A COMMON ERROR ANALYSIS IN STUDENTS' ENGLISH NARRATIVE WRITING

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore error analysis in students' academic writing. The study was conducted at the University of HKBP Nommensen Medan. The method used is a mixed-method. The research participants were 26 English department students in the third semester. Thus, the research data consist of 26 narrative stories. The results showed that around 252 errors were found in all categories. The most dominant error category is omission 92 (36.51%) then is respectively followed by addition 64 (25.40%), misinformation 56 (22.22%), and disordering 40 (15.87%). The most dominant factor as the cause of the error is first language interference, and then translation and carelessness. In conclusion, all types of errors (omission, addition, misinformation, and disordering) were identified in the students' narrative writing.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Factor of Errors, Narrative Writing, University Students

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the language skills that are very important for students at university to master. Dulay et al., (1982) said that writing skills are essential for students to succeed in education and work after completing university. The same thing was said by Nair & Hui (2018) that writing is a helpful skill for young learners to be successful in their academics. They also emphasize that writing skills are beneficial for students in school and job seekers because written exams are often carried out in the job selection process.

Writing is a complicated language skill faced by language learners (Dulay et al., 1982) and is also a difficulty that every student around the globe always faces. Writing requires extensive knowledge and an in-depth thought process to produce the correct words, phrases, and sentences to form paragraphs and text. Harmer (2003) emphasizes that writing is difficult because the writing process includes planning, organizing, and revising the text to produce higher-quality

writing. Errors are vital to providing an overview of students' abilities for teachers to correct them (Amiri & Puteh, 2017). Furthermore, Dulay et al., (1982) said that errors help indicate inappropriate parts of the curriculum. In addition, they noted that errors could be corrected if learners and teachers can identify mistakes.

Second language competence, such as knowledge of language structures, is also essential to ensure no writing errors (Nodoushan & Ali, 2018). The lack of understanding of the rules or norms of L2 in grammar and diction may lead to errors in writing. Therefore, the issues of error in writing skills are essential and still urgent to be discussed, especially in the context of university-level to find out how the students make errors in their writings and factors of the causes.

Some linguistic scholars have studied the issues of errors in writing to shed light on the ways errors occur in writing and find the reasons for their happenings. Some studies about errors in academic writing were carried out around the globe. Karim et al., (2018) explored errors in EFL writing classrooms in Bangladesh. They revealed that the most common mistakes by elementary students were related to grammar, misinformation, disordering, and over-generalization. Nair & Hui (2018) studied the errors in ESL descriptive writing in Chinese private schools in Malaysia. They found that students made most errors in the areas of grammar and sentence structures.

Songsukrujiroad et al., (2018) investigated the errors in the Chinese writing of the essay. This study also indicated several mistakes made by students in Chinese grammar. Xie (2019) also examined the students' linguistic accuracy in writing in Hong Kong. He found out that the Chinese students in this city made errors in academic writing due to the lack of knowledge of structure. Amiri & Puteh (2017) studied the errors in academic writing made by students in Malaysia. They found that the students mostly made errors using sentence structures, articles, punctuation, and capitalization. These studies confirmed that students in other countries encounter errors in academic writing at schools or universities.

In the Indonesian setting, several researchers also paid attention to the issues of errors in academic writing. Fauzan et al., (2020) and Gayo & Widodo (2018) studied errors in the literary text made by students of two different EFL junior high schools. They revealed that the students' academic writing errors in junior high school occurred in several aspects of grammar due to the interlingua transfer and lack of knowledge factors. Fitria (2018) explored the writing errors in using simple future tense by university students in Surakarta. She uncovered that most students made errors in sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling. Likewise, Perlin et al., (2020) studied the errors in using simple present tense in paragraph writing made by university students in Ogan Komering Ilir. They revealed that students made all types of errors in using simple present tense in their papers. The issues of errors in academic writing were likewise performed by

other researchers (Pardosi et al., 2019; Sitorus & Sipayung, 2018; Kumala et al., 2018). They also confirmed that EFL students still made massive errors in their academic writing at different levels of education.

Based on the previous studies above, it can be concluded that both research settings: errors in writing in middle/high school and university mostly focused on certain parts of L2 grammars and rarely explored the factors of the mistakes made by students in middle/high school or university. Thus, this study intends to explore more about the errors in narrative writing made by university students and revealed the factors of making the errors.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Error

Error belongs to productive skill issues, conversation, and composition (Dulay et al., 1982). Harmer (2003) claimed that errors are areas of students' inter-language. That is the type of language in which a learner develops his or her productive L2 skill, which is persistently reformed as he or she aims to master L2 fully. Dulay et al., (1982) defined errors as "flawed sides of learners' speech or writing. They belong to conversation or composition that deviate from some selected mature of language performance."

Richards & Schmidt (2010) then explains that errors caused by fatigue and carelessness are categorized as "performance" factors, while errors caused by lack of knowledge of rules of language are categorized as "competence" factors that new language learners frequently experience. Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that errors are parts of the process of language learning that language learners constantly do. Then the term "error" is often confused with the word "mistake" by language learners." Richards & Schmidt (2010) define that "mistake" is caused by reasons of ignorance, fatigue, and lack of attention. Meanwhile, "errors" are caused by a lack of knowledge of some L2 rules.

The Causes of Error

There are three leading causes of errors: carelessness, first language interference, and translation (Al-husban, 2018). Carelessness is caused by inaccuracy in pronouncing or writing the second language according to the language rules. This error is caused by a lack of motivation in learning a second language. The teacher's role is vital in teaching language to students with exciting teaching methods and materials.

Errors are caused by first language interference; errors caused by the influence of the mother tongue of the first language are affected by the time of acquisition of the second language, whether the acquisition of a second language is made at an early age or in adulthood. As second language acquisition is carried

out in the majority, the first language significantly affects the mastery of the second language, such as pronunciation, grammar, diction, and other linguistic components. In other words, the older the student's learning age is to acquire a second language, the more difficult his ability to master the language is. This difficulty will result in errors (errors) when pronouncing or writing sentences in the second language due to the influence of the sentence structure and pronunciation of the first language.

Eventually, an error is caused by the translation. This error is the most common error caused by learners as they translate word by word from L1 to L2 or vice versa. This kind of error occurs when the learners are asked to communicate something, but they do not know how to express it in L2, both in language structure and in the right choice of words (Al-husban, 2018).

Error Analysis

Harmer (2003) stated that error analysis determines the occurrence, nature, causes, and sequences of failed language. He emphasized that error analysis is a description and systematic explanation of language use errors committed by learners or users in their oral or written production of the target language (L2), which is different from the norms or rules of the L2. There are many theories about errors in writing and speech, but this study used the approach of errors put forward by Dulay et al., (1982).

Dulay et al., (1982) classified errors into four categories: omission, addition, double marking, and disordering. The omission is a type of error where learners tend to omit function words rather than content words, such as "be". Then, the addition is a type of error where there are additions, prefixes or suffixes, in a comment that should not be done, for instance, "taked" for "took". Furthermore, the misinformation is a type of error where learners are unaware of certain linguistic changes in some structures, for instance, "He didn't went to school yesterday." Finally, disordering is a type of error where the word order in a sentence does not match which is caused by the word-for-word translation, for instance, "girl beautiful".

RESEARCH METHOD

This research design uses mixed-method: quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative method was applied to allow the codification and interpretation of the narrative texts of students' writing tasks. On the other hand, the quantitative approach was employed to serve the statistical analysis of the data to provide an insight into the different numbers and percentages of the types of errors in the narrative writings.

A total of 26 students of the third semester of the English Department, University of HKBP Nommensen Medan, took a narrative writing class in the year 2020 participated in this research. They were assigned a task to write their own unforgettable stories in 200-250 words. The time allotment was 60 minutes for each student to write the story. The students were not allowed to use a dictionary or Google Translate when doing their writings. After writing completion, their stories were sent to the researcher through WhatsApp.

After data collection, the data were analyzed in quantitative and qualitative methods. In quantitative, the number and percentage of error types were counted and presented in a table. In the qualitative approach, the data were analyzed based on the classification of error types and described how they were categorized. The direct interview was applied to find out the causing factors of the errors. The process of gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data in the form of text was applied to explain a phenomenon.

FINDING

A total of 252 errors were found from 26 students' narrative writing texts. These errors were categorized into four types, namely omission, addition, misinformation, and disordering. Furthermore, the 252 errors were specifically identified in terms of grammatical features. Finally, the factors of error making were presented. The following table shows the errors in all categories, the number, and the percentage of frequencies.

Table 1. Categories and Frequency of Errors

No	Error Categories	Number of Errors	Percentage
1	Omission	92	36.51
2	Addition	64	25.40
3	Misinformation	56	22.22
4	Disordering	40	15.87
	Total	252	100

Table 1 shows the error categories of students' narrative writing. The most dominant type of error is omission 92 (36.51%) and then respectively followed by addition 64 (25.40%), misinformation 56 (22.22%), and disordering 40 (15.87%).

Table 2. Factors of Error Making

No	Factors of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage
1	Carelessness	10	38.46
2	First Language Interference	26	100
3	Translation	15	57.70

Table 2 shows the cause factors of errors. After having a direct interview with the 26 students asking the reasons for making the errors, these findings indicate that all the students stated that their first language interference influenced them, and then 15 of the students answered due to translation matter, and around 10 of the students claimed due to carelessness.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that all error categories were found in the students' narrative writing texts. According to Dulay et al., (1982), types of error consist of omission, addition, misinformation, and disordering. In this study, all types of errors were found in the students' narrative writing. Then the errors are discussed to show the details and compared to the results of previous research. The factors of errors are also identified and discussed.

Omission

The omission is the type of error where the language learners omit the function words rather than the content words. This type of error was found in 92 occurrences. This type is the most dominant. This finding is in line with the studies carried out by Al-husban (2018) and Gayo & Widodo (2018). They confirmed that omission is the most dominant type of error in their studies. The following are some extracts of omission type.
Extract 1:
"My father in the rice field with my mother"
Extract 1 shows the sentence in error since the verb "be" as the linking verb-subject "my father" and "in the rice field" is omitted. To make the sentence correct to be "was" should be added.

Extract 2:
"I born in small family"
Extract 2 also shows the same error as extract 1. This sentence is incorrect since the verb "was", and article "a" that precedes "small family" are omitted.

Addition

The addition is the type of error that the language learners tend to add words, prefixes, or suffixes to the sentence structure. This type of error was found in 64 occurrences. This type of errors is also confirmed by (Karim et al., 2018). The errors may occur as the results of addition to one part of the sentence structure. The following are some extracts of the addition type.
Extract 3:
"I was go to school with my friends."

Extract 3 shows the incorrect sentence due to adding the verb to be "was" to the ruling. This sentence can be corrected by omitting to be "was" and change the verb "go" to "went".

Extract 4:

"Andy and his brother plays food ball."

Extract 4 shows the incorrect sentence due to the suffix "s" to the verb "play". Omitting the suffix "s" makes the sentence correct.

Misinformation

Misinformation is the type of error that uses the wrong form of structure. This type of error was found in 54 occurrences. This finding is also agreed with the previous research carried out by Perlin et al., (2020). The mistakes in this type were due to a lack of knowledge in grammar, especially in verbs and tenses. The following are some extracts of the addition type.

Extract 5:

"He not studying when I meet him."

This sentence is incorrect since the inappropriate form of the negative auxiliary "not" and the verb "meet" should be changed into past form "met" as the tense in simple past. The sentence can be corrected by changing the negative form into "was not" and the verb "meet" into "met".

Extract 6:

"Were they work in the rice field?"

Extract 6 also shows the type of misinformation error. The auxiliary "were" is inappropriate to construct the interrogative sentence. The auxiliary verb "did" would be best to replace the extra "were". Or, the verb "work" can be changed into the present participle form "working" for a good sentence.

Disordering

Disordering is the error type that the language learners make the wrong order of words in sentence structure. This type of error was found in 40 occurrences. Nodoushan & Ali (2018) affirmed that disordering is the main problem for EFL learners in academic writing. The influence of word-by-word translation in L1 makes this type of errors. The followings are some extracts of addition type.

Extract 7:

"Watching television we are together in the living room."

The sentence in extract 7 is incorrect since the sentence is in disorder. The sentence can be corrected by rearranging the words into the correct order. The sentence order should be "We are watching television in the living room".

Extract 8:

"The relationship complicated make me sad."

Extract 8 shows that the sentence "the relationship complicated to make me sad" is incorrect for the answering and omission errors. The sentence can be corrected by changing the word order "relationship complicated" into "complicated relationship" and the verb "make" should be added "s" since the subject is in a singular form.

The research findings show the similarities with the previous research (Fauzan et al., 2020; Gayo & Widodo, 2018; Al-husban, 2018; Fitria, 2018; Amiri & Puteh, 2017) that confirm the errors in writing by students that can occur in all types of categories and in varied linguistic features. However, the most dominant type of error is "omission".

The study results also confirm the factors of error making, as Al-husban (2018) explained. Most of the students agreed that their first language had influenced the way they write in L2. The second reason is due to the literal translation method they applied in writing. Finally, the students also emphasized their carelessness in writing. However, the latter explanation is presumably caused by the lack of knowledge of L2 rules of grammar since being careless in writing is considered as an "error" rather than a "mistake" in academic writing (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

CONCLUSION

All types of errors such as omission, addition, misinformation, and disordering) were identified in the students' narrative writing. The study results also confirm that errors in writing may occur in all levels of education, especially for learners who make attempts to be fluent in L2 writing mastery. Some factors were assumed to be the causes of the errors.

Some students claimed that they made errors due to their unawareness of L2 rules of sentence structures. Some tend to be interfered with by their first language rules of sentence structures, and some due to the literal translation by using their first language concept of sentence structures and dictions. In other words, the students may struggle to express their ideas in English writing since the rules are unfamiliar to them.

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