Errors Analysis of Malay Compound Sentences of Foreign Language Learners

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Abstract: This study analyzed the essays written by 41 learners of Malay as a foreign language at the International Islamic University Malaysia and reports the errors found in the compound sentences constructed in the language. It was found that the learners had problems in using the correct spellings, punctuations, conjunctions, verb forms, vocabulary and sentence structures. It is suggested that more drillings, practices and exposures to the language are given to learners of Malay so that their grammar can be improved. Student-centred approaches may also be helpful in improving their level of proficiency.

Key words: Error • Compound sentences • Malay • Language learners

INTRODUCTION

A compound sentence is constructed by combining two or more simple sentences to make a new sentence [1]. According to [2], most of the spoken and written Malay sentences consist of compound sentences, implying the need for one to master compound sentences in order to be proficient in the language.

In Malay, a compound sentence or ‘ayat majmuk’ consists of two or more simple sentences, or independent clauses. These sentences or clauses are combined by conjunctions or pronouns to introduce a relative clause. Examples of the the compound sentences are:

- Sanah, Milah, dan Kiah sedang bermain bersama. *(Sanah, Milah and Kiah are playing together).*
- Rumah yang baru dibina itu sudah dijual kepada pemuda itu. *(The house which was recently built was sold to the gentleman).*

In the process of teaching and learning a second or foreign language, it is common to find learners who have problems in constructing the correct compound sentences. However, there is a limited information on the types of errors made by learners who learn Malay as a foreign language. This study will therefore analyse the types and frequency of errors in compound sentences seen in 41 essays written by international students of the International Islamic University Malaysia.

Literature Review: [4] says that errors in students’ writing range from spelling to morphological and syntactical errors. [5] categorises four errors committed by students in learning a second language. They are omission of required elements, inclusion of unnecessary or inappropriate elements, improper selection of elements and wrongly arranged elements.

In an analysis done by [6] on the errors made in 52 essays of East Africa students, a total of 14 types of errors were identified and the frequency measured. The results show that spelling mistakes were the highest at 18.4%, followed by sentence structure errors (16.6%) and wrong use of nouns and verbs (16.0% respectively). [7] on the other hand, analysed seven different types of errors in essays written by Chinese pre-university students in Singapore and reported that out of the 4813 errors, there were 1188 errors in the use of verbs, 767 errors in spelling, 694 in the use of noun markers, 656 in lexical, 634 in word functions, 463 in sentence structures and 411 errors in the use of articles. Errors in using the appropriate conjunctions in compound sentences have been reported to be common even among professional writers such as journalists [10].

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[3], [8] and [9] discovered that second language learners had problems in constructing compound sentences. Inaccurate use of conjunctions, repetition of the same conjunctions or interference from English, regional languages, native language or everyday language have been identified as some of the causes of these errors.

Objective of Study: The objective of this study is to examine the types of errors made by foreign language learners of Malay when using compound sentences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the purpose of this study, 41 essays written by students from Guinea, Nigeria, Somalia, Mauritania, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Jordan, Turkey, Palestine and Thailand were analysed. The study used [3]'s approach to syntactical error analysis which focuses on:

- Sentence structure
- Use of conjunctions
- Use of verbs
- Orthography
- Code-switching
- Vocabulary

Table 1: Type and Frequency of Errors Made in ‘Ayat Majmuk Gabungan’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect sentence structure</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate use of conjunctions</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate use of verb form</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthography</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code-switching</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate use of vocabulary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations to the Study: Only 41 essays were analysed. This study focused only on combined compound sentences (ayat majmuk gabungan) and compound sentences with relative clause (ayat majmuk pancangan relatif) in the Malay language.

RESULTS

Combined Compound Sentences (Ayat Majmuk Gabungan): The analysis shows that out of 316 compound sentences formed, 160 of them were the combined compound sentence (ayat majmuk gabungan). 156 errors were found in the sentences. Some sentences contained more than one type of error. Table 1 shows the frequency of each error.

Examples of errors made in combined compound sentences are shown in the following.

Error 1 | Example | Corrected versions | Explanation |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect sentence structure</td>
<td>Tetapi saya membeli setiap hari di kafe saya.</td>
<td>Harga makanan itu mahal tetapi saya tetap membelinya di kafe setiap hari.</td>
<td>The conjunction tetapi (but) is incorrectly used to start a sentence. This conjunction should be placed between two simple sentences or independent clauses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sini, kamu makan setiap hari, nasi putih dan ikan pedas dan daging, Here you eat every day, white rice and spicy fish and meat, |

Kamu makan nasi putih, ikan pedas dan daging di sini setiap hari, You eat white rice, spicy fish and meat here every day |

Error 2 | Example | Corrected versions | Explanation |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate use of conjunctions</td>
<td>Di situ banyak barang dan makanan jual antaranya, beg, kasut, pakaian, buah-buahan, sayur-sayuran dan macam-macam lagi.</td>
<td>Barangian serta makanan banyak dijual di situ seperti beg, kasut, pakaian, buah-buahan, sayur-sayuran dan ebungnya.</td>
<td>In the first example, the same conjunction ‘dan’ (and) was repeated in the same sentence. In the second example, a conjunction to show contrast such as ‘tetapi’ (but) should have been used instead of the conjunction ‘dan’ (and) that shows comparison.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were a lot of things and food sell among them bag, shoes, clothes, fruit, vegetables and many more. |

Nasi goreng di Kantin saya sangat sedap darenasang pedas. The fried rice at my canteen is delicious and very spicy. |

Barangan serta makanan banyak dijual di situ seperti beg, kasut, pakaian, buah-buahan, sayur-sayuran dan ebungnya. Many items as well as food are sold there such as bags, shoes, clothes, fruit, vegetables and many more. |

Nasi goreng di kantin saya sangat sedap tetapisangat pedas. The fried rice at my canteen is delicious but very spicy. |

Error 3 | Example | Corrected versions | Explanation |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate use of verb form</td>
<td>Pakai di situ kedai juga jual dan buku Clothes there shop also sells and buku</td>
<td>Kedai di situ juga ada menjual pakaian dan buku. The shop there also prefix ‘men’ + sells clothes and books</td>
<td>In the active voice, the prefix for ‘jual’ (sell) is ‘men’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pakaian di situ banyak barang dan makanan jual antaranya, beg, kasut, pakaian, buah-buahan, sayur-sayuran dan macam-macam lagi. |

There were a lot of things and food sell among them bag, shoes, clothes, fruit, vegetables and many more. |

Nasi goreng di Kantin saya sangat sedap darenasang pedas. The fried rice at my canteen is delicious and very spicy. |

Barangan serta makanan banyak dijual di situ seperti beg, kasut, pakaian, buah-buahan, sayur-sayuran dan ebungnya. Many items as well as food are sold there such as bags, shoes, clothes, fruit, vegetables and many more. |

Nasi goreng di kantin saya sangat sedap tetapisangat pedas. The fried rice at my canteen is delicious but very spicy. |
Table 2: Type and Frequency of Errors Made in compound sentences with relative clauses ‘Ayat Majmuk Pancangan Relatif’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect sentence structure</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate use of conjunctions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate use of verb form</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthography</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code-switching</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate use of vocabulary</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A total of 296 mistakes were found in the compound sentences analysed. The learners made 6 types of errors with orthography and incorrect use of verb form being the most problematic areas. These findings support [3], [5], [8] and [9] that language learners have problems in constructing combined compound sentences when they wrongly arranged their sentences, omitted required elements, used inaccurate conjunctions, repeated the same conjunctions in a sentence and code switched. The findings are also consistent with [4], [5], [6] and [7] who reported that language learners have problems with spelling, word or clause omission and punctuation.

The high frequency and also the varieties of errors indicate the need of learners of Malay as a foreign language to have a more effective pedagogical approach. It is suggested that more drills, practices and exposures to the language be given to learners including adult learners who are learning Malay in a higher educational institution. Pedagogical approaches that encourage students’ active participation may also help to improve their proficiency in the Malay language.

REFERENCES