

Grammatical Intricacy on Students' Writing

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ABSTRACT

Grammatical intricacy refers to how often a clause complex in a text in comparison with simple clauses. It is accepted that any text has a different level of intricacy (complexity). This is all related to how much information is introduced in a clause complex which can contain more than one simple clause. Classification of clauses (sentences) applies to the determination of grammatical intricacy (complexity) of a text. If in a text there are more clause complexes than simple clauses, it can be said that the text is more complex in the sense that it presents more information in a condensed way. Consequently, learners are potential to encounter problems. The concept of this article only focuses on the paratactic clause, hypotactic clause construction and the combination among clause constructions used by students.

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Introduction

Writing is one of the language skills, and it is both physical and cognitive in which the writer is required to produce some variables that consist of word, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, etc. in order to make possible transmission of messages. Alice Ochima states "*Writing is a progressive activity. This means that when you first write something down, you have already been thinking about what you are going to say and how you are going to say it. Then after you have finished writing, you read over what you have written and made changes and corrections. Therefore, writing is never one step actions: it is a process that has several steps* (Alice, 1997).

Writing is a process of discovering and organizing ideas, putting them on paper, and revising them. Writing is the hardest skill for almost everyone who is learning English. They are confronted with a lot of difficulties to transfer idea and construct some clauses in a written text. In writing any kind of text, we need complex grammar to express the idea comprehensively. Having good writing, the students must know well how to construct some clauses in written text, in order that the students' writing may develop well and completely.

The argumentative text is one of the genres that student must learn in a genre-based writing course. Argumentative text requires the ability of the author to show that he makes conclusions according to definite facts and not on personal

assumptions only. The researcher observes the argumentative text of English department students in genre-based writing course she teaches. She found out simple clauses in them. For example; "*Every human had been destined by Allah to have a couple. A man is for a woman. They connected by a holy ijab. Marriage is half of Iman in Islamic side*". From the example above, it consists of some sentences that can be made into one sentence that consists of some clauses. It should change the simple clause to complex clause that consists of hypotactic or parataxis clause. For example, "... *Every human had been destined by Allah to have a couple/ and / a man and woman is connected by a holy ijab*". It is called the paratactic clause construction since there are two clauses connected by the connector of 'and.'

The other examples of the hypotactic clause construction are "*Recently; there are many couples/ that have a marriage/ when they are still young. There are also many reasons/ that caused their marriage. Those who believe/ that marry /when people are still young is better have some reasons. They argue/ that it will be able to avoid free sex*". As shown the example above, there are eight hypotactic clauses construction used by students, which consists of four independent clauses and four dependent clauses. It indicates that students have understood the construction the hypotactic and comprehended how to use the clause construction in writing.

The feature of grammatical simplicity characterizes that written language tends to use few clauses per sentence (Halliday 1994). Grammatical intricacy relates to the number of sentences in the text. Writing can be difficult even in our language, in a new language, writing can be even more difficult. Students tend to use some grammatical simplicity in their writing. The simple clauses are usually found by the researcher in the students writing. This research will focus on grammatical intricacy. And the sub-focus of the research is the clause complex that consists of parataxis and hypotaxis on the students writing of the argumentative text. It is very important for students to do their writing in total construction.

The writer uses content analysis with the steps according to Functional Grammar of Halliday (1995). This article writes the grammatical intricacy on students writing descriptively. The materials as the source of data used for analysis will be the writings from the fourth semester of English Department students UIN Walisongo Semarang. The data of this study is the clause complex from the writings of the fourth-semester students of English Department of UIN Walisongo. This analysis concentrates on measuring grammatical intricacy of texts as well as on studying the construction of the clauses complex.

The method of collecting data uses text observation containing clause complex, and the technique of the collecting data uses taking note (*simak*, *catat*, Sudaryanto, 2015: 206-2010). The students will be asked to write the argumentative text. After reading the students' writing, the writer will identify, classify and record the construction of clauses complex made by students. The various kinds of clause complex made by the students and the complexity of the clauses made the writer

categorize and subdivide them. The categories chosen are created by Halliday (1995: 81-101). The categories of clauses and clause complexes are divided into taxis (parataxis & hypostasis) and categories of embedded clauses.

Review of The Related Literature

Previous Research

a. Lexical Density and Grammatical Intricacy of English Academic Writings Written By Native Speaker and Non-Native Speaker

The study shows the similarities and differences of characteristic features of academic writing written by NNS and NS. The similarities deal with the scores of lexical density and grammatical intricacy. Both academic writings have more or less similar scores of lexical density and grammatical intricacy. This indicates that both academic writings have the characteristics of a written text. The differences deal with the clause actor, clause process, and nominalization. In using clauses, NNS uses more human actors and action processes which do not show that characteristics of a written text. On the other hand, NS uses more abstract actors and relational processes in his clauses that make the writing more formal. Dealing with nominalization the information communicated in the text through nominal group, NS uses more words in his nominal group, although the functional elements used to make the nominal groups are nearly the same. They generally use a deictic, classifier, and qualifier in a prepositional phrase or relative clause (Sunardi, Journal of UDINUS, Volume 10, No.3 September 2010).

Theoretical Framework

a. Definition of Writing

Writing is a complex activity. Writing is the hardest skill for almost everyone who is learning English. It can happen because when they want to write something, they are confronted with a lot of difficulties to transfer thought and idea in written form. That's why teacher must be to provoke student engagement with material which is relevant and involving. The problems faced in the class are students have difficulties to build and develop their ideas, choose the right diction, and use the grammar, so they feel difficult to arrange what they think into a paragraph.

b. Grammatical intricacy

Grammatical intricacy refers to how often a clause complex appears in the text in comparison with simple clauses. It is accepted that any text has a different level of intricacy (complexity). This is all related to how much information is introduced in a clause complex which can contain more than one simple clause. Classification of clauses (sentences) applies to the

determination of grammatical intricacy (complexity) of a text. If in a text there are more clause complexes than simple clauses, it can be said that the text is more complicated in the sense that it presents more information in a condensed way. Consequently, the learners are potential to encounter problems. Grammatical intricacy is essential to be uncovered because the text is said to be difficult because of the intricacy of information. A simple clause is easier to understand in the sense that the amount of information presented is less than that of a clause complex. In other words, a clause complex as indicated in functional grammar contains more information than a simple clause. To understand the total meaning of a text, the types of clauses in English must be familiar to the students.

It often occurs that students cannot understand a clause complex as they cannot identify the subject and predicate. No matter how long a clause is, they should be able to recognize the subject and predicate because of these two elements of grammar which create certain meanings.

It is commonly known that a clause is composed of a proposition. The proposition contains the concepts of relation, events, attributes, and things. It means that every clause must have a subject (what is being explained) which is described by showing its relation to other things or events. A person, for instance, can learn English because the language is very important. He then studies it at a course and reads many books to get information. This man as the subject of the sentence should be described in details, which means that information is intricate. In this case, the levels of GI counted by analyzing the High and Low level of grammatical intricacy (complexity) of a text. If the number of clause complex is more dominant than a simple sentence in a text, it means that the text has a high level of GI, and contrary if the number of clause complex is lower than a simple sentence, it means that the text has a low GI.

The level of intricacy can be found by finding the ratio between the simple clauses and clause complexes in the real analysis, and a simple clause may be regarded as consisting subject and predicate. Every type of clauses has a different level of difficulty. This is true of the clauses which contain a different amount of information. Various studies showed that clause complexes, for instance, clause complexes are more difficult to process than simple clauses, reflecting their relatively greater intricacy as defined by (Slobin, 1979: 5). Concerning understanding clauses in reading text, the levels of knowledge and skill must constantly be called upon in the simple and effortless course of understanding the message. Simply, a brief comparison will give more comprehension in analyzing the levels of GI. The texts are taken from different sources.

Text 1

Studies show that students from low socioeconomic families often suffer conditions such as inadequate shelter, inferior food, unsafe neighborhood, and substandard schools that affect their emotional and social well-being.

CC (Clause Complex) analysis;

///Studies show //that students from low socioeconomic families often suffer conditions such as inadequate shelter, inferior food, unsafe neighborhood//, students from low socioeconomic families often suffer [from] substandard schools that [[substandard schools]] affect their emotional and social well-being.///

Text 2

Myths and stereotypes about the ideal family can influence teacher expectations and attitudes regarding the ability of students to learn and behave.

CC

///Myths and stereotypes about the ideal family can influence teacher expectations //and attitudes regarding the ability of students //to learn and behave./

By acknowledging and respecting a wide spectrum of families, teachers can discourage

prejudgment. They can take an active role in reinforcing the vital link between home.

and school (Lack of CC or no CC).

As shown in the example, the three texts have 3 LGI (levels of GI); (1. High LGI, 2. Medium LGI, 3. Low LGI).

Halliday (2004) states: typically, written language becomes complex by being lexically dense: it packs a large number of lexical items into each clause; whereas spoken language becomes complex by being grammatically intricate: it builds up elaborate clause complexes out of parataxis and hypotaxis (p. 654).

Clause complexes

Clause complexes show “how the flow of events is construed in the Development of text at the level of semantics” (Halliday, 2004, p. 363). Eggins (2004) defines clause complex as a “grammatical and semantic unit formed when two or more clauses are linked together in certain systematic and meaningful way” (p. 255). If there is just one clause in a sentence, it is called a clause simplex. The way clauses are combined in a clause complex is described through two systems, taxis, and logico-semantic. Taxis shows the type of relations between clauses; the relationship between equality and independence is called parataxis (Example I), and the relationship of dependency is called hypotaxis (Example II).

(II) Choose your topic, α and organize your information.

(II) Look at your listeners β when you speak.

α β

The logico-semantic system shows how clauses are related to each other: Through projection or expansion. When what is projected is a thought, it is called idea (example I). When what is projected is speech, it is called locution (Example II)

Decide α β what your purpose and audience will be.

α β

They might ask themselves α β why an event made them feel in a certain way.

α β

Expansion can be of three different types: elaboration (when one clause.

restates or exemplifies another one, Example I), extension (when one clause adds some new information to another clause, Example II), and enhancement (when one clause develops another clause in some way, Example III).

A synonym, <<or word that may come after

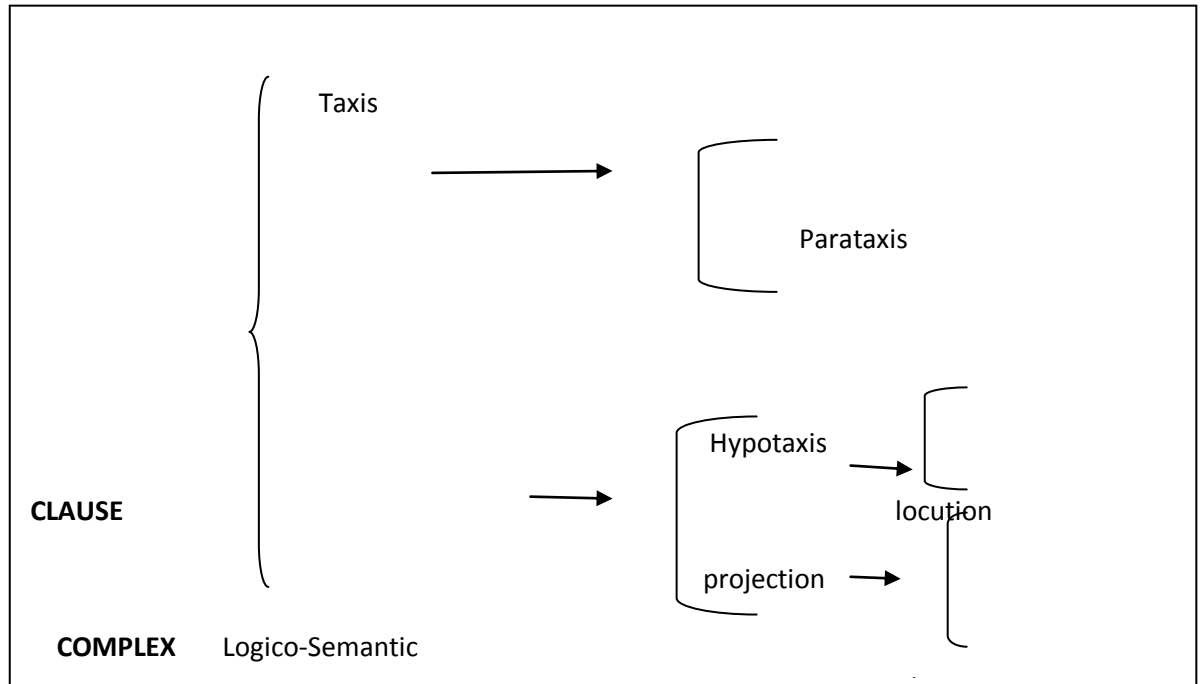
meaning>>the example sentence

1<<+2>>

Look at your listener and organize your information.

α

$\times \beta$



The system of clause complex (from Eggins, 2004, p. 259)

Any clause chooses both for taxis and logico-semantic relations. The choice is “either-or”: a type of relations between clauses can be either paratactic or hypotactic. The same is true for logico-semantic relations: a clause either projects (or is being projected), or expands (or is being expanded).

The difficulties in the analysis will arise mainly when the text divided into clauses because, in addition to ranking clauses, dependent or independent, each text

contained a large number of embedded clauses. Embedding is defined by Halliday (2004) as “a seismogenic mechanism whereby a clause or phrase comes to function as a constituent within the structure of a group, which itself is a constituent of a clause. Hence there is no direct relationship between an embedded clause and the clause within which it is embedded” (p. 426).

It is, however, difficult in many cases to define whether the clause is ranking or rank shifted. Martin, Matthiessen, and Painter (1997) in their manual for systemic

functional analysis give a number of probes that can help to distinguish ranking and rank shifted clauses: presence or absence of punctuation, ability to serve as a subject of an agnate passive clause, ability to become the focus of Theme predication, etc. (p. 183). Now that the research context for the analysis is established, the study will be described.

Embedded Vs. Non-Embedded Clauses

Embedding is a mechanism whereby an element comes to function within the structure of a group, which itself is a constituent of a clause (Gerot and Wignell, 1994:87). To see the contrast of embedded and non-embedded can be seen by the following clauses:

Non-embedded: it's my own invention--to keep dodol in

Embedded: I needed something [[to keep dodol in]]

In the first example, to keep *dodol in* not embedded. Instead, it is a dependent clause, one which adds a kind of an afterthought. In the second, [[*to keep dodol in*]] is embedded, and therefore, does not function as a dependent clause in its own right, but rather acts more like a word qualifying or modifying the meaning of something. Let's see other example taken from (Gerot and Wignell);

*Non embedded: the prisoner, who hid in the thicket escaped.

* Embedded: the prisoner who hid in the thicket escaped, but his accomplice was recaptured.

Here the first who hid in the ticket is not embedded; it is a dependent clause which adds more information about the event under discussion. There are two pieces of information in this clause complex: 'the prisoner escaped' and 'said prisoner hid in the thicket.' In the second clause complex *who hid in the thicket* is embedded. This embedded bit serves to define which prisoner it was who hid in the ticket to distinguish this prisoner from some other. In this example, there are again two pieces of information, but they are as follows: 'the prisoner who hid in the ticket escaped,' and 'accomplice was captured.' Embedding is defined by Halliday (2004) as "a seismogenic mechanism whereby clause or phrase to function as a constituent within the structure of a group, which itself is a constituent of a clause. Hence there is no direct relationship between an embedded clause and the clause within which is embedded" (p.426). Embedded clauses are called rank shifted; they are excluded from the analysis because they do not carry any separate experiential meaning and serve as postmodifier in a nominal group or Head in a nominal group (Example I, II). Choose a way [[to share your writing]].

[[Using different kinds of type and different colors]] does writing
[[fun to read.]]

Conclusion

The teacher will get description and information about the grammatical intricacy on the students writing. The teacher will improve the way his/her teaching in a writing course more accurately. He teaches students how to construct the clause complex completely. Besides that, the students can be motivated in learning English after knowing the result of the study. The students know how to construct clause complex and improve their English writing well. The other advantages, it is good for getting knowledge and description about the grammatical intricacy on the writings of the English department students, the writer hopes will be able to give a contribution to developing ELT (pedagogical purpose) in writing or grammar and discourse course as well to the students.

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