeschichte*)?
- b) What are the causes of basic mistakes made by students in writing short stories in German?

2 Theoretical review

2.1 Writing Skills (*Schreiben*)

Writing is a language skill that is very difficult to learn (Sukirman¹², 2020:73) and a skill that is less popular with learners (Wulandari, Herlina, and Zakiah¹³, 2020:33; Putri¹⁴, 2017:31). However, nowadays writing skills are increasingly important to master (Sattayatham and Ratanapinyowong¹⁵, 2008:19), especially writing in the academic field. Writing activities are an inseparable part of the entire learning process experienced by students while studying at university (Akhadiah, Arsjad, and Ridwan¹⁶, 2003:1). Basically, writing is not just about pouring spoken language into written language, but is also a mechanism for expressing ideas, ideas or knowledge that is written with the correct structure, good coherence between paragraphs and free from mechanical errors such as spelling and punctuation (Alwasilah and Alwasilah¹⁷, 2005:43).

Writing is a thinking and language activity that not only perpetuates language with graphic signs, but is a language skill that is used to communicate indirectly with other people in the form of correspondence, seminars, conferences, long-distance courses, and so on which of course requires high writing skills. Thus the meaning of writing can be realized in various forms, such as letters, papers, speeches, short story texts, and so on.

From the description above, it can be concluded that writing skills are the ability to express thoughts on paper (short story text) in written form that has the correct structure and vocabulary to achieve the goal.

2.2 Short Stories in German (*Kurzgeschichte*)

A short story is a literary work in the form of prose whose story can be read at one time, approximately between half and two hours (Rahayu, Lestari, Anjani, and Firmansyah¹⁸, 2018:126). Short stories are the result of creative art whose objects are humans and their lives. As a creative work, short stories must be able to create beautiful creations and try to channel

human needs for beauty, and with the power of creativity, short stories are created. Short stories can be a forum for conveying ideas that are thought by the author (Hartati¹⁹, 2017:117). As a literary work, short stories have the following characteristics: i) depict aspects of life; ii) give a good or bad impression to the reader; iii) short stories containing a maximum of 10,000 words; iv) complete reading within 10 – 30 minutes. Short stories are formed by several components, such as theme, plot, setting, characterization, point of view, message, and language style (Puspitasari⁴, 2017:251). The short story (*Kurzgeschichte*) referred to in this article is a short story that has components written in German (*Deutsch*) by the assessment criteria.

2.3 Error Analysis (*Fehleranalyse*)

Error analysis is a very important part of second language acquisition (Seitova²⁰, 2016:288). Error analysis is an attempt to explain errors in the use of a foreign language that is different from the mother tongue. Errors are defined as deviations from applicable rules or as violations of grammatical rules, which occur due to misunderstandings or communication difficulties (Cherubim²¹, 1980:1). Brown²² (1980:148) states that error analysis is an analysis of a student's language errors, whether in a foreign language, second language or language in general. Language error analysis is a process based on analyzing the errors of students or someone who is learning something, for example, a language. The language in question can be the mother tongue (for example a regional language), Indonesian as the national language, or German as a foreign language. Corder²³ (1981:45) states that error analysis has two functions in the learning process, namely to investigate the language learning process and to find out whether remedial teaching is necessary or not to achieve the learning objectives successfully. The error analysis method is a technique or strategy for finding out mistakes made by students. Crystal (quoted by Pateda²⁴, 1989:32) states that the error analysis method is a technique for systematically identifying, classifying, and interpreting errors made by students who are learning a foreign or second language using linguistic theories and procedures. Error analysis is a work procedure, which has the following work steps: i) Collecting data in the form of language errors; ii) Identifying and clarifying errors; iii) Ranking errors; iv) Explain the error; v) Predict areas or discussion points that are vulnerable; vi) Correcting errors: if possible eliminate errors through the preparation of appropriate materials, good handbooks and harmonious teaching techniques (Ardiana and Yonohudiyono²⁵, 1998:2.8).

3 Method

This research was carried out at the German Language Education Study Program, Department of Foreign Languages, FBS, Universitas Negeri Medan. The research subjects were 24 second-semester students, who took the *Schreiben A2* course. The instrument used is a writing test. After the short story writing test is carried out, the essays are collected, corrected, identified and the results are analyzed. The time used to write a short story is 100 minutes.

4 Result

4.1 Forms of German grammatical errors made by second-semester students in writing short stories (*Kurzgeschichte*).

The forms of German grammatical errors contained in short story texts (*Kurzgeschichte*), namely: i) Rules for writing German words (*Rechtschreibung*); ii) German verb conjugation (*Konjugation*); iii) German verbs (*Deutsche Verben*); iv) Punctuation (*Satzzeichen*); v) Plural form (*Plural*); vi) Word choice (*Wortwahl*); vii) Order of words in a sentence (*Satzstellung*); viii) Accusative Case (*Akkusativ*); ix) Dative Case (*Dativ*); x) Prepositions (*Präpositionen*); xi) Possessive pronouns (*Possessivpronomen*); xii) Elements of a short story.

4.2 The reason why second-semester students make mistakes when writing short stories in German

There are several reasons why students make mistakes when writing short stories in German, such as i) New vocabulary; ii) German grammar (*Deutsche Grammatic*); and iii) Writing traditions.

5 Discussion

5.1 Forms of German grammatical errors made by second-semester students in writing short stories (*Kurzgeschichte*).

The forms of German grammatical errors contained in short story texts (*Kurzgeschichte*), namely:

- i) Rules for writing German words (*Rechtschreibung*)
Students make mistakes in writing German vocabulary. In German, nouns and objects must be written with the initial capital letter. The beginning of each word in a sentence must also be written in capital letters. Nouns in a sentence must be written with the initial capital letter.
- ii) German verb conjugation (*Konjugation*)
German verbs in sentences must be conjugated according to the subject. Verbs change form when conjugated with a subject, such as *ich, du, er, es, sie, and ihr*.
- iii) German verbs (*deutsche Verben*)
There are sentences in which there are no verbs. In German, verbs have an important role in sentences. The verb (*Verb*) is mandatory in the sentence and is usually placed in the second position, except in interrogative sentences and sentences that have connecting words (*Konjunktion*), such as *weil, dass, nachdem*.
- iv) Punctuation (*Satzzeichen*)
Almost all students make mistakes in using punctuation marks, such as full stop (.), comma (,), question mark (?), exclamation mark (!), colon (:), hyphen/split (-), there are even sentences that do not have punctuation. The sentences written by students are difficult to understand because the punctuation marks are placed incorrectly.
- v) Plural form (*Plural*)
Students make plural form errors (*Plural*). There are at least 12 ways to pluralize nouns in German (Gallmann²⁶, 2016:1), which are different from pluralization in Indonesian. The difference in pluralization of nouns makes it difficult for students to compose sentences.
- vi) Word choice (*Wortwahl*)
Choosing the correct German words is a problem for students. The use of inappropriate words causes sentences to be difficult to understand or the meaning cannot be conveyed properly (Mardiyah²⁷, 2016: 265).
- vii) Order of words in a sentence (*Satzstellung*)

Word order errors in German sentences. Words that are not arranged properly in a sentence cause the sentence to be difficult to understand and incorrect according to German grammar.

- viii) Accusative Case (*Akkusativ*)
The error changes the object article in the first case (*Nominativ*) into the fourth case (*Akkusativ*). The object sufferer in Indonesian does not change form in writing, but this is not the case in German. If an object or material object becomes the object of the sufferer (*Akkusativ*), it undergoes a change in the form of articles (*bestimmter und unbestimmter Artikel*) and possessive pronouns (*Possessivpronomen*).
- ix) Dative Case (*Dativ*)
The error changes the object article in the first case (*Nominativ*) to the third case (*Dativ*). Accompanying objects in Indonesian do not change form in writing, but this is not the case in German. If an object or object becomes an accompanying object (*Dativ*), it undergoes a change in the form of the article (*bestimmter und unbestimmter Article*) and the possessive pronoun (*Possessivpronomen*).
- x) Prepositions (*Präpositionen*)
Mistakes in using prepositions. Prepositions (*Präpositionen*) in German can change the form of the word that follows them, as in the case of *Akkusativ*, *Dativ*, *Akkusativ-Dativ*, and *Genitiv* (<https://deutsch.info/de/grammar/verbs>²⁸, 2018).
- xi) Possessive pronouns (*Possessivpronomen*)
Mistakes in writing possessive pronouns. Possessive pronouns also change form according to the case.
- iv) Elements of a short story.
Almost all students do not fulfill the elements of a short story. Elements that are not fulfilled, such as the number of words is less than 250 words, the conflict in the story is absent or unclear, and the storyline is unrelated.

5.2 The reason why second-semester students make mistakes when writing short stories in German

There are several reasons why students make mistakes when writing short stories in German, such as

- i) New vocabulary
German vocabulary is a new vocabulary for students. The lack of mastery of vocabulary causes difficulties for students to develop stories, choosing words incorrectly and not being able to write German words correctly.
- ii) German grammar (*deutsche Grammatik*)
The differences between German grammar and Indonesian grammar cause students to experience difficulties and make many German grammatical errors in writing.
- iii) Writing traditions
Students are not used to writing, causing students to not be careful in writing the correct German words, not being careful in placing punctuation marks in sentences and not putting Umlaut marks (¨) on the vowels a, o, and u.

6 Conclusion

Based on the description in the results and discussion section, it can be concluded that through the application of error analysis, forms of German vocabulary (*Deutsche Vokabeln*) and grammatical errors were found in writing short stories, such as correct writing of German words (*Rechtschreibung*), German verb conjugation (*Konjugation*), German verbs (*Deutsche Verben*), punctuation (*Satzzeichen*), plural forms (*Plural*), word choice (*Wortwahl*), word order in sentences (*Satzstellung*), Accusative case (*Akkusativ*), Dative case (*Dativ*), prepositions (*Präpositionen*) and possessive pronouns (*Possessivpronomen*).

The reasons why students make mistakes in writing short stories include: i) lack of mastery of German vocabulary, ii) German grammar is different from Indonesian grammar, and iii) poor writing traditions.

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