Analysis of Errors in English Narrative Writing of STIE Port Numbay Students

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ABSTRACT

Background: Committing errors in second language acquisition, especially in writing, is natural, but the errors should not be ignored and need to be treated properly.

Purpose: The purposes of this descriptive research are to identify the types of errors occurred in the narrative writing of first-year students at STIE Port Numbay in Jayapura, explain the causes of the errors and the strategies applied to correct them and to prevent them from happening in the future.

Design and methods: This research is a descriptive qualitative one that uses the content analysis method. The data were taken from 20 narrative writings about daily activities made by 20 students of STIE Port Numbay in Jayapura who major in Development Economics and took the English 1 course in the Odd Semester of the 2020/2021 Academic Year.

Results: The findings revealed that there are 9 types of error occured i.e. omission, addition, misselection, misordering, blending, misformations, misspellings, sentence errors and semantic errors in lexis. The errors are caused by interference of the first language or interlingual, inadequate mastery of the target language rules or intralingual and limited vocabulary. The strategies that can be applied for the error correction are direct feedback and exposing the target language use by its native speakers so that the learners can compare it with their own L2 use and learn to use the language correctly. To prevent the same errors, the instructor can improve the learners' mastery of the target language rules by using creative and varied teaching methods and materials as well as encouraging the learners to develop the habit of reading English texts in order to improve their vocabulary and to obtain input about the use of English in writing.

Keywords: Error analysis, interlingual, intralingual

Introduction

Learning a foreign language like English that is not cognate with Indonesian can sometimes be a problem for Indonesian learners who are accustomed to their mother tongue. They may use the knowledge of the first language when producing the target language because they find it hard to comprehend the TL rules and this may result in negative transfer. In addition, the complexity of target language rules can also lead to errors if the learners have not fully absorbed the rules in question. The errors made are actually natural because the process of acquiring a second language does not happen in just one or two days. There are processes or stages that learners must go through before finally producing the target language that are both semantically and grammatically correct. Therefore, errors can be considered the sign of learning progress (Phuket & Othman, 2015). Even though, errors are natural, they should not be ignored and need to be treated properly, particularly errors in writing. This is because

accuracy is important in the world outside of the English class and lack of precision may affect the comprehensibility of the message or ideas being delivered and may mark the users of the language as being inadequate (Ferris, 2011). To determine a proper treatment for errors, instructors should first perform an error analysis.

Error analysis focuses on the errors that learners make. Language errors contain some important information to understand the second language acquisition process (Brown, 2014). By analyzing the errors, instructors could obtain information about the strategies that learners use to produce the target language and the difficulties that they encounter (Atmaca, 2016). The analysis could also shed light on the sources of the errors. Errors are not only useful for second language instructors and language researchers, but also for the learners themselves. Through these errors, learners may learn whether the language they produce is in accordance with the TL rules or not. Based on the feedback from their instructor, learners will learn to use the language correctly.

After obtaining the result of the error analysis, language instructors can apply specific strategies to help learners absorb the target language rules appropriately. One of the strategies is to correct the errors systematically or provide appropriate feedback. The purpose of correcting learners' errors is to avoid fossilization, that is a process in which incorrect linguistic forms become permanent in the learners' mind so they use the forms repeatedly (Brown, 2014).

Analyzing errors has to be done thoroughly so that the cause can be understood and explained. The errors could be the result of the learners' first language interference. So the first language affects the second language acquisition process. The errors can also result from faulty or partial learning of the target language (Richards & Schmidt in Tipprachaban, 2023). The first source of errors is called interlingual errors and the second one is called intralingual errors (James, 2013). In addition to these two errors, James added communication strategy-based errors and induced errors. Induced errors result from the situation in the classroom that include learning materials (materials-induced errors), instructor explanations (teacher-talk induced errors), and exercise-based induced errors. In line with James, Brown (2014) mentioned that the sources of error can also be the context of learning which relates to the instructor, learning materials or focus on form, and communication strategies which relate to the learner's learning style.

Some researches regarding errors analysis of narrative writings have been conducted by Zuhro (2014), Hamsia (2018), Qomariana et al. (2019) and Yuniza et al. (2020). These four researches only identified the types and the causes of errors but did not discuss the strategies that can be applied by the target language instructors to deal with the problem. This research on the other hand, not only identifies errors and their causes but also explains the strategies applied in dealing with them.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to identify the types of errors that occurred in the English narrative writings of STIE Port Numbay students, explain the causes of these errors and the strategies applied to correct them and anticipate the reoccurrence of the same errors in the future. This research can be considered as feedback for the English course instructors at STIE Port Numbay so they may take into account errors made by the learners and then take action in dealing with the errors by designing more effective and efficient instructional strategies.

Methods

This research is a descriptive qualitative one that uses the content analysis method. The data were taken from 20 narrative writings about daily activities made by 20 students of STIE Port Numbay in Jayapura who major in Development Economics and took the English 1

course in the Odd Semester of the 2020/2021 Academic Year. The data of this research are sentences that contain errors in the students' writings. These data were recorded in a table which consists of four columns. Sentences with errors are recorded in the first column, types of errors are put in the second column, the third column is for causes of errors and the last column is for explanation of the errors.

After the data collection, to determine whether a deviant form in the data is an error or a mistake, the researcher asked the learners to correct the form. If they cannot correct it themselves then it is an error, and if they can then it is a mistake (James in Brown, 2014). The procedure of error analysis is based on the one proposed by Ellis (in Rajab et al., 2016), namely, (1) collecting samples from language learners, (2) identifying the errors, (3) describing the errors, (4) explaining the errors and (5) evaluating the errors.

Findings & Discussion
Findings
Based on the result of the data analysis in the narrative writings of STIE Port Numbay students, the following findings were obtained.

Types of Errors
Errors that occurred in the learners' writings include omission, addition, misselection, misordering, blending, misformations, misspellings, sentence errors, and semantic errors in lexis. The percentage of each error is presented in *Figure 1*.
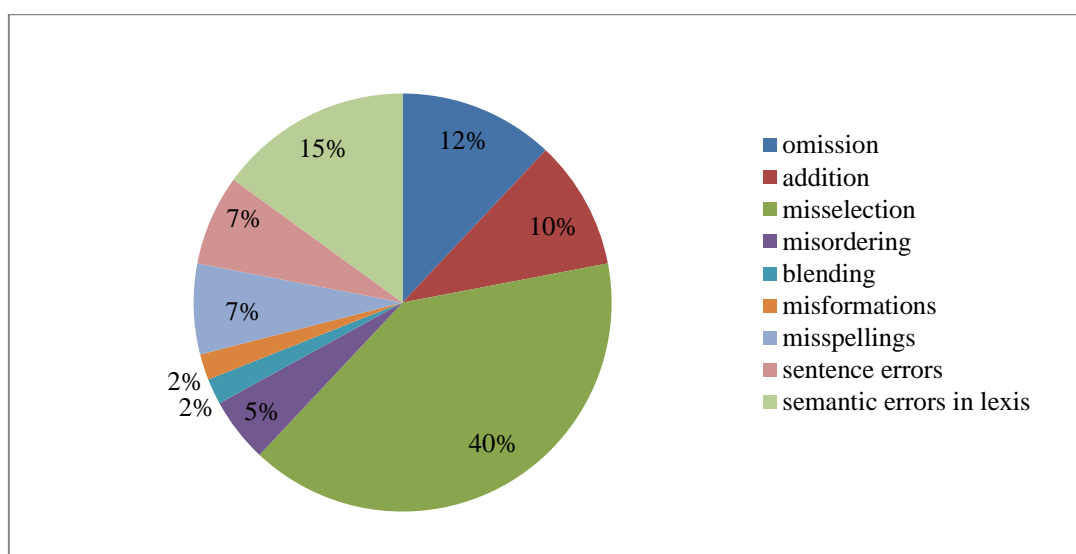

Figure 1. Types of errors in students' writing

It can be seen from the chart above that the most common error is misselection (40%). The other types of errors, although occurring less frequently, were still a problem for the learners. Therefore, it should not be assumed that the learners have less difficulty concerning those errors than misselection errors. These nine types of errors can be described as follows:

Omission
   a. Omission of particle 'to' between two verbs
      Example: I go there if I want eat chicken noodles (R3/04/Om)
   b. Omission of the definite article 'the' in front of the noun 'market'
      Example: I go to market to buy vegetables and fish (R14/08/Om)

Omission occurs when a required element is omitted. It could be a particle, a verb, an article, a pronoun or other parts of speech. Omission differs from ellipsis. Unlike ellipsis, omission is ungrammatical (James, 2013). There are two kinds of omission found, i.e. the omission of a particle and the definite article 'the'. In the first example, a 'to + infinitive' form should be used after the verb 'want'. Therefore, the particle 'to' should be added between the verbs 'want' and 'eat'. In the second example, the article 'the' is usually added in front of the noun 'market' to indicate a particular market where the learner usually goes in order to fulfill his/her everyday requirements. The source of these errors is intralingual transfer because the learner hasn't gained enough knowledge about the rules of using 'to + infinitive' form and the use of definite article 'the'.

Addition
a. Addition of the verb 'to be' in simple present tense sentences that use another verb
   Example: We <u>are</u> study in the library (R10/01/Ad)
b. Addition of particle 'to'
   Example: I sometimes go <u>to</u> home at 2 o'clock in the afternoon (R9/06/Ad)

Addition occurs when an unnecessary or incorrect element is added. The examples above are in the category of simple addition, which is any addition that cannot be described as either double marking or regularization (James, 2013). In the first example, it is clearly seen that the learner added 'are' in the sentence which already has the verb 'study'. In simple present tense, the verb 'to be' cannot be used together with another verb. In the second example, the learner added the particle 'to' before the word 'home' which is unnecessary. Murphy (2019) stated that the correct form should be 'go home' without 'to'. These addition errors result from intralingual transfer because the learner hasn't obtained enough knowledge about the rules of simple present tense and particular word combinations.

Misselection
a. Using singular nouns in place of plural nouns
   Example: Every Saturday, I wash my <u>shoe</u>. (R20/03/MSe)
b. Using inappropriate prepositions
   Example: I sometimes play badminton <u>at</u> Saturday (R7/19/MSe)
c. Using inappropriate forms of pronouns and prepositions
   Example: Then <u>me</u> and my friend Sella go to church <u>for</u> practice singing (R2/15/MSe)
d. Using 'to + infinitive' verbs in place of present verbs
   Example: I believe God always <u>to protect</u> me (R5/22/MSe)
e. Using present participle verbs in place of present verbs
   Example: I <u>playing</u> football with my friends (R11/17/MSe)
f. Subject-verb agreement
   Example: <u>My English class start</u> at 11.00 o'clock (R4/27/MSe)
g. Using adjectives in place of adverbs and adding an unnecessary word 'with'
   Example: I pray to God so I can go home with <u>safe</u> (R8/30/MSe)
h. Using indefinite articles in place of definite articles
   Example: <u>A</u> first class is from 8.00 until 9.30 in the morning (R1/35/MSe)

Misselection occurs when learners use the wrong form of a structure or morpheme (James, 2013). In the first example, the learner described his/her habit every Saturday. Since this is a repeated activity, it should be assumed that he/she washes his/her pair of shoes instead of only one shoe. In the second example, the preposition 'on' should be used with the name of days. Preposition 'on', 'in', 'at' can be a problem for Indonesian EFL learners because those prepositions are often used as the equivalent for the word '*pada*'. In the third example, the pronoun 'I' should be used as the subject instead of 'me' and the particle 'to' should replace the preposition 'for'. This particle is needed to form the structure of infinitive of purpose. Therefore, 'to practice singing' is the purpose the learner and his/her friend Sella go to church. In the examples afterwards, the 'to + infinitive' form should be changed into the present verb 'protects' to fit the subject 'God' as a singular noun and the verb 'playing' should be changed into 'play'. In the sixth example, the learner should use the present verb 'starts' to fit the subject 'my first class' which is a singular noun. In the seventh example, the word 'with' should be omitted and the adjective 'safe' should be changed into the adverb 'safely'. In the last example, the definite article 'the' should be used instead of indefinite article 'a' because the subject 'first class' refers to the class that the learner attends. The aforementioned errors result from intralingual transfer because the learners have insufficient knowledge about the rules in question.

Misordering

> Using improper word order of noun-modifier in the formation of a noun
> phrase based on L1 rules
> Example: I also work as an <u>employee cafe</u> (R17/05/MOr)

Misordering occurs when learners fail to arrange the TL forms in the right order (James, 2013). It often results from 'word-for-word translations of learners' native language surface structures'. The example above shows the use of incorrect order of elements in the noun phrase. In English, the modifier (cafe) has to come before the noun it modifies (employee) but in Indonesian, it is the other way around. In this case, it is obvious that the learner applies the Indonesian rules and therefore the source of the error is interlingual transfer.

Blending

> Blending semantically related elements that function as time adverbs
> Example: I usually get up at 6 <u>a.m</u> <u>in the morning</u> (R2/02/Bl)

Blending or blends arises when the learner combines two alternative grammatical forms which are semantically related to produce an ungrammatical blend (James, 2013). The source of the error is intralingual transfer because the learner does not know that 'a.m'. and 'in the morning' contain the same meaning. So the sentence above is a combination of 'I usually get up at 6 a.m.' and 'I usually get up at 6 in the morning.'

Misformations

> Using a word that does not exist in the L2 by borrowing the L1 word
> Example: I go to *warnet* near my house (R14/01/MFo)

Misformations are errors that produce 'words' that do not exist in the target language. These words can either derive from the mother tongue or be made by the learner from the resources of the target language itself (James, 2013). In the example above, it can be seen

that the learner used the Indonesian word '*warnet*'. The learner borrowed the L1 word because he/she does not know that word in English. He/she should first know that '*warnet'* stands for '*warung internet*' in order to find its English equivalent easily. This error is caused by the limited vocabulary that the learner has.

Misspellings

Mischoice
Example: Then I go to <u>colegge</u> by bus (R16/04/MSp)

Mispellings are errors that break certain conventions for representing phonemes by means of graphemes (James, 2013). Mischoice is one of the four subtypes of intralingual misencodings. Misencodings is one of the two categories of misspellings. Mischoice occurs when the learner uses a word that contains one or more letters different from the letter(s) in the intended word. In the example above the learner used two 'g' instead of two 'l'. Misspellings could occur because generally in English, the writing of a word is different from its pronunciation. Spelling and pronunciation are two aspects of English that are quite difficult for Indonesian learners so this can be a problem in learning. The source of the error is intralingual transfer because the learner doesn't know how to spell the word correctly.

Sentence Errors

a. Using the incorrect form of first conditional sentences
   Example: If the instructor not come we study alone (R6/02/SnE)
b. Coordination
   Example: I <u>pray</u> to God and then <u>cleaning</u> my bedroom (R9/05/SnE)

Sentence errors involve the selection and combination of clauses into larger units (James, 2013). In the first example, the learner failed to combine the correct form of clauses to make an accurate conditional sentence. The example shows the incorrect use of the first conditional sentence in which the 'if clause' should be in simple present tense while the main clause in simple future tense. For future learning, before the learners are exposed to the rules of conditional sentences, the instructor has to make sure that they master the rules of tenses used in conditional sentences first. In the second example, which is called a coordination error, the two clauses shouldn't be joined in a sentence because they are not syntactic equals. The first clause contains the verb 'pray' which is a present verb while the second clause contains the verb 'cleaning' which is a present participle verb. The source of the errors is intralingual transfer because the learner hasn't mastered the rules of conditional sentences and of combining clauses which are syntactic equals.

Semantic Errors in Lexis

a. Word choice
   Example: We <u>make</u> our tasks in the classroom. (R15/01/SmE)
b. Using inappropriate verb tenses for simple present tense sentences
   Example: I <u>am drinking</u> tea every morning (R11/08/SmE)
c. Collocation errors
   Example: I <u>pray for God</u> before I sleep (R12/012/SmE)

The semantic errors in lexis are errors concerning the meaning relations existing between words (James, 2013). The errors occur when learners choose a word from a set of near-synonyms that is not suitable with the context, use a superonym in place of a hyponym and

vice versa, or use a word that is less suitable of two co-hyponyms. The errors could also result from the use of a particular word or words that do not typically precede or follow another word. In the first example, the verb 'do' could be used instead of 'make' because people commonly 'do tasks' rather than 'make tasks'. In the second example, there is an adverb 'every morning' which implies that the activity takes place frequently. Therefore, using a present continuous form is not suitable in this context. In the third example, people normally say 'pray to God' and 'pray for something'. These three kinds of semantic errors in lexis are what Ferris (2011) called 'untreatable' because the learner has to rely on his/her own judgement instead of following certain rules. He/she should know the context of the sentence before choosing the right word to use and be aware of the other word(s) around the word being chosen. Therefore, these errors result from intralingual transfer.

The classification of the aforementioned errors was adopted by James (2013). Omission, addition, misselection, misordering were suggested by Dulay, Burt & Krashen (in James, 2013). They classified these errors under the surface structure taxonomy. James then added his own category, namely blending, to this taxonomy. Misspellings is part of substance errors. Misformations and semantic errors in lexis are parts of lexical errors while sentence errors is part of grammar errors. Some of the errors are common in second language acquisition process. Errors such as omission, addition, misselection, and semantic errors in lexis are often found in the learners' writing tasks. Lexical errors are classified in terms of the sorts of knowledge of words that learners have. There are seven things to know about a word, i.e. its morphology which includes the word's spelling and pronunciation, its syntactic behaviour, its functional restrictions, its semantic value(s), its secondary meaning, what other words it is associated with, and how likely the word is to be used (Richards in James, 2013). The instructor should be aware of whether the errors made relate to the use of correct form or correct meaning in order to find the most effective way to deal with each of them.

Based on the above description, it can be seen that the learners have not fully mastered the rules of the target language, especially those relate to the use of particles, verbs, prepositions, articles, nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Errors also occurred because the learners have not mastered the spelling of certain words, the use of simple present tense, English collocations, the rules of constructing conditional sentences and have insufficient knowledge of certain words meaning and their synonyms. The learners still apply the first language rules as well when forming a noun phrase.

Causes of Language Errors and Strategies Applied
From the analysis, it can be concluded that the errors are result from interlingual and intralingual transfers. Errors caused by first language interference are seen in the use of improper word order where the order of noun-modifier is used in the formation of a noun phrase. Other types of error, namely omission of a required element, addition of an unnecessary or incorrect element, selection of an inappropriate element, the combination of semantically related elements to produce an ungrammatical blend, the use of words that do not exist in L2, spelling errors, sentence errors and semantic errors in lexis are results from inadequate mastery of the target language rules. Another cause is the learners' limited vocabulary.

The appropriate strategy to correct these errors is direct feedback. There are three reasons for direct error correction (Ferris, 2011). Two of them relate to the condition of the learners in question, namely because they are still in the early stages of learning to write in English and the second is because the errors are 'untreatable'. Such errors cannot be corrected by the learners themselves because there is no rule that they can use as a guide to correct the errors, for example, errors in word choice and word form. After getting the direct feedback, the

learners need to rewrite the correct sentences so that they become more aware of proper use of the target language.

Another strategy that can be applied is to expose the learners to the use of the target language produced by its native speakers and the one that is produced by the learners themselves (Vickers & Ene in Ali, 2011). When applying this strategy, the instructor can encourage the learners to study autonomously by noticing their own L2 use in comparison to the L2 use by the native speakers. Comparing the two samples of language use doesn't only benefit the learners but also the instructor as he/she can confirm with the learners whether the form that they use really represents what they actually intend to say.

To prevent similar errors from happening in the future, the instructor needs to emphasize the difference between pronouns, nouns, verbs, prepositions, adjectives and adverbs so that the learners can use them correctly in a sentence. In addition, the instructor needs to emphasize the difference between definite and indefinite articles, the correct use of verb tenses and to teach the learners to make coherent and cohesive sentences. The learners also need to be reminded that the way something is expressed in English is different from when it is expressed in Indonesian. For example, in Indonesian, the learners can say '*Saya kuliah dari pukul 11.00 sampai pukul 13.00*". This sentence cannot be translated into "I lecture from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m". The verb '*kuliah*' which means '*mengikuti pelajaran di perguruan tinggi'* (*Kuliah*, 2016) or 'to take lessons in a higher education institution' cannot be translated into 'to lecture' in English. In such a case, the learners should be able to distinguish that 'lecture' as a verb cannot be used in the context of the sentence above. The verb 'to lecture' is used with a subject that 'does the activity of teaching in a university or college' (*Lecture*, 2022), for instance in the sentence 'The professor lectured three classes today'. It is also used with a subject that 'tells or criticize someone' as in the sentence 'Her father lectured her about the importance of wearing a helmet when riding a motorcycle'. The word 'lecture' can still be used in the above context if it is considered as a noun and thus a verb needs to be added, like the verb 'to have'. Therefore, the sentence becomes 'I have a lecture from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.'

Some of the strategies that are intended to prevent the reoccurrence of the same deviant forms could be realized through the use of creative and varied teaching methods and materials to maximize the learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, there are several things that can be concluded. Firstly, in producing the English sentences, the learners are still influenced by their mother tongue since the sentences tend to follow the L1 sentence structure. Nevertheless, not all the L2 sentences made based on the L1 sentence structure contain errors. Secondly, there are nine types of error that occurred in the learners' writings. Some of the errors are common such as omission, addition, misselection, and semantic errors in lexis. Thirdly, the various forms of errors indicate that the learners have insufficient mastery of English rules. To correct the errors, the instructor may apply direct feedback and expose the target language use by its native speakers so that the learners can compare it with their own L2 use and learn to use the language correctly. To prevent the same errors, the instructor may design more creative teaching materials and methods so that the learning process can produce the result as expected. Fourthly, the learners need to be encouraged to have the habit of reading English texts so that they can improve their vocabulary and get input on real examples of English usage in writing.

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