



PROSPECTIVE MILLENNIAL ENGLISH TEACHERS' S-V AGREEMENT PROFILE IN INSTAGRAM STORIES

Desy Rizki Lukitasari and Vernanda Nopita Sandi Putri

Sanata Dharma University

desyritzil77@gmail.com and vnsandi@gmail.com

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Abstract

Digital disruption has brought today's learning to a more flexible context. Teachers can innovate various applications on a computer or mobile phone to engage digital-native students. Instagram Stories, a popular feature launched by Instagram in August 2016, has given a big impact to prospective English teachers' language development as an expression of their identity. Due to the overuse of IG Stories, this research aims at identifying the profile of English education students' subject and verb agreement as well as its types of mistakes written in their IG Stories. The data of this descriptive study were taken from English education students' IG Stories in a well-known private university in Yogyakarta. The result shows that most of the students, 80% of the participants, already produced correct S-V agreement in their writing in IG Stories while 20% of them still made mistakes. Few of them wrote an incorrect form of S-V agreement, used inappropriate tense, and made unnecessary omission and addition. This research can be an insight for English practitioners to make use of SNS as the media to teach writing for fostering students' critical thinking skills in language learning.

Keywords: Instagram Stories, S-V agreement, writing skill

Introduction

In the 21st century, students no longer learn languages from traditional classes and paper-based materials. The nature of millennial students or "Net Generation" is "fast-paced, fun-seeking, technology savvy, but also stereotyped as technology-dependent, having short attention span, and spoiled" (Information Resources Management Association, 2014; as cited in Djiwandono, 2017). They are more interested in technology-use, particularly SNS (Social Networking Service) which they can effortlessly access across different time and place. For instance, social media like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram are very common among millennials. Being active in social media by updating status, commenting on someone else's posts, and uploading pictures or videos is part of their life. Regarding that, in order to promote the Four Cs (critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation) expected in this century, teachers can take advantage of students' dependency on SNS to bring a more engaging learning activity in foreign language classrooms, particularly EFL classroom.

One widely-used social media is Instagram which “learners are now accustomed to using” (Cahyono and Widiati, 2018). With its popular feature, Instagram Stories or IG Stories launched in August 2016, Instagram has extended its function to a more interactive application. IG Stories allows users to capture their daily activities through statuses, pictures, and videos. This highly engaged millennials and caused a new habit to do self-branding through the stories. Therefore, the overuse of IG Stories has been a phenomenon happening nowadays. Not limited to any millennials, but to English education students as well.

In fact, the students do not merely post their daily activities or other entertainment content for entertaining purposes. They also express their opinions, insights, and even comments on viral issues which are good to advance their critical thinking. Furthermore, as students who are trained to be English teachers, their IG Stories containing pieces of writing matter. The contents they post on IG Stories show their writing as well as lexico-grammatical competences, and therefore they may indicate how proficient they are as a prospective English teacher. Unfortunately, besides the skill and competences promoted in their IG Stories, errors are inevitable.

There are a lot of grammatical errors made by students when writing a text. One of them is the subject-verb agreement. Its concept is “a basic principle of the English language grammar” (Suryo and Yustisia, 2017) yet it is one of the most frequent errors found in students’ writing (Zhan, 2015; Singh et al., 2017; Sermsook et al., 2017). Hence, English education students are expected to have “the ability to construct grammatically correct sentences” not only to write a text with good coherence and cohesion through the subject-verb agreement but also to equip them to be a good model for their future students (Mbau, Marhum, Muhsin, 2014). As a consequence, prospective English teachers should be able to demonstrate the correct use of it, particularly in writing where revision is possible. Thus, this research aims at identifying the profile of English education students’ subject-verb agreement production as well as its types of errors written in their IG Stories.

Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL)

It is inevitable that the development of technology in this digital disruption era has significantly reshaped the way of teachers across the globe in developing their materials in teaching and learning process. Today’s learning has evolved to be more flexible where teachers can innovate and apply various applications on computers or mobile phones. On top of that, technology development in the classroom is very suitable for students nowadays. It is because they are familiar and actively using technologies in their daily life. This phenomenon, then, requires teachers to make the learning attractive and interactive. Thus, technology can be a good choice to fulfill that requirement as supported by Belardi (2013): “studying effectively and with the right type of technology is one of the best ways to ensure that students succeed in class”.

Related to the use of technology in education, it is needed to know a glimpse of theory about TELL (Technology-Enhanced Language Learning) which underlies the use of technology in language practice. According to Kranthi (2017) TELL is a result of technology innovation in education which can be used to support or assist teaching and learning process in the classroom. Besides, Golshan & Tafzoli (2013)

asserted, “TELL is the study of applications of the technology in language teaching and learning (p.115). In other words, TELL is the utilization of technological advancement in education which is expected can improve educational learning. By implementing TELL in the classroom, the center of learning will be focused on the students which further promotes learners’ autonomy. Besides, the source of learning will be more varied and easier to find through “handled gadgets” which best-suit the characteristic of millennials (Djiwandono, 2017).

There are several main types of media used in TELL including sound, film, and image and if it is linked to students’ habits nowadays which tends to enjoy using social media sites in their daily life. It is such benefits for teachers to utilize social media in their classroom as it offers features that enable teachers to attract students’ attention. Basically, Social Networking Services (SNS) is not a new thing in our life, there are almost over 1.8 billion active users who use SNSs. According to Boyd (2007), SNS is a set of 2.0 platform which is used for different purposes such as finding new friends, contacting with old friends, education purpose, or only for having fun. They comprise “several activities including socializing and online networking through various forms, such as words, pictures, and videos” (Cahyono and Widiati, 2018). Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google+, Skype, Weibo, Snapchat, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Reddit are several popular social media used by people around the world. However, this paper will only focus on Instagram, particularly IG Stories, as a language learning tool.

Instagram and IG Stories

One of the social media sites which gives boards for foreign language learning is Instagram. Instagram is one of 2.0 platforms which released in 2010. It is “an online mobile photo-sharing and video-sharing” (Cahyono and Widiati, 2018). In specific, the users can post pictures, video, story, add captions, apply filters, add location, as well as tag other users. Importantly, they can follow every account which suits their interest and purpose and utilize that account to learn English through Instagram.

In previous studies, Cahyono and Widiati (2018) found that students in their Argumentative Writing classes could improve their writing ability because of the implementation of Instagram. The students also showed a positive response towards it as the application makes their writing class become more meaningful and fun. Similarly, Shazali, Shamsudin, and Yunus (2019) also found that 25 students that participated in the Instagram tasks agree that Instagram helps them to develop their writing ability, particularly their vocabulary and motivation. They suggested that “Instagram can be considered as one of the pedagogical tools in teaching writing” (Shazali, Shamsudin, and Yunus, 2019). Despite of its functions to “create accounts, post content (pictures or 15-second videos), apply filters, add captions, tag users, add locations, add hashtags, like content, add comments, browse and follow other accounts, check a feed generated by followed accounts, and explore (search for) hashtags/users” (Al-Ali, 2014), IG Stories or IG Stories) as one of the newest features by Instagram has also been popularly used. The feature was launched in August 2016 which lets the users to post statuses, pictures, and videos within 24 hours. Through IG Stories, the users, including students, can record their daily lives in audio-visual contents. However, not much research has been

conducted on IG Stories to practice as well as improve students' lexico-grammatical competence, particularly S-V agreement.

Subject-Verb Agreement

According to Suryo and Yusticia (2017), subject-verb agreement is an agreement between subject and verb, and therefore it determines the sentence meaning. Basically, the rule of the agreement is "that a verb must agree in number and person with its subject" (Al-Dubib, 2013). Although it seems easy, there are many errors students can make when constructing sentences and dealing with subject-verb agreement.

Regarding the rules of subject-verb agreement, Turkenik (1998) as cited in Mbau, Marhum and Muhsin (2014), explained three basic rules of it. They are (1) "in simple present or past tense, the main verbs are and have", (2) "the verbs in the third person singular must be added -s, -es, or -ies in simple present tense", (3) "compound tenses use be or have as the first auxiliary". In a more specific sense, Azar (1999) in Mbau, Marhum and Muhsin (2014) described five subject-verb agreement rules: (1) "finals/ -es: use", (2) "basic subject-verb agreement", (3) "using expressions of quantity", (4) "using there + be", and (5) "some irregularities of writing". In a more recent theory, Ellis (2003) classified errors as the result of inadequate learning of the target language in four categories: omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. Omission refers to any absences of an item to form a text whereas addition is the presence of it. Misinformation is the wrong utterance in a text starting from morpheme to clause. Misordering, then, means the inappropriate placement of utterance on the morpheme level.

Method

Since this study aims to describe and investigate the profile of prospective millennial English teachers' S-V agreement production on IG Stories, thus the researchers use a content analysis technique to describe the profile of the participants. According to Ary (2010), "the material in content analysis may be public records, textbooks, letters, films, tapes, diaries, themes, reports, or other documents (p.28)". The respondents of this study are sixty-five IG users from English Language Education Department students of a well-known private university in Yogyakarta. These sixty-five IG users are chosen because they are actively using English in making a story on Instagram. The students were sophomore students in the university.

Besides, in order to ease the process of collecting the data, the data source of this research is obtained from their' IG stories and/or archives. Moreover, to analyze the data, the researchers analyze by using several steps namely determining the data, identifying the mistakes, classifying the mistakes, and explaining the mistakes. Furthermore, in order to achieve the accuracy of the data, inter-rater reliability will be used in analyzing the students' IG archives. According to Hyland (2003), "Inter-rater reliability can be promoted by having two or more raters evaluate the same writing sample and then compare their marks and criteria". By having this trustworthiness method, it is expected that the similarity degree of the score given by the reader-raters will be more accurate.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the data analysis, it was found that the majority of the participants were able to produce correct forms of S-V agreement in their IG stories. 80% clauses were written correctly while 20% of the data indicated wrong agreement, inappropriate tense, omission, and addition of the clauses. The specific numbers of the data results are shown below.

Table 1. The data of S-V agreement in the students' IG stories

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Correct	163	80%
Misinformation	16	8%
Inappropriate Tense	14	7%
Omission	9	4%
Addition	2	1%
Total	204	100%

There were 163 data of S-V agreement produced correctly by the students. The data were in forms of clauses which (at least) have subject and verb in order to show agreement to one another. Referring to Turkenik (1998) and Azar (1999), the students used *to be* and *have* for present and past tenses correctly. *Is, am, are, have,* and *has* for simple present tense while *was, were,* and *had* for simple past tense. The examples were “Because Sunday is a free day”, “it was a disgusting thing”, “You have charisma and leader vibes”, etc. The addition of *-s/-es* for the third person singular was greatly indicated in the clauses like “but it looks like you can’t smell my presence”, “even kid knows little”, “this means every time you sleep, Allah takes your souls”, etc. Other complex or compound tense such as present perfect tense was also highly used. For instance, “we have already read”, and “we have made”. *Have* here was used as the first auxiliary expressing finite verb in the clauses. The correct production of S-V agreement proved that the students are aware of the agreement. In a narrower sense, they are actually emerging their identity of a good prospective English teacher through their linguistic competence on Instagram. This is discussed in Zacharias (2010) that one of NNES teachers in her study questioned her identity as an experienced English teacher due to her language competence. This shows how important language or linguistic aspects in constructing prospective NNES, particularly sophomore students who happen to be seeking their preliminary identity.

In a more detailed sense of S-V agreement rules, expressions of quantity were also written in the IG stories. Indefinite pronouns were used in clauses like “no one sees what I see in you”, “no one feels the same”, and “no one sees myself as you do”. Another quantity form was used in “one of the good movies that I’ve ever watched”. Unfortunately, there were no demonstrative determiners, like *there is/was* or *there are/were*, etc., used correctly as well as irregularities in writing in the students’ IG stories. In fact, simple past tense was also rarely used. The absence of the previous aspects implies that the majority of the students did not like to use complicated and rarely-used language features and functions in their IG stories to express themselves. This often happens in any SNS, including Instagram. People

tend to use effective and efficient language to communicate themselves due to word limitations set by the platform. It is said that “Instagram enhances online presence and identity, and allows more effective interaction” (Abbott et al., 2013 as cited in Ting, et al., 2015).

Apart from the correct production of S-V agreement, 20% of the data were reported as other mistakes of the agreement, namely misinformation, inappropriate tense, omission, and addition.

Misinformation

Besides interesting findings above, misinformation was reported as one common mistake made by the participants in writing IG stories. According to Ellis (2003), misinformation is the use of wrong forms of certain morphemes or structures. Referring to the definition, 16 (8%) IG sentences could be categorized as misinformation. Some of them were “I’m not [*do not*] exist in this world.”, “I’m [*supposed*] suppose to eat it when sahur actually but I slept through the night”, “How can the girl [*who record*] recording the fancam still alive after being that close to him?”, “Don’t [*screw*] screwed up all my plans or anything this month, please!”, “Me and my close friend’s (not really) annual agenda in exchange [*exchanging*] book”. Based on the data display above, it could be seen that the participants made the mistakes in the use of structures or in the other words they were failed to make the correct clauses because of the use of wrong verbs. Referring to the first example, it is clear that the participant uses the wrong verb. The correct sentence should be written as “I don’t exist in this world”. Another example is “How can the girl [*who record*] recording the fancam is still alive after being that close to him?”. The sentence is in interrogative form which means that it should be followed by the simple form of the verb “record”. Basically, this kind of mistake was often found in EFL context and of the factors was because students’ lack of grammar which made students confuse and difficult to produce the correct structure of sentences. (Saad & Sawalmeh, 2014)

Inappropriate Tense

The use of tenses was reported pretty high in students’ IG stories. They mostly could not differentiate the context(s) to use present or past tense in the clauses or sentences they wrote. For example, “thankyou gap year I learn[*ed*] a lot”, “today, we have [*had*] a mission to make bookmarks”, “lately I have [*had*] this question on my mind”, etc. Although some tenses other than present tense do not clearly show the addition of *-s/-es*, tenses are important to express time significance. This is relevant to make students’ writings in the IG stories show a coherent timeline. This seems very simple, but it shows students’ basic knowledge of English grammar. For that reason, a 7% occurrence of inappropriate tense use in students’ IG stories affirms that the students can produce the sentences prescriptively correct, but the meaning is not clear and appropriate regarding the ignorance of the context of present and past time. Prospective English teachers should be aware of this trend of contextual grammar as they will forward it to their students. As a matter of fact, National Education Association asserts that today’s language learning concerns more on actuating students’ critical-thinking and creative-thinking skills to solve

problems in this era of disruptive education. This inevitably applies to grammar as well since determining context in a text requires the ability to correlate the linguistic knowledge and the events encountered in real life.

Subject Omission

There were two types of omission found in this study. First, subject omission or known as null subject was found in several IG stories made by participants. There were 6 out of 204 (3 %) absence of subjects in sentences. The subject drop in the sentences could be seen in some captions made by the participants in sentences “[I] Miss spending my time being b2uty and currently I listening to their old song” and “Thanks bebe, love you always and more”. By looking at the sentences, it could be seen that the participants dropped the subject “I” which could be considered as the violation of basic rules of a subject-verb agreement which at least should have subject and verb in one clause.

According to Nordquist (2019), this type of subject drop could be categorized as truncated null subject. He pointed that truncated null subject usually could be found in diary style of written English and informal style of spoken English. In line with that, Thrasher (2017) added that the subject drop normally happens in conversational spoken so-called conversational deletion. Related to those researchers, it could be said that the reason why the participants dropped the subject in writing caption in IG was because they might think it was a normal situation since IG is an entertaining platform. Moreover, as already mentioned previously, another reason why they dropped the subject is that there is a limitation in writing the caption in IG stories.

Verb Omission

The second omission is verb omission. There were 3 (1%) verb omissions made by the participants. The verb omission made by the participants could be seen in following captions such as “When you bored and don’t know what to do” and “I listening to their old song”. Based on the cases above, the participants tried to omit the necessary item in those sentences. At this rate, the participant omitted the verb “are” and “am” in their captions. In fact, the correct form should be written as “When you [are] bored and don’t know what to do” and “I [am] listening to their old song”. Otherwise, verbs play an important part in English grammar. Without a verb, it will lead to confusion. These flaws were often found in EFL context which notably English is not learned as first language and most of their writing was influenced by their first language. According to Na (2012) who stated that EFL learners sometimes produce omission words to make the sentences in spoken, and the omission words occur in the use of verb which is influenced from their first language.

Addition

An interesting finding was identified as opposed to omission which also exists in S-V agreement mistakes. Two data showed an excessive or redundant subject in few clauses in the students’ IG stories. This case is precisely termed as double subjects or addition. Ellis (2003) emphasized that it is not necessary to use an item

which is not needed in a well-structured text. The result of the current study, then, recognized two additional errors in terms of subject use: “I finally I could meet my friends (books) again” and “beliefs it can be the way you act”. The examples show a mistake that accidentally made by the student which often occurs in writing a status in IG stories as an entertaining platform. This might be caused by the automaticity of Instagram, especially IG Stories, which enables the users to post and access anything in a split second in which they become accustomed to typing status or caption very quickly but ignores the accuracy of the writing. No wonder, then, omission and addition interfere in well-structured clauses the students produce.

Conclusion

Despite all the mistakes shown by the students in their IG Stories, they still proved that they are potentially competent to be English teachers in the future. This is seen from their profile of 80% correct S-V agreement production in their clauses written. However, the misinformation, inappropriate tense, omission, and addition should also be considered as this will turn to be errors when the students are not aware and willing to work on them to be better. The mistakes indicated in this study seem a very simple ignorance of language use, yet it can be fossilized which gives impact to the students’ proficiency as prospective English teachers.

This research can be an insight for English teachers and practitioners to make use of IG Stories or other features of Instagram and even other SNS which is very familiar to students nowadays as the media to teach English skills, particularly writing skills. They can make them practice their language skills without realizing they are learning. In fact, they actually use their critical thinking skill to create language content on social media. That way, the learning will become more engaging and meaningful. In addition, since research focusing on IG Stories for English learning is still new, further research concerning how IG Stories can improve a specific skill or students’ traits are potential.

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