

ANALYZING THE ROLE OF SEMANTICS IN REDUCING WRITING ERRORS AMONG 6TH SEMESTER ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF MUHAMMADIYAH TANGERANG

Riana Andriani Putri¹, Salsa Sabilla Alin Safitri², Aidil Syah Putra³

^{1,2,3} English Education Study Program, University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang, Indonesia

Email: ¹rianaandriani47@gmail.com, ²ssabillaa02@gmail.com,

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received May 18, 2024

Revised June 16, 2024

Accepted July 15, 2024

Available online July 15, 2024

Kata Kunci:

Kesalahan Penulisan,
Semantik, Analisis

Keywords:

*Writing Errors, Semantic,
Analysis*

ABSTRAK

Studi ini meneliti bagaimana semantik dapat membantu mahasiswa pendidikan bahasa Inggris semester enam di Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang mengurangi kesalahan penulisan. Studi ini meneliti bagaimana elemen semantik seperti pilihan kata, struktur kalimat, dan pemahaman kontekstual memengaruhi akurasi dan kejelasan komunikasi tertulis, dengan menyoroti pentingnya semantik. Studi ini berupaya menentukan metode yang efisien untuk menggabungkan kesadaran semantik ke dalam pengajaran menulis melalui pemeriksaan menyeluruh terhadap kesalahan penulisan yang umum dan dasar semantiknya. Melalui penggunaan teknik penelitian kualitatif, seperti pengumpulan data dan analisis kesalahan, studi ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan kesulitan semantik yang dialami mahasiswa dan menyarankan penanganan khusus yang akan meningkatkan keterampilan menulis mereka. Temuan ini dimaksudkan untuk menginformasikan desain kurikulum, praktik pedagogis, dan program pelatihan guru, dengan tujuan akhir untuk menyediakan mahasiswa dengan keterampilan linguistik yang mereka butuhkan untuk keberhasilan akademis dan profesional.

ABSTRACT

This study examines how semantics can help sixth-semester English education students at the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang reduce writing errors. The study examines how semantic elements such word choice, sentence structure, and contextual understanding affect written communication's accuracy and clarity, highlighting the importance of semantics. The study attempts to determine efficient methods for incorporating semantic awareness into writing teaching through a thorough examination of typical writing faults and their semantic foundations. Through the use of qualitative research techniques, such as data collecting and error analysis, the study aims to shed light on the semantic difficulties that students encounter and suggest specific treatments that would improve their writing skills. The findings are intended to inform curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and teacher training programmes, with the ultimate goal of providing students with the linguistic skills they need for academic and professional success.

INTRODUCTION

Language is widely regarded as the most crucial tool for communication and conveying information. It plays a vital role in human life, as it allows people to communicate with each other effortlessly (Sagala, 2019). Interestingly, the meaning of language involves not only the choice of words but also the manner in which it is delivered. If a speaker cannot effectively communicate their message in one language, they need to switch to another language to be better understood (Sagala, Rakhmat, Rezeki, Gurning, 2018).

In the field of English education, the development of proficient writing skills is crucial for students to effectively communicate ideas and express themselves. However, writing errors remain a significant challenge, particularly among students in their sixth semester. At the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang, where English Education is a core focus, addressing these errors is paramount to ensuring academic success and professional competence among future educators.

Understanding the role of semantics in the writing process is essential in tackling these challenges. Semantics, the study of meaning in language, plays a pivotal role in shaping the clarity and effectiveness of written communication. It encompasses various aspects such as word choice, sentence structure, and contextual understanding, all of which can significantly impact the quality of written work.

Through empirical research and data analysis, this study seeks to identify common writing errors encountered by 6th-semester English Education students and examine how semantic factors influence these errors. By gaining insights into the semantic challenges faced by students, educators can develop targeted interventions and instructional approaches to enhance writing proficiency.

Semantics is a linguistic field that studies the relationship between linguistic signs and the things they signify, or in other words, it is a field of study within linguistics that investigates meaning in language. (Chaer, 1994:2) Semantics is a part of grammar that deals with meaning in a particular language, seeking the origins and development of the meaning of a word." (Kraf). Semantics is a branch of linguistics that examines and investigates the meaning of vocal units that refer to the relationship of meaning between the units in question." (Ridwan, 2002:61)

Based on the views and thoughts of the experts above, it can be concluded that semantics is a branch of language science that studies and examines the intricacies of the emergence of meaning, ranging from literal meanings to the use of language in the form of figures of speech. Thus, semantics not only studies linguistic elements, but also the relationship between language and the culture of its users.

Pateda (2010) says there are 8 types of semantics, namely: 1) Behaviorist semantics is that meaning is determined by the situation, which means it is determined by the environment, therefore meaning can only be understood if there is observable data that is within the environment of human experience. 2) Descriptive semantics is a semantic study that specifically pays attention to current meaning. 3) Generative semantics is a grammar consisting of an inner structure which contains nothing other than the semantic structure and an outer structure which is the embodiment of utterances or sayings. 4) Grammatical semantics is the study or teaching of semantics which specifically examines the meaning contained in sentences. 5) Historical semantics is a study in semantics that specifically examines meaning systems in time series. 6) Lexical semantics is a semantic study that focuses more on discussing the meaning system or arrangement of meanings contained in words. 7) Logical semantics is a part of modern logic that deals with concepts and symbolic notation in language analysis. 8) Structural semantics is a semantic study that specifically examines or discusses language structure. Language structure consists of phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, sentences and discourse.

Writing activities are highly effective in the learning process due to numerous benefits. Ak Gift et al. (1988) identify eight key advantages. Firstly, writing helps individuals recognize their abilities and potential, and assess the objectivity of their own ideas. Secondly, it provides a space to express, develop, and organize thoughts. Thirdly, writing hones analytical, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Fourthly, it encourages active engagement in gathering, managing, and absorbing information. Fifthly, writing is a means to practice language in an orderly way.

To reap these benefits, it's important to understand that writing is a process. Good writing emerges from several stages, as described by Abidin (2015): 1) the idea acquisition stage, where the writer uses sensitivity to react to various phenomena; 2) the idea processing stage, involving thinking, feeling, imagining, and contemplating; 3) the idea production stage, which includes applying language knowledge and work conventions, as well as editing; and 4) the broadcasting stage.

Writing is a form of indirect communication where the reader cannot observe the author's facial expressions, body language, or hear the intonation and pauses in their voice. When information is conveyed orally, even if the language is less organized, facial expressions, gestures, intonation, and pauses help ensure the message is understood correctly. However, in written communication, the reader lacks these visual and auditory cues. Therefore, writers need to be skilled in grammar, language structure, and word choice (Tarigan, 2008). This proficiency does not come automatically but requires continuous practice. Writing is a skill that develops progressively with practice, enhancing the ability to convey ideas and intentions effectively by optimizing the use of grammar, language structure, and word choice.

Error Analysis (EA) is a linguistic approach that examines the mistakes made by language learners, aiding educators in comprehending the language acquisition process. Recognizing various

errors as instrumental for learning, researchers aim to identify effective corrective methods to enhance English teaching and learning. Writing, in particular, serves as a medium to assess language proficiency, memory recall, and cognitive abilities (Javed et al., 2013).

Upon contemplation of these strategies, we believe that error analysis serves as a valuable tool for educators to identify and dissect students' mistakes, thereby fostering opportunities for growth. This approach not only illuminates the challenges encountered by students but also uncovers the root causes of these errors. Consequently, teachers are equipped to develop tailored strategies and interventions aimed at addressing students' difficulties and enhancing their linguistic proficiency (Norasiah Muhari & Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor, 2008).

Writing errors related to grammar occur when there are mistakes in the structure of sentences, such as incorrect word order, improper use of verb tenses, subject-verb agreement issues, punctuation errors, or misuse of articles and prepositions. These errors can hinder the clarity and effectiveness of written communication. Error analysis in writing grammar involves identifying and examining these mistakes to understand why they occur. By pinpointing recurring patterns and underlying reasons for these errors, teachers can gain valuable insights into students' language learning difficulties. For instance, they may discover that students struggle with verb tense consistency because they haven't fully grasped the rules or haven't had enough practice.

Once the errors are identified and analyzed, teachers can develop targeted strategies and interventions to address them. This may involve providing additional instruction on specific grammar rules, offering practice exercises, or giving feedback tailored to individual student needs. By addressing writing grammar errors through error analysis, teachers can support students in improving their writing skills and overall language proficiency.

Wee et al. (2010) argue that misformation occurs when incorrect forms are used in the subject-verb agreement process, such as "students is..." and inaccuracies in verb tense usage. Their study focuses on analyzing the general misformation patterns observed among students. Zheng and Park (2013) further categorize misformation into noun, verb, and preposition misformation. However, the current study does not aim to classify errors but rather to analyze prevalent misformation trends to aid teachers in curriculum planning and assessment.

Zheng and Park's (2013) research, which concentrated on Korean and Chinese students, highlighted that misformation often arises due to errors not being properly addressed and explained to students. This underscores the importance of identifying writing errors to enhance student writing skills. They also warn against the risk of fossilization if errors are not promptly corrected. Fossilization, the persistent use of incorrect language forms, can impede fluency and accuracy in second language acquisition.

Reducing writing errors requires a combination of effective strategies and consistent practice. Here are some methods to achieve this: 1) Provide clear and comprehensive instruction on grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and other writing conventions. Break down complex rules into understandable concepts and provide examples to illustrate each concept. 2) Demonstrate correct writing techniques through modeling. Show students examples of well-written texts and analyze them together to highlight effective language use, including grammar and punctuation. 3) Offer ample opportunities for students to practice writing in various formats and genres. Provide constructive feedback on their writing, focusing on specific areas for improvement such as grammar, sentence structure, and coherence. 4) Incorporate peer review sessions where students can exchange drafts of their writing and provide feedback to their peers. Peer feedback helps students develop their editing and proofreading skills while also promoting collaboration and communication. 5) Integrate grammar drills and exercises into lessons to reinforce grammar rules and concepts. These exercises can be tailored to target specific areas of weakness identified through error analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This method using qualitative method. Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems. Instead of collecting numerical data points or intervene or introduce treatments just like in quantitative research, qualitative research helps generate hypotheses as well as further investigate and understand quantitative data. Qualitative research gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior. Qualitative research relies on the observation and interpretation of individuals' perceptions of various events, capturing a snapshot of their views within a natural setting (Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Newman, 1994). Within a 'grounded theory' framework, researchers aim to illuminate and investigate employees' perceptions of phenomena such as abusive supervision (Khan, Qureshi, & Ahmad, 2010; Tepper, 2000) within an organizational context.

Qualitative data is collected through various means, including face-to-face interviews, focus groups, telephonic interviews, and similar methods.

The research will be conducted at the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang in 2024. The university campus provides an ideal setting for investigating Analyzing the Role of Semantics in Reducing Writing Errors among 6th Semester English Education Students at University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang. The diverse student body and the academic environment at the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang offer valuable insights into the various factors influencing language learning.

The data collection techniques for this research included interviews and observations. Interviews, as defined by Yusuf (2014:372), involve direct, interactive communication between the interviewer and informants. This study used a free guided interview format to gather relevant information from individuals at the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang. Observations, according to Morissan (2017:143), involve using the five senses to systematically watch, record, and analyze behaviors, events, or phenomena in their natural settings. This qualitative method provided insights into social, cultural, and behavioral aspects. The subjects of the research were 6th semester English Education students, with a sample from the 6th semester, class A2, at the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The study uncovered that semantic awareness significantly influenced the reduction of writing errors among sixth-semester English Education students at the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang, as evidenced by qualitative data obtained from student writing samples and error analysis. Several major findings emerged from this analysis, highlighting common writing errors and the impact of semantic factors. Among the most frequent writing errors identified were vocabulary misuse, sentence structure issues, and contextual knowledge deficits. Students often exhibited difficulties in selecting appropriate vocabulary, leading to ambiguous or incorrect phrases; for example, substituting "economic" for "economical" altered the intended meaning of their sentences. Sentence structure errors, such as run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and improper clause usage, were also prevalent, disrupting the cohesion and grammatical accuracy of their writing. Additionally, a lack of contextual knowledge frequently resulted in ambiguity and misinterpretation, with students struggling to grasp idiomatic expressions and cultural references.

The role of semantic factors in these writing errors was also notable. Misunderstandings of word meanings were a primary source of semantic errors, exemplified by students confusing terms like "affect" and "effect," which led to incorrect usage in their writing. The ineffective use of synonyms further compounded these issues, with students often substituting terms like "big" for "significant" in academic contexts, resulting in sentences that, while grammatically correct, were semantically flawed. Furthermore, a failure to appreciate contextual nuances, such as the proper use of homonyms and polysemous words, contributed to inappropriate word choices and hindered the clarity of their writing. These findings underscore the critical need for enhanced semantic awareness and targeted pedagogical strategies to address these common errors and improve overall writing proficiency.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of semantics in enhancing the writing skills of sixth-semester English Education students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, revealing several key points that highlight the necessity of integrating semantic awareness into language teaching and its broader implications for educational practices. Semantic awareness is foundational to effective writing, as it involves understanding word meanings and their interactions within various contexts, which enables students to convey their intended messages more clearly. The study reveals that many of the writing errors observed stem from a lack of semantic understanding, including issues such as vocabulary misuse, incorrect sentence structures, and contextual misunderstandings. These errors not only impede effective communication but also indicate deeper issues in language comprehension and usage. By focusing on semantics, educators can help students address these challenges and significantly enhance their overall linguistic competence.

To mitigate the semantic errors identified in the study, several pedagogical strategies can be effectively implemented. First and foremost, explicit semantic instruction is crucial. Teaching the principles of semantics in a detailed and systematic manner can markedly reduce writing errors. This

instruction should include lessons on word definitions, synonyms, antonyms, and contextual usage. For instance, differentiating between terms like "economic" and "economical" or "affect" and "effect" can prevent frequent and confusing mistakes. Furthermore, incorporating contextual learning into the curriculum is vital for helping students understand how words function in different scenarios. This can be achieved through targeted activities such as reading comprehension exercises, contextual vocabulary lessons, and writing assignments that require precise word usage within specific contexts. Additionally, engaging students in interactive semantic exercises like semantic mapping, word association games, and contextual usage drills can reinforce their semantic understanding in an enjoyable and effective manner. Such interactive activities not only make the learning process more engaging but also enhance retention and application of semantic knowledge.

The role of feedback is also pivotal in helping students recognize and correct their semantic errors. Constructive feedback must be specific, addressing the nature of the error, explaining why it is incorrect, and offering suggestions for improvement. Rather than simply marking a word as wrong, teachers should provide explanations of its proper usage and examples of correct sentences. This approach not only rectifies immediate mistakes but also educates students on how to avoid similar errors in the future, contributing to their overall learning process. The implications for curriculum design are substantial. The study suggests that integrating a strong semantic component into the English curriculum could offer significant benefits. Curriculum designers should consider including more content focused on semantics, such as detailed vocabulary lessons, contextual exercises, and comprehensive writing practice. Emphasizing the practical application of semantic knowledge in real-world writing scenarios will further support students' learning and development.

Error analysis has proven to be a valuable tool in identifying common mistakes and their underlying causes, offering insights that can lead to targeted interventions. Regular error analysis allows educators to discern patterns in student writing, enabling the development of focused lessons to address recurring issues. For instance, if a particular class consistently misuses a set of words, a targeted lesson on those words can be developed to address these specific challenges proactively. This proactive approach helps prevent errors from becoming ingrained habits. The long-term benefits of developing strong semantic awareness extend beyond academic contexts into professional settings, where the ability to select the appropriate words and construct clear, precise sentences is invaluable. Whether drafting reports, composing emails, or preparing presentations, semantic competence enhances communication effectiveness. Thus, emphasizing semantics in education not only prepares students for academic success but also equips them with essential skills for their future careers.

While this study offers significant insights, future research could further explore the relationship between semantics and writing proficiency. Investigations could focus on the impact of different teaching methods on semantic understanding or examine how semantic awareness influences writing across various genres and contexts. Additionally, exploring the role of technology in teaching semantics—such as utilizing digital tools and online resources—could provide new opportunities for enhancing semantic learning. In summary, the study highlights the critical role of semantics in the writing process and underscores the necessity for educators to address semantic challenges to improve students' writing proficiency. By integrating semantic-focused activities into the curriculum, providing targeted feedback, and employing error analysis, educators can significantly reduce writing errors and enhance students' ability to convey precise meanings. These strategies not only benefit students academically but also prepare them for effective communication in their future careers. Adopting a comprehensive approach that includes explicit instruction, contextual learning, interactive exercises, and constructive feedback ensures that students are well-equipped to write correctly and communicate their ideas clearly and effectively.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the role of semantics in reducing writing errors among sixth-semester English Education students at the University of Muhammadiyah Tangerang. Through qualitative research methods, including interviews and observations, several key findings emerged. The research identified frequent writing errors related to vocabulary misuse, inappropriate term selection, and issues with sentence cohesion and grammatical accuracy. Students often struggled with contextual knowledge, leading to ambiguity and misinterpretation in their writing. Semantic errors were primarily linked to misunderstandings of word meanings, improper use of synonyms, and an inability to grasp contextual nuances. The inconsistent application of semantic norms was a significant challenge for students. The study found that explicit instruction on semantic principles, such as word definitions,

relationships, and contextual usage, was effective in reducing writing errors. Incorporating semantic exercises and contextual writing practices into the curriculum improved students' semantic understanding and application in their writing. Providing targeted feedback on semantic issues also helped students identify and correct their errors more effectively.

The findings highlight the critical importance of semantics in the writing process and the need for educators to address semantic challenges to enhance students' writing proficiency. By understanding and promoting semantic clarity, educators can significantly improve students' ability to convey precise meanings in their writing. Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed. Firstly, integrating semantic-focused activities into writing instruction is crucial. Secondly, offering students ample opportunities to practice precise language use through various writing exercises and assignments is essential. Lastly, implementing error analysis as a regular component of writing assessment and feedback can help identify and address specific semantic issues faced by students. In conclusion, the study underscores the vital role of semantics in reducing writing errors and enhancing overall writing proficiency among English Education students. By adopting targeted instructional strategies and utilizing error analysis, educators can effectively support students in developing their writing skills and achieving academic and professional success.

REFERENCES

- Abidin, Y. (2015). Pembelajaran Multiliterasi. Bandung: Refika Aditama
- A case of language transfer. (Unpublished project paper). Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Malaysia.
- Ak Gift, E., Collins, C. B., Dickson, R., & Leonard, G. (1988). Writing in the Real World: Making the Transition from School to Work. Teachers College Press.
- Akhadiyah, S., Arsjad, M. ., & Ridwan, S. . (1998). Pembinaan Kemampuan Menulis Bahasa Indonesia. Jakarta: Penerbit Erlangga.
- Chaer, A. (1994). Linguistik Umum. Rineka Cipta.
- Chaer, A. (2013). Linguistik Umum: Edisi Baru. Rineka Cipta.
- Chaer, Abdul. (2013). Pengantar Semantik Bahasa Indonesia. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Fartas, Mohamed (2023). An Introduction to Semantics: A brief summary. 11.
- Guba, E. G. (1990). The paradigm dialog. Sage Publications.
- Javed, M., Juan, W. X., & Nazli, S. (2013). A study of students' assessment in writing skills of the English language. International Journal of Instruction, 6(2), 129-144.
- Kurniawan, Andri. Dkk. 2023. Semantik. Sumatra Barat.
- Nababan Ernie., Boangmanalu, Iko., Gumono, Abednego., Rahmadi, Pitaya. (2023) ANALYSIS OF SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC ERROR IN THE WRITING OF INDONESIAN LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDENTS AT PELITA HARAPAN UNIVERSITY.
- Noraisah Muhari & Wan Fara Adlina Wan Mansor. (2008). An analysis of ESL students' multimedia project work:
- Pateda, Mansoer. 1996. Semantik Leksikal. Ende-Flores: Nusa Indah.
- Pateda, M. (2010). Semantik Leksikal. Rineka Cipta.
- Rezeki, Tri., Sagala Rakhmat. (2019) SEMANTICS ANALYSIS OF SLANG (SAOS) IN SOCIAL MEDIA OF MILLENNIAL GENERATION. Vol 3. No 1. 2019.
- Ridwan, M. (2002). Aspek Semantik dalam Analisis Bahasa. Erlangga.
- Syarifuddin, Salmia. Hasyim, Irmawaty. (2020). Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris. SEMANTIC ANALYSIS IN ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL HANDBOOKS. Vol 9. 12.
- Singh, Amreet., Razak, Nur., Ravithar thilaga. (2017) Grammar Errors Made by ESL Tertiary Students in Writing .English Language Teaching; Vol. 10, No. 5
- Tarigan, H. . (2008). Menulis Sebagai Suatu Keterampilan Berbahasa. Bandung: Penerbit Angkasa Bandung.
- Tarigan, H. G. (2008). Pengajaran Analisis Kesalahan Berbahasa. Angkasa.
- Zheng, C., & Park, Tae-Ja. (2013). An analysis of errors in English writing made by Chinese and Korean university students. Theory and Practise in Language Studies, 3(2), 1342-1360.