EFL LEARNERS' RELATIVE CLAUSES IN WRITING SHORT ENGLISH DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS

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ABSTRACT

The role of relative/adjective clauses in introducing new information, connecting with given information in sentences structures plays role in constructing grammatical sentences and doing well communication to face the global challenge. While some EFL learners still have sufficient knowledge in using relative clauses so it is assumed that not all EFL learners know how to construct adjective clauses grammatically and understand cognitively. This study shows how learners construct relative clauses in writing short descriptive essay. What learners' problems as effect of lack competence on English grammar rules and some deviation which is caused by the Indonesian interference in English use since two languages have different pattern are discussed in this study as well. Through the analysis of 40 pieces of learners' short descriptive essay, it is found that basic forms of English relative clauses; distinguishing between the antecedent; typically in a main clause and the relative pronoun in the relative clauses, the difference grammatical roles of possessive relative, differences between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses with their separation markers are problems in using adjective clause. The analysis of the data and discussion in this study are based on the theories of English grammatical, especially learning EFL and this study is derived and further developed based on a research report conducted in 2012 and 2016.

Keyword: *English, Relative, Clause, Descriptive, Writing*

INTRODUCTION

Learning first language (L1) is different from learning second language (L2) and foreign language (FL). Learning L1 which is also called native language or mother tongue goes through natural process. It is natural acquisition of the language or languages they hear from birth. Acquiring the first language goes through a period of listening to the language a child is exposed to. During this period the learner tries to discover what language is. Learning English as second language of foreign language in natural setting is about the same as learning English as the first language in a way that the learners learn the first two skills (listening and speaking skill). Nevertheless, learning ESL or EFL in the classroom settings will be very different. In learning ESL or EFL in the classroom setting, the learner learns the language consciously. It covers the development of phonology, lexis, grammar, and pragmatic knowledge. The study of L2 acquisition is directed at accounting for the learner's competence, but in order to do so what has set out to investigate empirically how a learner performs when he uses a second language. It means all the aspects of language that the language learner needs to master in L2 acquisition.

Grammar as one of language aspect talks about whether the sentence is acceptable or not as Thornburry (1999:1) says that it is partly the study of what forms (or structures) are possible in a language and it attempts to explain why sentences are acceptable. It is also reasonable to argue that by having knowledge of grammar the learners can both be better writers and speak a more standard dialect. However, learning a L2 or a FL should pay serious attention to the grammatical features of the learnt language. Among the others, adjective clause in one particular language is one of so many linguistic phenomena which need serious attentions in order to know specific grammatical features of the language.

As a matter of fact, learners of EFL in Indonesia have been taught about the use of adjective clause constructions. It has already been known that adjective clauses are dependent clauses that modify a noun. Yule (2009:240) says it provides some information about the person or thing indicated by that noun phrase. They are sometimes called 'relative pronouns' because, like many adjective, they often describe and help to identify the person or thing being talked about. An adjective clause usually comes immediately after the noun. It usually begins with a relative pronoun: *that, who, whom, which,* and *whose,* or relative adverb: *when,* and *where.* The followings are the examples of common adjective clause construction problems which are believed that learners are insufficient understanding in use (Adopted from Azar, from Grammar 4 Packet).

(1). My friend who lives in Dallas……
(2). Edmonds Community College, which located in the US, has a lot of international learners.
(3). She who comes from Japan is my roommate.
(4). The new book which I read it was very interesting.
(5). I went to San Francisco to visit my aunt and uncle where I used to live.

In constructing adjective clauses, the following constructions are found in EFL learners' writing as in following construction (see also Hendrayana, 2016).

(6). Indonesia which is one of the largest developing country in the world…….

(7). Tampalo mountain that named by the ancestor in Tanjung given the impact to many industries in Sijunjung.
(8). Silokek is an amazing place which consist of some nice places there.
(9). Jam Gadang which is located in the central of Bukittinggi has a unique story to tell.

The construction made by learners (6) – (9) is common problems in the use of adjective clauses. That is right that such construction do not follow the grammatical rule of adjective clauses. From these phenomena, it can be clearly seen that the learners still have limited knowledge in the use of adjective clauses although they had been given a set of grammar courses which consist of Structure 1, 2, 3 and 4. They learned these courses after taking an Integrated Course, which also covers grammar and this course is prerequisite for Structure 1 and the other courses. They are not allowed to take Structure 2 if they do not pass Structure 1.

The low ability of the learners in using adjective clauses is line with Biaggi (2003). She says that unawareness on the particular system or rule exists in English language's component often happen to the student of language particularly in the process of acquiring the second language. Besides, in learning second language, learners often challenge by the certain incompetency in conveying their language production between spoken or written without having to be laced by any trace of erroneous error. This is deemed impossible since learners not only cognitively threaten by the unconscious error made repetitively but also by the type of mistakes caused by the learner's incapability in utilizing the known language system correctly. This lingusitic phenomena should be seen academically as essential problems in the learning of EFL grammar, moreover at university level. Reflected from the phenomena at English Department UNP Padang, in which learners have the problem constructing adjective clauses, this paper will discuss: (i) how adjective clauses constructed in learners' descriptive essay; and (ii) problems learners write in constructing adjective clauses. The data presented and gotten from descriptive research at English Department Universitas Negeri Padang academic year 2013/2014. The population of this study was 44 learners; consisting two classes (Non Kependidikan 1 and 2).

Adjective clauses are dependent clauses that modify a noun. Yule (2009:240) says it provides some information about the person or thing indicated by that noun phrase. Some linguists sometimes call it as 'relative pronoun' because, like adjectives, they often describe and help to identify the person or thing being talked about. An adjective clause usually comes immediately after the noun. It usually begins with a relative pronouns: *that, who, whom which, whose,* or relative adverb: *when,* and *where.*

In the following examples, the adjective *new* in [1a] and the relative pronoun *that doesn't make me fall asleep* in [1b] both provide information about the *book.* [1] a. For the grammar class, we need a new book. b. I'm talking about a book *that doesn't make me fall asleep*. The information [1a] is in a single clause, whereas the information in [1b] is presented in two clauses. There is a main clause (*I'm talking about a book*…..) and a relative pronoun (….*that doesn't make a feel asleep*). There is always a close connection between the noun phrases (e.g. *a book*) in the main clause, known as the antecedent, and the relative pronoun (e.g. *that*) in the relative pronoun. When a relative pronoun is used in English, there is a strong tendency to place it immediately after the antecedent noun. There are, as shown in [2], several different relative pronouns. [2] a. I'm the kind of person *who* is always losing things. b. Right now, I can't find a book *that* I need for school. c. It's a brand new book *which* I just bought last week.

Five relative pronouns (*that, who, whom, which, whose, when and where*) are used in different grammatical roles within the relative clause. Azhar (2009) explains six different roles of adjective clauses constructions as the following examples:

(10). I know the man who always writes magazine article.
(11). The book which I read last night was interesting.
(12). I know the man whose motorcycle was stolen.
(13). Where is the hotel in which you stayed?
(14). Sunday is the day when we will meet.
(15). The beautiful citye where we live is Padang.

It is common in grammar texts to treat the relative pronoun as a form that substitutes for a noun and to present sentence like (10). It is worth noting that the whole noun phrase (*the man)* and not just the noun (*man*) is replaced by the relative pronoun *(who/that)*. This role of adjective clause called adjective clause pronouns used as the subject. In sentence (11), the adjective clause pronouns (*which*) are placed at the beginning of the clause. *Which* is the object of their two clauses so it is called adjective claus pronouns used as the object of a verb. In possessive relative, the *whose* form is more frequent (occuring three time more often) that the *of which* form. Both of these possessive relatives are typically found in written English. This form relative pronoun can be seen in sentence (12). *Whose* in this sentence is connected to a noun *(motorcycle)*. It carries the same meaning as other possessive pronouns used as adjectives: *his, her, its,* and *their.* Both *whose* and the noun it is connected to are placed at the beginning of the adjective clause. Note that, in (13), the preposition (*in*) comes at the beginning of adjective clauses. This is one position where the form *that* cannot be used instead of *whom* or *which.* However, if the preposition is placed at the end of the sentence, the the form *that* can be used at the beginning of relative clause. As illustrated *They are student that we told to you about.* The relative pronoun *that* is next to antecedent, but the preposition *about* have been left or stranded at the end of the clause. Some grammarians are generally called a stranded preposition. In adjective clause, *when* is used to modify a noun of time as illustrated in (14) and *where* is used in an adjective clause to modify a place (15).

Yule (2009:248) divides restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses. In all examples discussed so far have been loooking at restrictive relative clauses. It is also called 'defining' relative clauses because it defines or restricts the reference of the antecedent noun. It helps to identify or classify the person ot thing being talked about. Another structured known is non-restrictive relative or 'non-defining' relative clause. A non-restrictive clause gives extra information and additional information about an antecedent as in following sentences.

(16). Professor Wilson, who teaches Chemistry 204, is an excellent lecturer.
(17). Andy, whose writing I read last week, was my old friend.
(18). This food, which is relatively inexpensive, is both delicious and nutritious.
(19). In 1964, when I left Tokyo, the Olympic Games were being held.

It is essential to know that in writing non-restrictive relative clause is usually marked by commas. Davis (1977:342) says when the noun they modify is a proper name as in (16) and (17),

commas are needed to give additional information about *Professor Wilson* and *Andy*. In (18), the sentence gives extra information about *this food*. Comma are needed because the noun (*food*) is preceded by *this* or *these*. Commas are also needed when the clause modifies a specific time or date as in sentence (19). In this sentence the adjective clause is not necessary to identify *year,* because we already know the year is 1964.

(20). France ─ which is a beautiful country in Europe ─ has a low incidence of heart attack.
(21). France which is a beautiful country in Europe has a low incidence of heart attack.

In speaking, these non-restrictive adjective clauses would be marked by pauses and a change in intonation. These commas, dashes, brackets, abd pauses are generaly known as separation markers as in sentence (20). Those distinc separation markers around non-restrictive adjective clauses make them easy to recognize. In writing, they also help to make a distinction between some extra information about, as with *France* and some necessary information, as in (21), that identifies a particular *France which is a beautifuk country in Europe.* We can paraphrase (20) as *France has a low incidence of heart disease* and, by the way, *France is a beautiful country in Europe,* whereas (21) will communicate that *France which is a beautiful country in Europe,* not *France who is develop country, has a low incidence of heart attack.* The comma in the non-restrictive adjective clauses in (21) actually signal that this clause could easily omitted.

(22). Robert, whose big family lived in America, was born in Canada.
(23). Someone said that I took the books, which was not true.
(24). The village has around 500 people, most of whom are farmer.

Separation markers a refound more often with names and other proper nouns, as in (22), with additional comments on previous statement, as in (23), and with clauses that begin with quantity expressions *(e.q many of whom, none of which, etc)*, as in (24). As may have become clear, restrictive are closely tied to their antecedents and non-restrictive are quite separate. Yule (2009:249) mentions that the commas or pauses before non-restrictive create more lingusitic distance between the antecedent and the relative clause. more lingusitics distance conveys a much looser connection. This distance is also noticeable when both a restrictive and non-restrictive adjective clauses are used with the same antecedent.

What learners constructed in (6) - (9) are ungrammatical because the constructions are not based on the rules of adjective clauses. Azhar (1998) mentions that there are six possible problems which should be considered in constructing adjective clauses as 1). An adjective clause must be together with another complete sentence. There need to be 2 subjects and 2 verbs. 2). Adjective clause must have a subject and a complete verb. 3). A pronoun (he, she, him, her etc.) (except for some special expressions) cannot be used in using adjective clauses. 4). Do not repeat a pronoun with an adjective clause. 5). Adjective clause must be just after the noun it describes. 6). If we are describing something very simple, especially using one adjective, it is usually better to put the adjective in front of the word. It seems that the adjective clauses constructions in English are quite complex for learners as the use of relative clauses and in identifying non-restrictive adjective clauses. Therefore, the understanding on adjective clauses constructions in English is academically and communicatively necessary for EFL learners in both writing and speaking.

METHOD

The type of this study is descriptive research whose subject of the research is the third semester learners of English department at State University of Padang academic year 2013. To get the data, the researcher uses proportional cluster random sampling which is taken 50% of 87 students. The sources of the data are the products of learners' writing production and the result of the learners' interview were analyzed descriptively in order to see the learners' mastery in using adjective clauses, problems, and types of mistakes made by learners. Related to the data analyzed, identifying the use of adjective clauses by learners is based on the indicators and sub-indicators of grammatical elements of adjective clauses, that is adjective clauses classification, relative pronoun function and position, types of mistakes found and are based on the theories of English grammatical. The data from the interview were tabulated in forms of quantitative analysis which is aimed to confirm what type of mistakes made by learners in using adjective clauses. Those data can lead to conclusion of how EFL learners' relative clauses in writing English descriptive essays.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Basically, Adjective clauses construction is faced in learners' writing resulted the effect of lack competence on English grammar rules especially adjective clauses. There was deviation of adjective clauses construction as shown in the following data:

(25) Siti Nurbaya bridge is a big bridge in Padang city that is very beautiful bridge. It was built when the story Siti Nurbaya and Samsul Bahri was born.
(26) Silokek is located 10 km from Muaro, Sijunjung regency, West Sumatra. Silokek is an amazing place which consists of some nice places there.

The first common learners' problem in writing adjective clauses is incorrect placement between antecedent and relative clause. In learners' writing (25) there is no close connection between the noun phrase (*Siti Nurbaya bridge*) known as antecedent and relative pronoun (*that*) in the relative clause (*that is very beautiful bridge*). When relative pronoun is used in adjective clause, there is a strong tendency to place it immediately after the antecedent noun. It can also be clearly seen in writing (26). Relative clause in this sentence is *Which consists of some nice places*, it provides information about the *Silokek* so relative clause must be placed after antecedent *(Silokek)*.

The next ungrammatical construction is the another structure known as a non-restrictive adjective clauses or non-defining relative clause. This is represented in learners' adjective clauses construction as following writings:

(27) Nyarai which is used as place to take rest for visitors is located in the forest.
(28) Bukittingi which has many magical buildings, had ever become capital city of Indonesia. Those buildings are SMA 2 Bukittinggi, Jam Gadang, Benteng fort de Kock, etc.

Non-defining relative clauses provides additional information, not identifying information. *Nyarai* in sentence (27) is proper noun so non-restrictive relative clause gives extra information about an antecedent (*Nyarai*). The adjective clause is not necessary to identify *Nyarai.* We already know what place it is: it has name. Commas are used between relative clause (*..,which is used as place to take rest,…*). Adjective clause used in construction (28) is ungrammatical because only one comma used. From the result of the research, it shows that learners are still difficult in identifying restrictive and non-restrictive adjective clauses. Davis (1977:342) says nonrestrictive it is sometimes difficult to decide whether adjective clauses are restrictive or not, but they are clearly non-restrictive as first, when the noun they modify is a proper name (since a name by itself is enough to tell *which*). Secondly, when the noun is preceded by this or these as in the sentence *Americans like ice cream. This food,* ***which*** *is relatively inexpensive, is both delicious and nutritious.* Thirdly, when the clause modifies a specific time or date.

There are some sub-indicator in the element of syntax that shows a high degree in interference transfer is about word order. An example that shows the problem of syntax, the concordance between subject and predicate of the sentences are seen in this sentence:

(29) Japan, which a lot of culture, is an interesting country to visit**.** Japan is a small island but it is a modern country. One kind of culture from Japan is anime.

The construction above is incomplete since it does not contain *predicate* after relative pronoun *which.* In order not to be anomalous, it should be cured by writing *Japan, which has several various culture, is interesrting country to visit*. In indonesia pattern, *predicate* contains several types (Lapoliwa in Hermawati Syarif, 2014) such as S – P (verb, noun, adjective, adverb); while english only contains verb as a predicate that is usually patterned by S – V. It is assumed that this kind deviation is caused by the indonesian interference in english use since two languages have different patterns.

The use of *whose* is also one of problems in constructing adjective clauses in learners' writing. Some learners apply rules to context of adjective clause where it is not applicable as the following construction:

(30) Padang city, whose its nice history, is the one of the famous cities in West Sumatra**.**

It can be clearly seen that *whose* in adjective clause is used to show possession. It carries the same meaning as other possessive pronouns used as adjective *his, her, its, their, etc.* In that sentence, both *whose* and possessive *its* is used together, it means that the learners apply a rule in the context of a sentence where actually it is not necessary. Where English allows *"Padang city, whose beautiful history, is the one of famous cities in West Sumatera"* or *"Padang city, which has beautiful history, is the one of famous cities in West Sumatera*".

The lack of using passive verb reflected on learners' adjective clause writing. In passive sentences, the thing receiving the action is the subject of the sentence and the thing doing the action is optionally included near the end of the sentence (See Hermawati Syarief, 2014). It is constructed by using TOBE + past participle. In learners' writing, TOBE is ignored after relative pronoun as presented as following:

(29) Bukittinggi, which well known by many people, has some beautiful tourism objects.
(30) Jam Gadang which located in the central of Bukittinggi has a unique story to tell.

Finding of the current study highlight that most of the learners are lack of understanding the forms of adjective clauses, even though they have taken Grammar subject. The low ability of the learners in using adjective clause is line with Biaggi (2003). She says that unawareness on the particular system or rule exists in English language's component often happen to the learners of language particularly in the process of acquiring the second language. Besides, in learning second language, learners often challenge by the certain incompetency in conveying their language production between spoken or written without having to be laced by any trace of erroneous error. This is deemed impossible since learners not only cognitively threaten by the unconscious error made repetitively but also by the type of mistakes caused by the learner's incapability in utilizing the known language system correctly.

CONCLUSIONS

Adjective clause constructions still become problems in EFL learners' writing. The problems in using adjective clause are on distinguishing between the antecedent, typically in a main clause and the relative pronoun in the relative clause, the differences between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses with their separation markers, and the use of possessive relatives. Consequently, the learners' sentences are often hard to understand.

Since, the adjective clauses constructions have complicated theoretical bases, the EFL learners should be taught the use of correct adjective clauses construction both in writing and speaking. Besides, some efforts need to be done by learners such as increasing practical habit by using adjective clauses in describing about the person or thing indicated by noun phrase. Thus, peer correction also should be done by learners to improve their understanding of adjective clause in using complex sentences grammatically in writing and in speaking so they can speak English naturally.

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