Solikhah, Imroatus. 2017. Linguistic Problems in English Essay by EFL Students.
*IJOLTL* (2017), 2(1): 31-44.

# LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH ESSAY BY EFL STUDENTS

**Imroatus Solikhah**
**IAIN Surakarta**
**Jl. Pandawa, Pucangan, Kartasura**
**Email: ratu.shyma@gmail.com**

**Abstract**
This study reports linguistics problems in an essay writing by EFL undergraduate students. This study used content analysis design assigning 10 essay writing manuscripts for analysis. The 10 essays available for writing assignment were used as data sources. The study revealed that: linguistics problems appeared in terms of: syntax, sentence, grammar, tenses, and agreements. Essentially, the linguistic features in writing cover mastery on the rules of grammar. Four aspects of linguistic features are: syntax, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Sentence problems, i.e. fragment, choppy, run-on, and stringy sentences, that is usually integral to syntactic and grammar problems are introduced.

**Keywords:** linguistic, features, syntax, grammar, vocabulary, rhetoric.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Linguistics problems in an essay appear as main constraints for students to develop a good English essay. In the teaching of writing, the sequence of activities typically involves: (1) familiarization: learners study grammar and vocabulary, usually through a text; (2) controlled writing: learners imitate given patterns, often from substitution tables; (3) guided writing: learners manipulate model texts; and (4) free writing: learners employ the patterns they have developed to write a letter, a paragraph, an essay, and the like (Richards, 2002 as cited in Widodo, 2007). Widodo (2008) concluded writing is not only a tool for communication, but also it serves as a means of learning, thinking, and organizing knowledge or ideas. In addition, writing is a complex activity involving some stages of composition task completion (Chen, 2002; Watskins, 2004).

Undoubtedly, this skill particularly in an EFL context (i.e., Indonesia) has been considered one of the most difficult skills for learners to master. The difficulty is due not only to the need to generate and organize ideas using the appropriate choices of vocabulary, sentence, and paragraph organization but also to turn such ideas into a readable text along with a particular rhetoric pattern (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Moreover, Indonesian learners often encounter difficulties in transferring ideas from

their native language--Indonesian into the target language--English. This case calls for teachers greater attention to help the learners to be successful in a writing skill.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1. An Essay

Oshima and Hogue (2006) stated an essay is a piece of writing several paragraphs long. It is about one topic, just as a paragraph is. Because the topic of an essay is too complex to discuss in one paragraph, you need to divide it into several paragraphs, one for each major point. Then you need to tie the paragraphs together by adding an introduction and a conclusion. Because an essay is long, it is important to organize and plan before you begin to write. The best way to do this is to make an outline. An outline not only organizes your thoughts, but it also keeps you on track once you begin to write.

It is important to recognize that in order to write an essay well, you must commit yourself to a process (Starkey, 2004). Writing in particular for academic purposes is necessarily prepared since there are many aspects to be concerned for a good writing. There were hard work have done by the teachers to teach writing to the students, either the methods were diverged.

An essay is a relatively short piece of nonfiction that tries to make an interesting point (Langley, 2009). Langan (2008) in explained an *essay* is a relatively short piece of nonfiction in which a writer attempts to develop one or more closely related points or ideas. Essays are shorter pieces of writing that often require the student to hone a number of skills such as close reading, analysis, comparison and contrast, persuasion, conciseness, clarity, and exposition. As is evidenced by this list of attributes, there is much to be gained by the student who strives to succeed at essay writing.

The purpose of an essay is to encourage students to develop ideas and concepts in their writing with the direction of little more than their own thoughts (it may be helpful to view the essay as the converse of a research paper). Therefore, essays are (by nature) concise and require clarity in purpose and direction. This means that there is no room for the student's thoughts to wander or stray from her purpose; she must be deliberate and interesting. Writing an essay, especially a descriptive essay offers a large combination of possibilities. All you want to do is hit upon the key ideas and appropriate words to present your word-picture.

### 2.2 Parts of an Essay

A short essay has three basic parts: an introduction, one or two body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Each part is a separate paragraph. The first sentence of each paragraph is indented.

- **The introduction** is the first paragraph of the essay. It contains the thesis of the essay, which states what the entire essay is about.

- **The body paragraphs** develop the idea presented in the introduction. Each body paragraph has a topic sentence and details that support the thesis in the introduction. The topic sentence of a body paragraph also states what that body paragraph is about.
- **The conclusion** is the last paragraph. It brings the essay to a close.

Oshima and Hogue (2006) explain an essay has three main parts: an introductory paragraph, a **body**, and a concluding paragraph. **The introductory paragraph** consists of two parts: (1) a few general statements: introduce the general topic of the essay, capture the reader's interest; and (2) a thesis statement: states the specific topic, may list subtopics or subdivisions of the main topic or subtopics, may indicate the pattern of organization of the essay, is normally the last sentence in the introductory paragraph. **The body** of an essay discusses the subtopics, one by one. It contains as many paragraphs as necessary to explain all subtopics are like the supporting sentences in a paragraph. They are the place to develop your topic and prove your points. You should organize body paragraphs according to some sorts of pattern, such as chronological order or comparison/contrast. Sometimes, depending on your topic, you will need to use a combination of patterns. **The concluding paragraph** reminds your reader of what you have said. In it, you summarize your main ideas or paraphrase your thesis. You may also make a final comment on the topic for your reader to remember. It has three purposes: It signals the end of the essay. To do so, begin your conclusion with a transition signal; It reminds your reader of your main points, which you can do in one of two ways: You can summarize your subtopics or paraphrase your thesis; It leaves your reader with your final thoughts on the topic. This is your opportunity to convey a strong, effective message that your reader will remember.

The *thesis* of an essay is its main idea. Sometimes, it is implied rather than directly stated. The thesis determines the content of the essay: everything the writer says must be logically related to the thesis statement. A good thesis statement identifies the topic and makes an assertion about it. A well-written essay should be *unified;* that is, everything in it should be related to its thesis, or main idea. There should be no digressions. A unified essay stays within the limits of its thesis. Your essay is unified if you advance a single point and stick to that point. If all the details in your essay relate to your thesis and supporting topic sentences, your essay is unified.

An effective essay requires a good *introduction* or beginning and a good *conclusion* or ending. A good beginning should catch a reader's interest and then hold it. In addition to capturing your reader's attention, a good beginning frequently introduces thesis and suggests or reveals the structure of the essay. The best beginning is the one most appropriate for the job you are trying to do.

A conclusion may summarize; may inspire the reader to further thought or action; may return to the beginning by repeating key words, phrases, or ideas; or may surprise the reader by providing a particularly convincing example to support a thesis.

*Transitions* are words and phrases used to signal relationships between ideas in an essay and to join the various parts of an essay together. Writers use transitions to relate ideas within sentences, between sentences, and between paragraphs. The most

common type of transition is the *transitional expression*, such as *furthermore*, *consequently*, *similarly*, *granted*, *nevertheless*, *for instance*, *elsewhere*, *simply stated*, *finally*, *to conclude*, and *subsequently*. Pronoun reference and *repeated key words* and *phrases* are the other important ways to make transitions. Good transitions enhance *coherence*: the quality of good writing when all sentences, paragraphs, and longer divisions of an essay are effectively and naturally connected.

## 2.3. Linguistic Features in Writing

Linguistic features of writing refer to the language rules accepted in a standard academic writing. The linguistics features deal with the sentence maturity the writer uses based upon the conventional good grammar. The ability to write a clear, concise, logical and convincing paragraph or essay involves more than just the ability to be able to write a grammatical sentence.

Normally, in writing most students suffer from two points: (1) the ability to write long sentences that requires various coordinating, subordinating tools, vocabulary, and grammar; and (2) knowledge of the meaning and proper use of linking devices, especially those needed to establish inter-sentential relationship.

Besides objectivity, neutrality, and observation, in writing the writer should have her or his own style. Sentence structures, sentence length, sentence types, and diction are important factors in writing. Sentence structure is generally long and complex; it does not restrict itself to a simple vocabulary. It avoids slang and contractions and the use of grammar that are generally ignored.

Sentence length refers to the number of words per sentence; sentence type refers to the structure of the sentence, i.e. simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. Short, simple sentences are easier to understand than longer sentences. However, long and complex words are sometimes associated with important and sophisticated material (Carosso and Standford, 1983:92-93). In addition, formal writing generally inserts the relative pronouns (that, which, whom) that are almost always omitted in speech (Hogins and Lillard, 1972:16).

Another important element of formal writing is the diction, kind of words used. In all writing, direct and unambiguous vocabulary is most effective. For general audiences, straightforward and clear words are best (Carosso and Standford, 1983:92).

In sum, good writing requires good grammar and good organization. The grammatical features of academic writing must fulfill a rhetorical function such as verbal complementation, nominalization, use of definite and indefinite articles, relative clauses, tenses, subject-verb number agreement, and cohesive devices such as lexical repetition, referential pronouns, conjunctions, synonyms and substituted phrases (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). The use of proper sentence structure, precise vocabulary, and proper rhetoric helps the reader identify proposition in the text more readily (Richards, 1992:103).

The facts that writing in L2 are influenced by L1 have been proved by Krashen (1994) and Connor (1996). Krashen (1994) discovered that L2 learners transfer their L1

Solikhah, Imroatus. 2017. Linguistic Problems in English Essay by EFL Students.
*IJOLTL* (2017), 2(1): 31-44.

rules in writing an English essay. The transfer of L1 into L2 characterizes the grammar errors in the essay. In addition to Krashen, Connor (1996) posited that L2 learners use their knowledge of L1 to express ideas in an English essay. Most learners translate their ideas in L1 before they develop them in an English essay. As a result, the style of English language in the essay the learners write is colored with the grammar of L1. According to Connor writing was concerned with the transfer of the first language (L1) cultural conventions to the second language (L2) performance. The transfer deals with the rhetorical organization of ideas in writing that was assumed to be culturally determined.

Various studies on writing indicate that as beginners, when students of English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) write in English, they translate or attempt to translate the L1 words, phrases, and organization into English. The students use patterns of language and stylistic conventions that they have learned in their native language and cultures (Connor, 1996:3-4). When they are mature to achieve successful accomplishments the advanced level of mastery in writing, of course, they will not translate L1 words and patterns of L1 conventions into English anymore.

The language of academic writing uses specialized symbols that illustrate features of vocabulary, grammar, and rhetoric. The statement is described accurately. The use of proper sentence structure, precise vocabulary, and proper rhetoric helps the reader identify proposition in the text more readily (Richards, 1992:103).

The proficiency of the linguistics features in writing is also obvious and it indicates how well a writer is able to develop good ideas and good grammar. Conversely, immature demonstration of linguistics in the writing will produce awkward sentences and poor writing. The linguistics features in writing include four types: syntax, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics (Budiharso, 2005:44).

In terms of language, the writer should have her or his own style, a set of characteristics generally found in an author's writing. The style is manifested in the use of three most important elements of formal writing: tone, sentence structure, and diction (Budiharso, 2005). Tone reveals the writer's attitude towards her or his subject by the choice of words, choice of grammatical structure, and even by the length of sentence. Sentence structure indicates the preference of the writer in using certain types of sentence. Diction refers to the kinds of words used.

## a. Syntax

Syntax is defined as the ways in which words are put together to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. The syntactical features in writing refer to types of sentence construction: simple, compound, complex, or compound complex sentences. The description of the syntactical features follows Latief's (1990:9) arguments.

A simple sentence does not have any embedding or conjoining. Example is: "Our father is coming to our home tonight." A compound sentence is a sentence connected to another sentence by using coordinate conjunction, such as: and, or, but.

Solikhah, Imroatus. 2017. Linguistic Problems in English Essay by EFL Students.
*IJOLTL* (2017), 2(1): 31-44.

Example is: "We have to do our work, and then we have to go." A complex sentence is a sentence with sub-clause embedded to the main-clause. Example is: "She told us that we have to go now." A compound-complex sentence has both conjoining and embedding. Example is: "If you want to ask me for my advice about your plan, you can either talk to me on the phone or you can send me a letter."

**b. Grammar**

Grammar in writing is defined as the ways in which the writer handles basic rules of writing, such as parallelism, pronoun reference, double negatives. The grammatical features in writing refer to the use of grammatical errors in a sentence that include awkward construction and agreement errors (Latief, 1990:9). Specifically, grammatical errors cover: agreement, tenses, word order, articles, pronouns, prepositions, and other parts of speech (Latief, 1990:15).

**c. Vocabulary**

Vocabulary in writing refers to the word choice used to express ideas appropriately. The vocabulary includes: sufficient arrangement and variation, effective word or idiom choice and usage, correct form of word form mastery, e.g. accurate prefixes, compound words, word classes, and appropriate register.

**d. Mechanics**

Mechanics in writing refers to ways the writer handles basic convention of writing, such as punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. The mechanical errors include punctuation errors, spelling errors, capitalization errors, paragraphing, and handwriting.

**2.4. Sentence Problems in Writing**

Most common errors the writer made in an essay deal with syntactical problem as a result of imperfect development of sentences. The sentence problems arise from incomplete mastery of syntax in writing. The sentence problems are characterized into four kinds of awkward sentences, reflecting incomplete knowledge of basic rules of syntax.

The description of four types of sentence problems in this section refers to argument of Oshima and Hughes (1983:239-246). According to Oshima and Hughes (1983) sentence problems appear in terms of: sentence fragment, choppy sentence, run-on sentence, and stringy sentence.

**a. Sentence Fragment**

Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences or parts of sentences. Examples of sentence fragments are:
a. Because some students have part-time jobs in addition to going to school.
b. For example, the increase in the cost of renting an apartment.
c. Having no money and being lonely in the big city.

Solikhah, Imroatus. 2017. Linguistic Problems in English Essay by EFL Students.
*IJOLTL* (2017), 2(1): 31-44.

d.  Many people who get married before they are mature enough.

To revise the fragment, two techniques may apply: (1) attach the fragment into an independent clause, or (2) rewrite the sentence so that it has a subject and a verb. Implementing the rules, the above fragment may be revised as follows:

a. Because some students have part-time jobs in addition to
   full-time class work, they have very little free time.
b.  For example, the cost of renting an apartment has increased.
c.  She has no money and was lonely in the big city.
d.  Many people get married before they are mature enough.

## b.  Choppy Sentences

Choppy sentences are sentences that are too short.  They are the result of using too many simple sentences.  Although simple sentences are quite effective sometimes, overuse of them is considered poor style in academic writing (Oshima and Hughes, 1983: 241).  For examples:

**Incorrect**
We must find new source of energy. The earth's natural sources of energy are dwindling. Solar energy is a promising new source of energy. Solar energy is energy from the sun's radiation.

**Revision**
We must find new sources of energy, because the earth's
natural energy sources are dwindling.  Solar energy, which is energy from the sun's radiation, is a promising new source of energy.

Choppy sentences are easy to correct. Just combine two or three simple sentences to make one compound or complex sentence.

## c.  Run-on Sentences

A run-on-sentence is a sentence in which two or more independent clauses are incorrectly joined by a comma without a coordinating conjunction or sentence connector. This kind of error is also called a run-on-sentence or a comma splice.  For examples,

Getting married is easy, staying married is a different matter.

Jakarta is a very cosmopolitan city, there are people from many cultures and ethnic groups living there.

Solikhah, Imroatus. 2017. Linguistic Problems in English Essay by EFL Students.
*IJOLTL* (2017), 2(1): 31-44.

A run-on-sentence can be corrected in four ways.

    a. a period:
Getting married is easy. Staying married is a different matter.

    b. a semicolon:
Getting married is easy; staying married is a different matter.

    c. a coordinating conjunction:
Getting married is easy, but staying married is a different matter.

    d. a subordinating conjunction:
Getting married is easy although staying married is a different matter.

### d. Stringy Sentences

Stringy sentence is a sentence in which too many clauses are connected, usually with and, but, so, because, forming one long sentence. The result is a sentence that seems endless. For example,

**Incorrect**
Many students attend classes all morning and they work all afternoon and then they have to study at night so they are usually exhausted by the weekend.

**Revision 1**
After attending classes all morning, working all afternoon, and studying at night, many students are exhausted by the weekend.

**Revision 2**
Many students attend classes all morning and work all afternoon. Then, they have to study at night. As a result, they are usually exhausted by weekend.

### e. Coherence

Coherence in writing refers to the sense of wholeness or interconnectedness among sentences and ideas within a paragraph or among the paragraphs within any piece of connected discourse (Latief, 1990:66). The sense of wholeness requires that an essay develops a unified idea, a major topic idea supported by all the rest of minor topic ideas in the essay. An essay which develops two or more separate ideas, or has ideas irrelevant to the major topic idea, does not have sense of wholeness.

In addition, the sense of interconnectedness requires that all sentences and paragraphs are interconnected well. For example, the ideas flow smoothly from one sentence to the next sentence and from one paragraph to the next paragraph (Latief, 1990:67).

Solikhah, Imroatus. 2017. Linguistic Problems in English Essay by EFL Students.
*IJOLTL* (2017), 2(1): 31-44.

## 3. METHODS

This study analyzed 10 English essay texts written by the seventh semester students of English Department at IAIN Surakarta. The analysis focused on how sentences on the essay were presented. The 10 English essays were available for the home assignment for the preparation of the thesis proposal. This means that students were ready to write academic writing and aware of how grammatical sentences should be correctly developed. The topics of the essay were about difficulty in writing thesis using expository mode of writing. The length of the essay was 4 to 6 pages in double spaces. The analysis of the sentences was focused on the typical sentences in terms of syntactical problems, grammatical problems, and mechanics of writing.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
### 4.1. Linguistic Features

Problems on linguistic features in writing vary from simple to the complex one. Studies on linguistics features have identified those students writing an essay faced problem in all aspects of linguistics features of writing. Latief (1990) for instance, found that students who took more writing courses, did not write with greater complexity of sentence construction, did not write longer paper, and did not make fewer errors.

In general sense, problems on linguistics may include: syntax, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanic. The problems on linguistics, event occurs parallel to the problems in developing rhetoric in an essay.

In the syntactical problem, students show imperfect mastery of developing sentences. Sentence errors are dominated by the fragment and awkward compound sentences. No indication is made that students develop more complex ideas in terms of compound sentence, complex sentences, or compound complex sentences. Mastery of sentence maturity is the major problems to face indicating an imperfect mastery of the basic rules of the language.

The use of proper phrases and clauses is dominant and characteristics of sentence problems appear elsewhere in the essay. Fragment sentences and choppy sentences are more; run-on sentences are produced, and stringy sentences sometimes exist. Usually, imperfect mastery of the syntax is followed by improper use of rhetoric. The sentences are wrong and the ideas expressed in the essay digress or unrelated to the topic.

The second problem in linguistic refer to grammar errors. The grammar errors are mostly colored by the use of incorrect word orders, agreement, tenses, plurality, compound words, parallelism, and other parts of speech. Normally, grammar errors in writing deal with the ignorance to control correct usage. Agreement comes frequently in all level of sentences and in the discourse level among paragraphs.

Problems on vocabulary or word choice indicate variations on the use of natural expression using inappropriate diction. Paucity of vocabulary knowledge and size arouse limitation of expression in a natural way. Variations of vocabulary problems are identified the use of one similar word for several different expressions.

In line with the use of natural expression, problems of transition signal are also prominent. The choice of wording for the transition among sentences that keeps the coherence of the essay is obvious. Besides the transition signals are mostly inappropriately selected, the variation is not much. It seems that a single model of the transition signals is used and practices to vary the different model are rudimentary.

In terms of mechanic, the problems indicate that most students apply imperfect basic rules of convention. Mostly, mechanical problems appear in term of the wrong use of punctuation, e.g. full stop, comma, question mark, collon. Spelling errors and capitalization are frequently indicated reflecting imperfect knowledge of English rules. In terms of rhetorical convention, paragraphing is another problem that produces poor standard of writing.

As a conclusion remark, problems in linguistics together with problems in rhetoric are dominant. Writing needs practices, not all aspects of writing are teachable. Therefore, the knowledge on linguistics should be developed in relation with rhetoric.

## 4.2. Syntactical Problems

Problems on writing of an English essay have been identified through the syntactical problems. In this regard, good writing requires good grammar and good organization. The grammatical features of an English essay must fulfill verbal complementation, nominalization, use of definite and indefinite articles, relative clauses, tenses, subject-verb number agreement, and cohesive devices such as lexical repetition, referential pronouns, conjunctions, synonyms and substituted phrases (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). The use of proper sentence structure, precise vocabulary, and proper rhetoric helps the reader identify proposition in the text more readily (Richards, 1992:103).

In reference to the syntactical problems, the subject under this observation faced three most common problems. The problems include: problems on sentences, problems on tenses, and problems on agreement. The sentence problems refer to the errors on the use of simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence, and compound-complex sentence. The tense problems cover errors in using tense signal so that the sentences are ungrammatical. The agreement problems indicate the imperfect mastery in forming concord that shows ungrammatical sentences, such as: plurality, subject-verb number agreement, referential pronouns, etc.

## 4.3. Sentential Problems

Sentence structures indicate the preference of the writer in using certain types of sentence. In an English writing, its sentence structure is generally long and complex; it does not restrict itself to a simple vocabulary. It avoids slang and contractions and the use of grammar that are generally ignored (Hogins and Lillard, 1972:16).

Sentence length and sentence type are also factors that determine the level and the appeal of writing. Sentence length refers to the number of words per sentence; sentence type refers to the structure of the sentence, i.e. simple, compound, complex.

Generally, short simple sentences are easier to understand than longer sentences. However, long and complex words are sometimes associated with important and sophisticated material. Sometimes such words are necessary to convey a precise meaning to a specific audience (Carosso and Standford, 1983:92-93). In addition, formal writing generally inserts the relative pronouns (that, which, whom) that are almost always omitted in speech (Hogins and Lillard, 1972:16).

Based on the illustration above, the subject under observation showed that they produced simple sentences more than compound and complex sentences. Clauses that indicate the proper mastery of English were limited to produce in the essay. Compound sentences that contained clauses appeared for some descriptions, however, it did not refer to the proficiency of the language rules and academic writing. Viewed from the way the students learned English, this evidence indicated that the students did not reflect a more perfect mastery on English rules although they had learned English grammar more.

Variations of sentential problems made by the students under observation vary from simple to complex ones. The variations follow sentence problems as stated by Oshima and Hogue (1999). In the lower degree of errors, students produced fragments that were indicated by the missing of subject or missing of predicate of a sentence. The missing subject normally appeared when students developed long subject phrases or a sentence that has an adjective clause. The missing predicate happened more when the sentence the students produced required to be as a predicate. In addition to the sentence fragments, students also frequently made choppy sentences. Short and simple sentences appeared everywhere in the essay. It seemed that students avoided to use clauses in their sentences and used simple ideas reflected in simple sentences to compensate. As a result, the quality of the essay is immature.

In the higher level of errors, students under observation showed imperfect mastery on developing compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. The main error of this type included the appearance of the stringy sentences. The stringy sentences were colored with the use of comma and conjunctions, such as and or but to connect one sentence and other sentences. In this regard, the use of clause did not appear, as the students did not master language rules perfectly.

### 4.4. Problems on Tenses

Problems on tense mastery appeared in two types of errors. The major type of error was indicated in terms of the use of past form of a verb as a predicate in a sentence. A sentence may have present form and past form together. The subject of a sentence contained a noun phrase that had three or five words normally made the students ignored to put a predicate. Frequently, the missing predicate appeared in the sentence subject that used noun clause. For example,

(1)     The main objective of the study gives SD student's exercises in elementary stage of English.

Solikhah, Imroatus. 2017. Linguistic Problems in English Essay by EFL Students.
*IJOLTL* (2017), 2(1): 31-44.

(2)     The words that taught by the English teacher useful for initial experience.

In the quotation (1) the predicate "is"  is missing after the word "study".  The students also miss to put "to" before "give".  It seems that the students believe that the predicate of the sentence (1) is the word "give".  To revise, the quotation (1) should read: *"The main objective of the study is to give SD students exercises in elementary stage of English"*.

In the quotation (2) students ignored two kinds of predicates in one sentence. The first predicate is missing to form the passive voice "that … taught".  In this context, the word "is" must appear before the word "taught" to form the passive voice.  In addition, the second predicate should appear after the last word "teacher".  The correct form of the quotation (2) should read: *"The words that [were] taught by the English teacher are useful for initial experience. Or, The words [taught] by the English teacher are useful for initial experience."*

As seen from the quotation (1) and (2) above, the students applied rules of L1 in developing their ideas.  The missing of "to be" and "to infinitive" indicates that the language rules that are absence in L1 will also be absent in L2 application.

## 4.5.  Problems on Agreement

Problems on agreements indicate errors on the use of: morpheme –s for the verb predicate, morpheme –ed for the past form of verb, plurality, and pronoun.  The evidence indicates that students have known the rules of the language, but they ignore to apply in an essay because of lack of practices writing an English essay.  Below are sentences quoted from the essay to illustrate the description:

(3)     The quality of the books that sold in the bookstores are … .
(4)     The students who learned English in a non-formal English Course comes from … .

Error agreement on quotation (3) presents because the predicate of the sentence is to be "are".  The subject of the sentence (3) is "the quality" but, the student identified the word "books" or "bookstores" as the subject.  In addition, students also missed to use "to be" after the word "that".  The correct sentence should read: *"The quality of the books [sold] in the bookstores is "*

In the quotation (4) error agreement appears in terms of the verb-predicate.  The subject of the sentence is "The students".  In this respect, the predicate should be the word "come" without morpheme –s.  It also indicates that students are confused to use morpheme –s in an essay.

The evidence substantial to comment against the quotation (3) and (4) is the role of L1 in the application of L2.  The incorrect use of "to be" and "morpheme –s" is mainly because L1 does not have the system, so that students do not master in the L2 writing.

Solikhah, Imroatus. 2017. Linguistic Problems in English Essay by EFL Students.
*IJOLTL* (2017), 2(1): 31-44.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Syntactical problems are dominant in the development of an English essay by EFL students. Three most problems include: problems on sentences, problems on tenses, and problems on agreements. In one side, the problems appear because students are lack of practices in developing an English essay. In addition, the problems present because of the imperfect mastery of language rules. The evidence shows that the rules of L1 are substantial in developing L2 essay.

## REFERENCES

Andrew, I.B and Rurth G. 1979. *Aspects of Composition*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

Arnaudent, M. and Barret M.M. 1981. *Paragraph Development: A Guide for Students of English as a Second Language*. Rowly, Massachusetts: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Budiharso, Teguh. 2004. *Prinsip dan Strategi Pengajaran Bahasa*. Surabaya: Penerbit Lutfansah.

Brereton, J.C. 1982. *A Plan for Writing.* New York: CBS College Publishing.

Calderonello, A.H, and Edwards, B.L. 1986. *Roughdrafts: The Process of Writing*. Lawrenceville, New Jersey: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Carosso, R.B and Standford. 1983. *The Writing Connection.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.

Champbell, Jack, Littlefield. 1969. *Concise Rhetoric: An Introduction to Structure Development and Style*. California: Dickenson Publishing Co.

Connor, U. 1996. *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-Cultural Aspects of Second Language Writing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Connor, U and J. Lauer. 1988. Cross-Cultural Variation in Persuasive Student Writing. In *Writing Across Languages and Cultures*. pp. 138-159. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publication.

Flower, L.S and J.R. Hayes. 1981. A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing. *College Composition and Communication,*32(4): 365-387.

Halliday, M.A.K and Hassan R. 1976. *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.

Harjanto, I. 1999. *English Academic Writing Features by Indonesian Learners of English.* Unpublished Ph.D's Dissertation. Malang: IKIP MALANG.

Hartfiel, V.F., Hughey, J.B., Wormuth, D.R. Jacobs, H.L. 1985. *Learning ESL Composition: English Composition Program.* London: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.

Heaton, J,B. 1989. *Writing English Language Tests*. London: Longman.

Hogins, JB and Lillard T. 1972. *The Structure of Writing*. Rowly, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company.

Solikhah, Imroatus. 2017. Linguistic Problems in English Essay by EFL Students.
*IJOLTL* (2017), 2(1): 31-44.

Jacobs, H, Zinkgraf, S.A, Wormuth, D.R., Hartfiel V.F., and Hughey, J.G. 1981. *Testing ESL Composition: A Practical Approach.* Rowley, Massachusetts: New House Publishers, Inc.

Latief, M.A. 1990. *Assessment of English Writing Skills for Students of English as a Second Language at IKIP MALANG Indonesia*. Unpublished Ph.D's Dissertation. Iowa City, Iowa: The University of Iowa.

Mukminatien, N. 1997. *The Differences of Students' Writing Achievement Across Different Course Levels.* Unpublished Ph.D's Dissertation. Malang: IKIP MALANG.

Oshima, A. and Houge, A. 1991. *Writing Academic English: A Writing and Sentence Structure Handbook.* Second Edition. Cambridge: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Sabilah, F. 1999. *Problems Found and Strategies Used in Essay Writing by the Fifth Semester Students of English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Malang.* Master's Thesis. Malang: IKIP MALANG.

Sadtono, E. 1997. ELT Development in Indonesia: a Smorgasbord. In Sadtono (Ed.). *The Development of TEFL In Indonesia*. pp. 1-19. Malang: IKIP MALANG and Bina Budaya Foundation.

Smalley R. and Ruetten. 1983. *Refining Composition Skills: Rhetoric and Grammar for ESL Students.* New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Stovall, J.G. 1994. *Writing for the Mass Media.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.

Sulistyani, I. 1993. *A Study on Coherence Within a Paragraph of Students' Composition at English Department of Muhammadiyah University of Malang.* Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis. English Department. Malang: Muhammadiyah University of Malang.

Sulistyo, G. 1996. Promoting the Students' Functional Skills in Paragraph Writing Through the Topic-Based Analysis Approach. *English Language Education*. 2(1):50-72.

Sweeny, A. 1987. *A Full Hearing: English in Academic and Research Settings.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wahab, A. 1995b. *Indonesian Rhetoric in Intercultural Communication*. The TEFLIN Silver Anniversary Seminar. Yogyakarta: IKIP Yogyakarta, Gajah Mada University, Sanata Dharma University, August, 2-5.

Warriner, J.E, Mersand, J, Griffith, F. 1958. *English Grammar and Composition.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Wingersky, J, Boerner, Holguin-Balogh. 1992. *Writing Paragraphs and Essays: Integrating Reading, Writing, and Grammar Skills*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Winkler, A.C and McCuen, J.R. 1974. *Rhetoric Made Plain*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanocich, Inc.