AN ANALYSIS OF ERRORS IN THE USE OF NOUN CLAUSES MADE BY SENIOR ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT VAN HIEN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to analyze errors in the use of noun clauses made by senior English major students at Van Hien University. Identifying and analyzing errors as well as finding out the causes of errors are crucial in foreign language learning. Learning from previous studies about errors analysis, this case study focuses on analyzing thirty academic essays in order to find out solutions to improve accuracy in language competence for learners. The results explains that errors concludes 35 omission errors (51%), 15 misformation errors (22%), 13 addition errors (19%), 6 misordering errors (8%). The error analysis contributes to raising awareness about the precise use of general English syntax and noun clauses in particular to improve learners' language ability.

***Key words:** error analysis, noun clauses, grammar, syntax.*

TÓM TẮT
Phân tích lỗi sai trong việc sử dụng mệnh đề danh từ của sinh viên năm cuối chuyên ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh ở trường Đại học Văn Hiến

Mục tiêu bài báo này là phân tích lỗi khi sử dụng mệnh đề danh từ trong tiếng Anh của sinh viên chuyên ngữ. Việc phát hiện và phân tích lỗi cũng như tìm hiểu nguyên nhân gây lỗi là một công việc hết sức cần thiết khi học ngoại ngữ. Cùng theo hướng phân tích lỗi, nghiên cứu trường hợp này phân tích 30 bài luận để tìm giải pháp cải thiện năng lực ngôn ngữ chính xác hơn cho người học. Kết quả cho thấy lỗi cơ bản bao gồm: lỗi thiếu sót 35 (51%), lỗi sai cấu trúc 15 (22%), lỗi sai dư thừa 13 (19%) và lỗi sai trật tự 6 (8%). Việc phân tích lỗi góp phần nâng cao nhận thức về việc sử dụng chính xác cú pháp tiếng Anh nói chung và mệnh đề danh từ nói riêng để cải thiện năng lực ngôn ngữ của người học.

***Từ khóa:** phân tích lỗi, mệnh đề danh từ, ngữ pháp, cú pháp.*

1. Introduction

According to Saragih's (2015) "Writing depends on a grammatical rule. One of the grammatical rules is a clause. The clauses divided into three parts, namely noun clause, adverb clause and adjective clause. The three of them are very important to learn, especially noun clause." It can be said that people often use noun clauses in sentences to make the

essays more coherent. However, understanding and using the correct usage of noun clauses is still out standing question for language learning generally or English language learners typically. That is the need to conduct *"An analysis of errors in the use of noun clauses made by senior English major students at Van Hien University"* to find out how noun clauses are used by senior English major students at Van Hien University.

2. Literature review
2.1. Previous studies

Baithy's (2014) revealed the result of the research showed that the most common type of error is omission; its frequency is 94 or 48%. The second is misformation; its frequency is 54 or 28%. The third is addition with 32 errors or 16%. Then, the lowest error frequency is misordering with 16 errors or 8%.

By qualitative and quantitative techniques Tirazu (2014) showed that all components of English languages have been affected by the errors especially addition of an auxiliary, omission of a verb, misformation in word class, and misordering of major constituents. This research pointed out two reasons that led to learners' errors: intralingual and interlingual.

Saragih's (2015) conducted a research on error analysis in constructing noun clauses with the fifth semester students of English Deparment at STAIN Zawiyah Cot Kala Langsa. The writer selected 5 students from each unit based on number unit in the fifth semester that is six unit to be the sample of this study. In analyzing the data, the writer used percentage system.

The data analysis show that the percentage calculation of students errors on constructing the sentences into noun clause items is 96% percent with the average students' errors is 32% percent. The everage students' errors in identifying the noun clause in multiple choice item is 39%. The average errors is 71% that obtained from sum of students errors in constructing the sentences into noun clauses and identifying noun clauses in multiple choice items. The types of errors made by fifth semester are (a) the errors of omission, (b) errors of addition, (c) errors of ordering, (d) errors of selection, (e) errors of false concepts hypothezised. And the causes of the errors is due to intralingual interference".

2.2. Definitions

"Noun clause is subordinate clause which functions the same way as a noun does". (Suhadi, 2012). For example, "That John is the best in the class is not true". The form of noun clause are (a). Beginning with interrogative words (who, whom, whose, what, which, why, where, and when). For example, "What the teacher has explained to us is not that clear" (b). Beginning with *That*. For example, "That he is a liar seems quite obvious". (c). With *That* deletion. For example, "I know you are fine." (Saragih, 2015).

"Error identification: Ellis's (1997) claims that comparing the sentences learners produce with what the normal or 'correct' sentences in the target language, which correspond with them enable us to identify errors. This process involves "…a comparison between what the learner has

produced and what a native speaker counterpart would produce in the same context" (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005). Errors are those sentences which are ill-formed grammatically or well-formed grammatically but inappropriate for a particular context. This is to say that superficial wellformedness only does not make a sentence error-free; it also needs to be appropriate in the communication context. After identifying the erroneous utterance, it will be possible to compare the reconstr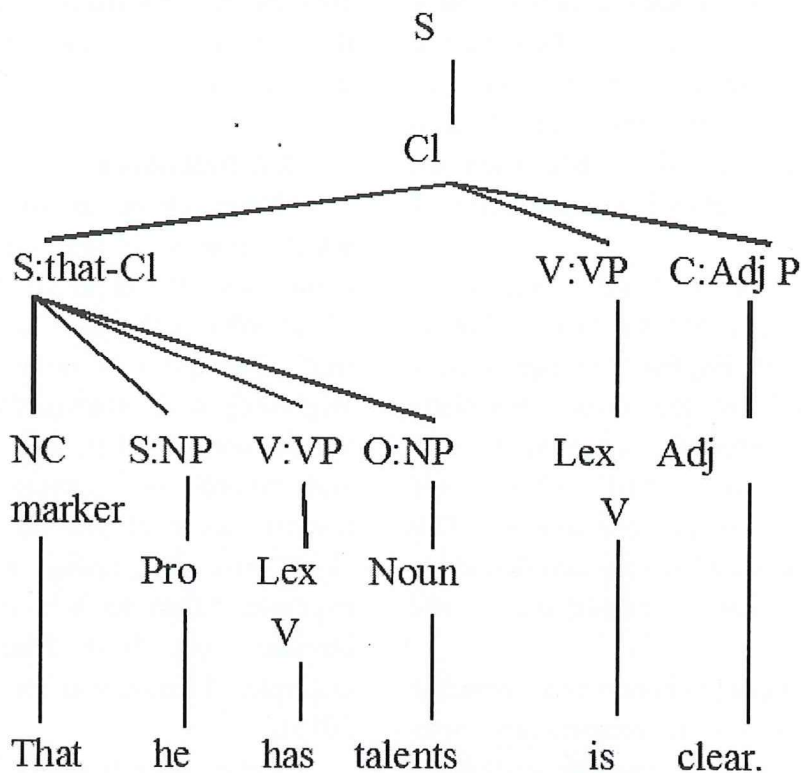uction with the original erroneous utterance and then we can describe the differences in terms of the grammar of the target language." (Tizazu, 2014).
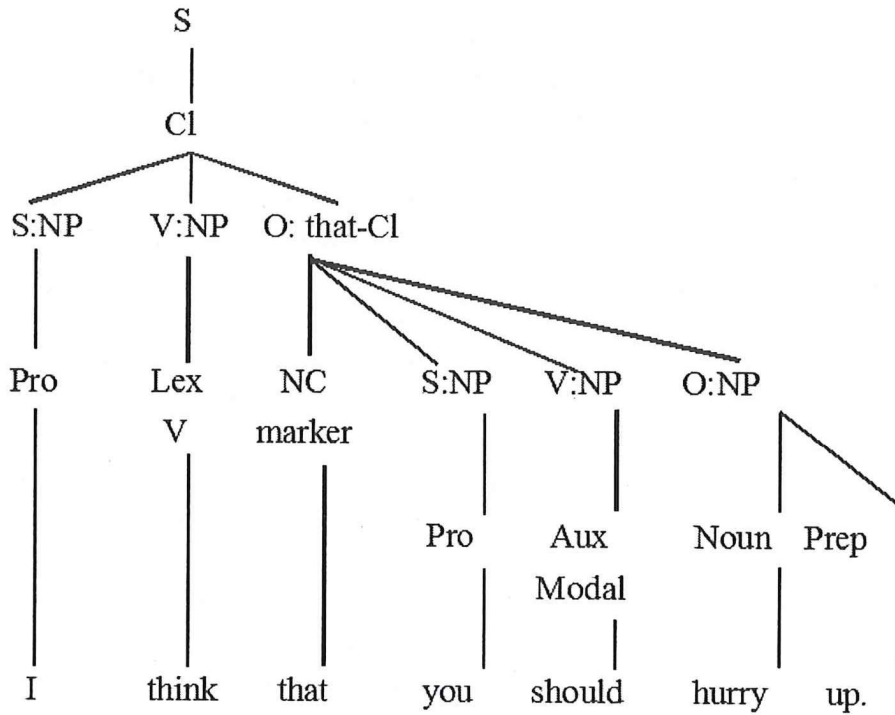
2.3. Functions and forms

2.3.1. Subordinator "That" in noun clauses (Baithy, 2014)

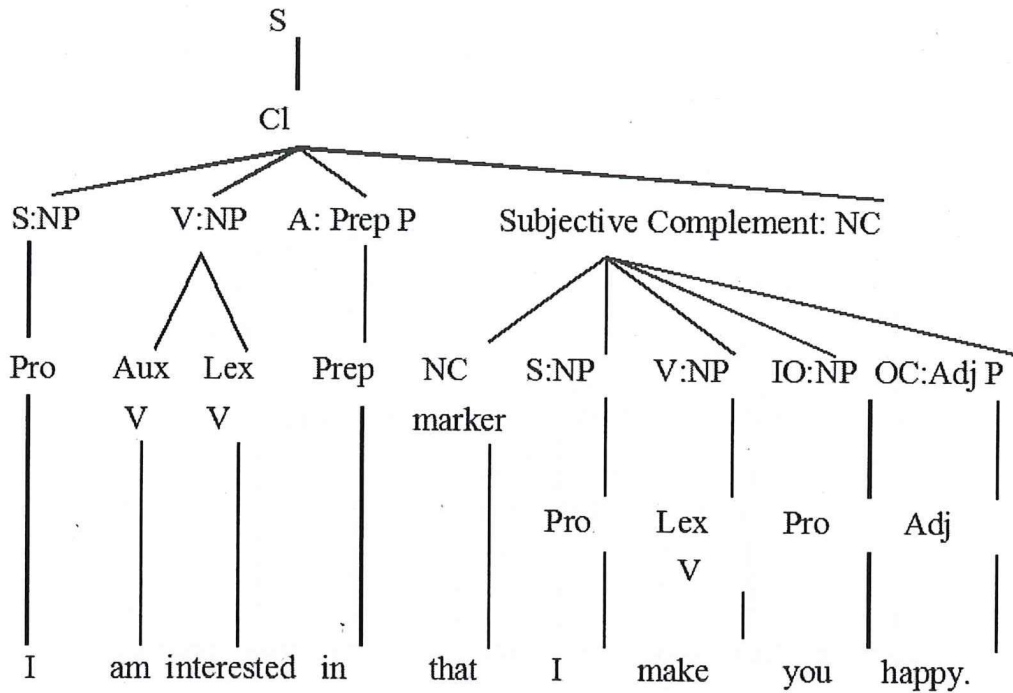"That" followed by a complete clause can the functions as subject, object and complement as in (Jackson, 1982).

That clause as a Subject (Jackson, 1982)

That clause as a Object (Jackson, 1982)

```
                    S
                    |
                    Cl
         _____|_____
        |           |           |
      S:NP         V:NP      O: that-Cl
        |           |         /|\ \ \
        |           |        / | \  \  \
       Pro         Lex      NC  S:NP V:NP O:NP
        |           V     marker  |    |   /|
        |           |       |    Pro  Aux Noun Prep
        |           |       |     |   Modal |   |
        |           |       |     |    |    |   |
        I         think    that  you should hurry up.
```

That clause as a Complement (Jackson, 1982)

```
                    S
                    |
                    Cl
       _____|_____
      |       |        |                      |
    S:NP     V:NP    A: Prep P    Subjective Complement: NC
      |      / \       |          /   | \   \    \
     Pro   Aux Lex    Prep       NC  S:NP V:NP IO:NP OC:Adj P
      |     V   V      |       marker  |    |    |     |
      |     |   |      |         |    Pro  Lex  Pro   Adj
      |     |   |      |         |     |    V    |     |
      I    am interested in     that   I   make you  happy.
```

2.3.2.   Subordinator   "Question Words" in noun clauses (Baithy, 2014)

A dependent clause (wh-clauses) is a subordinate clause that's introduced by question words: who, where, what, why, when, which, how.

Wh-clauses have functions as subjects, objects, complements (Azar, 2009) as in *What I am doing* is good for you .
    Subject
He would like to know *where she is going*.
                                         Object
The problem was *why you did not come*.
                        Subjective complement

Although this type of noun clause begins with a question word, but it does not mean that is an interrogative sentence (Azar, 2009) as in the two sentences
Question: What did he do ?
    Noun clause: *I don't know what he did* .
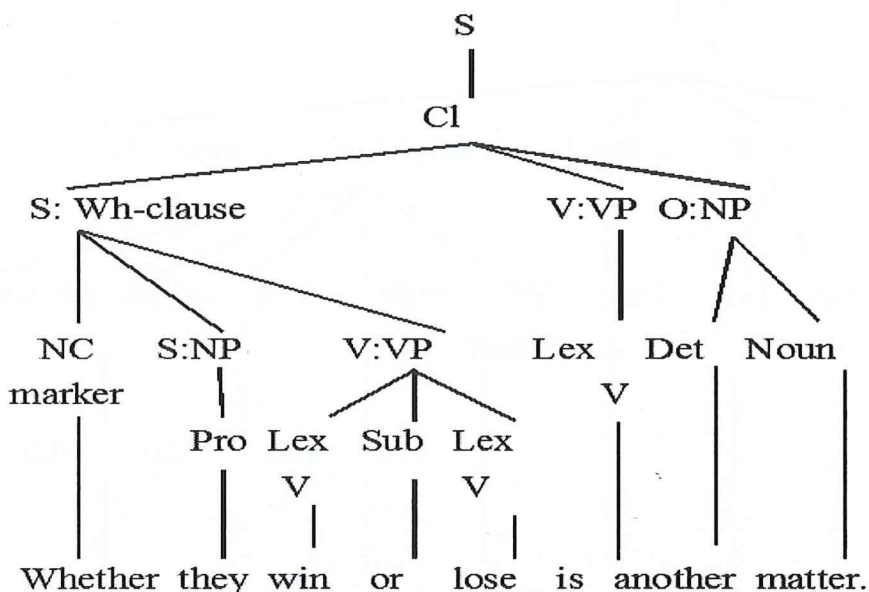   Question : Who is your closefriend ?

Noun clause: *I wonder who your closefriend is.*

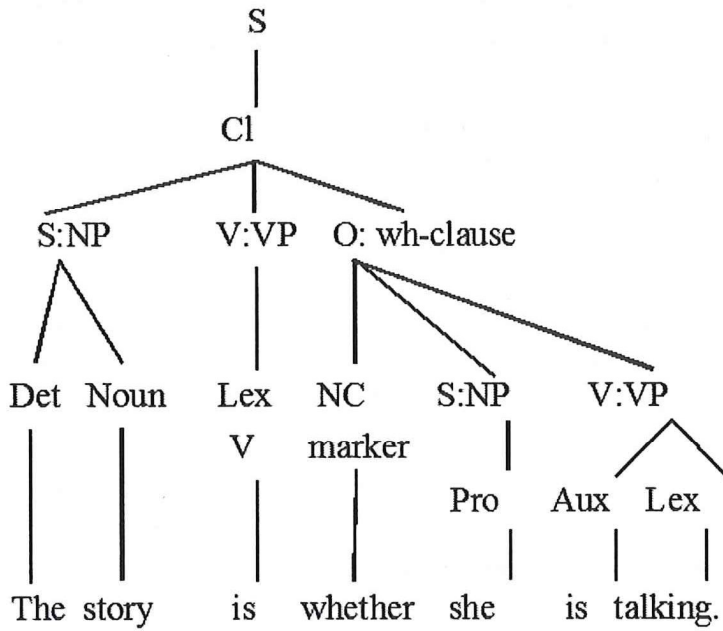*2.3.3. Subordinator "If or whether" in noun clauses (Baithy, 2014)*

The if/whether clause is a dependent noun clause that starts with an "if" or a "whether" conjunction. Although they are formed from the right and wrong question form, they are not questions that should be disposed of in the narrative form. In short, the if/whether clause is used to translate the yes / no question into a noun clause. Both words are used in spoken language but whether are more commonly used in essay writing (Le M. A., 2011)

In the sentence, "or not" follows if/whether the clarity of the noun clause is clarified. The clause if/whether in the clause can be a Subject, a Subjective Complement or an Object of Verb as in.

If/whether clause as a Subject (Le, M.A. , 2011, p.92)

```
                         S
                         |
                        Cl
          _____|_____
        S: Wh-clause              V:VP  O:NP
       _____|_____           ____|____
      NC   S:NP  V:VP          Lex  Det  Noun
    marker    |   __|__         V
             Pro Lex  Sub Lex
                  V        V
      |       |   |    |   |    |    |      |
  Whether  they win  or  lose  is  another matter.
```

If/whether clause as a Subjective Complement (Le, M.A. , 2011, p.92)

```
                        S
                        |
                        Cl
          _____|_____
        S:NP          V:VP      O: wh-clause
        /  \           |         /    |    \
      Det  Noun       Lex      NC    S:NP   V:VP
       |    |          V     marker   |     / \
       |    |          |       |     Pro  Aux  Lex
       |    |          |       |      |    |    |
      The story       is    whether  she   is  talking.
```

If/whether clause as an Objective of Verb (Le, M.A. , 2011, p.92)

```
                        S
                        |
                        Cl
          _____|_____
        S:NP      V:VP              O: wh-clause
         |        / \          _____|_____
        Pro     Lex  Inf     NC    S:NP   V:VP    O:NP
         |       V    |    marker   |     / \      |
         |       |    |      |    Noun  Aux  Lex  Pro
         |       |    |      |      |    V    V    |
         I     want  to    know  if  An  can help me .
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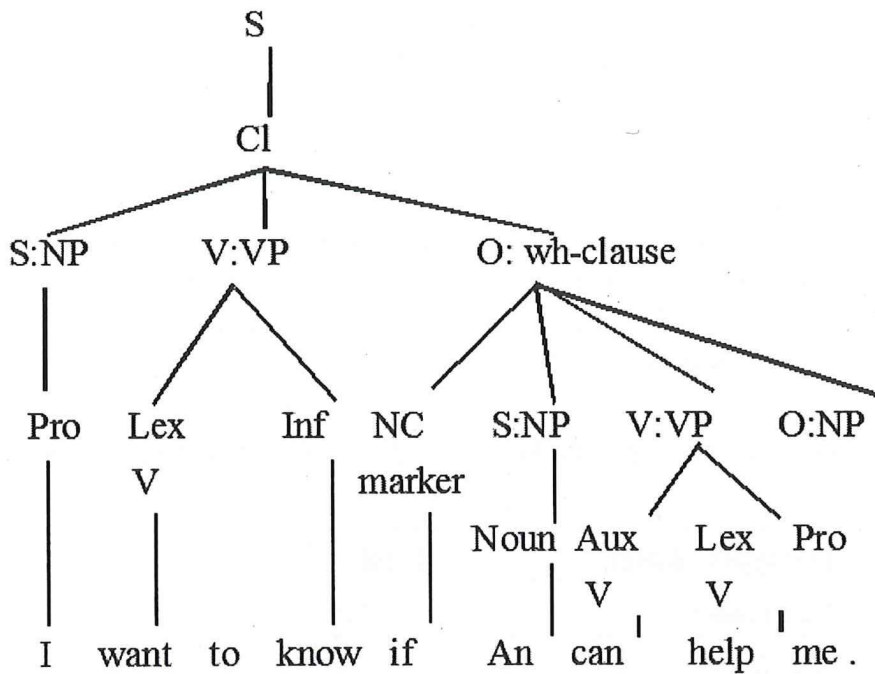
3. Research methodology

To analyze errors in the use of noun clauses, we collected thirty essays from senior English major students who attended the Academic Writing class on Monday afternoon at Au Co campus. We chose these students' essays to analyze because they had learned Grammar level 1, 2, 3 and Syntax. For us examining their essays is the most feasible way to make an analysis of errors in their use of noun clauses in English. It took us 3 weeks in April 2017 to collect data and analyze data.

Firstly, we borrowed senior students' essays and made copies. Secondly, we work together to identify errors the types of noun clauses that they made in their essays. Thirdly, we counted the number of errors and classified them into types of noun clauses. Finally we made a statistics to have an overview of the most and the less types of errors in the collected data.

Based on the collection of approximately 162 sentences with the use of noun clauses in 30 essays, we count the errors using the following formula:

(Bluman, 2004)

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100 \ \%$$

Explanation:

P: Percentage (%)

F: Frequency of each error made

N: Number of error

4. Findings and Discussion

We found out three types of noun clauses included that-clause, wh-clause and if/whether clause. In particular, that-clause is most commonly used with 129 sentences/30 essays, wh-clause with 31 sentences/30 essays and if/whether clause is also written in sentences less than 2 words/30 essays (*Table 4*).

Table 4.1 The total number of use of that-clause, wh-clause and if/ whether clause

The types of uses	Total
That-clause	129
Wh-clause	31
If/whether clause	2

The writers began to count the number of correct sentences and the number of wrong sentences In total 30 essays, the student's used noun clauses consist of 162 sentences, of which 93 noun clauses are correct (accounting for 57.4%), 69 wrong clauses (accounting for 42.6%) (*Table 4.2*).

Table 4.2 The total number of students who used that clause, wh clause and if/whether clause correctly and incorrectly

Total Sentences	162
Correctly	93
Incorrectly	69

Finally, after finding the 69 wrong sentences (accounted for 42.6%) out of 30 articles, The writers found that there were 4 basic errors that the students had to include Omission errors with 35 sentences (accounted for 51%), Misformation errors with 15 sentences (accounted for 22%), Addition errors with 13 sentences (accounted for 19%) and Misordering errors with 6 sentences (accounted for 8%) (*Table 4.3*).

Table 4.3 The recapitulation of the students "The classification of errors"

The types of errors	Total
Omission errors	51%
Misformation errors	22%
Addition errors	19%
Misordering errors	8%

The 51% in omission errors that most of the editors have made this error. Here the errors are that the students often miss the subject when writing a complete sentence a noun clause.

The 22% in misformation errors that many students misuse the sentence while writing the sentence. It can be said that this is quite a basic, the cause may be due to wrong or careless.

The 19% in addition errors that the students often bring the text into the article should cause the problems repeating the words, leading to the sentence lengthy sentence and picking up.

The 8% in misordering errors shows that it is very few students make these errors but it is also of concern. Since writing the sentence, the writers were required to write the words order so that the reader can understand it better.

5. Conclusions

Error analysis has many implications for language teaching and learning. According to Nur Baithy (2014), errors are the evidence of adapting regulations of target language learning process and errors' analysis is necessary to realize student's language competence.

The findings from this study are in line with those from previous related studies in terms of types of error namely omissions, misformation, addition and misordering errors. Accordingly, low-level students make more errors than those at a high level of proficiency in productive skills. Of all types of errors, omission makes up the highest percentage, which may be caused by interlanguage interference as Vietnamese language has the structure that is considered "run-on" sentences in English.

The findings has made great contributions to successive studies in the same interest, which raises awareness among Van Hien's seniors in language learning especially those who still confuse when using noun clauses in their writing. In addition, it is important the teacher should be aware of the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese to draw learners' attention to interlanguage errors, which are considered inevitable by linguists. Finally, curriculum and syllabus designers and language policy makers need to be aware of this type of errors so that appropriate adjustments should be made to facilitate teaching and learning.

However, because of the limited scope of the survey, the survey only benefits seniors English major students. From the shortcomings of the study, we recommend further studies on error analysis should be conducted on verb clauses, adjectives clauses, adverb clauses with larger population for the sake of learners, and teachers as well as curriculum developers.

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