TYPES OF ENGLISH WRITING ERRORS OF AN INDONESIAN EFL STUDENT

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Abstract: This study aims to look for the types of errors in writing made by a 6th grader of a bilingual school in Indonesia. The student was implicitly asked to write stories during his first semester of academic year 2017/2018. Then the writings were collected and analyzed by the nature and distribution of writing errors and it also investigates factors that cause errors in their writing in English. The findings showed that the subject made grammatical and mechanic errors the most, and also intralingual errors were made more than interlingual errors. The researcher found out that he has a wide knowledge of vocabulary as well as good proficiency, not only in writing, yet also other skills. The possible explanation derived from interview with his parents. Then it was found out that the subject has been using the target language since he was in second grade of elementary, so the first language influence less the target language.

Keywords: writing, error analysis, second language acquisition, efl student

Introduction

Writing is a complex process for a person to create, even for the first language (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012, Perez, et al., 2003). In accordance, it is also a complex process for second and foreign language. Then, many researchers had tried to find out the basic errors made by EFL learners in writing. That was done in aims of better understanding of the students' errors and to help them learn better. Corder (1974) in his persuasive statement, notes that "they are significant in three different ways. First, to the teacher, in that they show how far towards the goal the learner has progressed. Second, they provide to the researcher evidence of how a language is acquired, what strategies the learner is employing in his learning of a language. Thirdly, they are indisputable to the learner himself because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn". Those are the reason why teachers need to understand and do the right step towards the students' errors. The study toward error analysis will be described in the following section.

Error Analysis is one of the major topics in the field of second language acquisition research. Errors are an integral part of language learning. The learner of English as a second language is unaware of the existence of the particular system or rule in English language. The learner's errors have long been interested for second and foreign language researchers. The basic task of error analysis is to describe how learning occurs by examining the learner's output and this includes his/her correct and incorrect utterances (Khansir, 2012). Richard (1974) distinguished three sources of errors:

1. Interference errors: errors resulting from the use of elements from one language while speaking/writing another, 2. Intralingual errors: errors reflecting general characteristics of the rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply, and 3. Developmental errors: errors occurring when learners attempt to build up hypothesis about the target language on the basis of limited experiences.

Then, intralingual errors are also subdivided to the following categories:

1. Overgeneralization errors: the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of other structures in the target language (e.g. "She can studies" where English allows "She can study" and "She studies").

2. Ignorance of rule restrictions: the learner applies rules to context where they are not applicable (e.g. He made me to go rest" through extension of the pattern "He asked/wanted me to go").

3. Incomplete application of rules: the learner fails to use a fully developed structure (e.g. "You like to dance?" in place of "Do you like to dance?")

4. False hypothesis: the learners do not fully understand a distinction in the target language (e.g. the use of "was" as a marker of past tense in "One day it was happened").

Jiang (1995) analyzed Taiwanese EFL learners' errors in English prepositions and found that a great number of errors derived from language transfer. The researcher stated that compared to English speakers, Mandarin speakers use fewer prepositions for more concepts, therefore increasing difficulties in learning English prepositions. In addition, Kim (1989) cited in Lee (2001) conducted Error Analysis with two-hundred 10th grade Korean EFL learners using their English translation of Korean sentences. She identified 1122 errors in which transfer errors resulting from L1 structure were higher (24%) than overgeneralization errors (23%). Furthermore, she identified the 1122 detected errors in terms of six domains and subdivided them into 22 linguistic categories. Her findings revealed that errors in articles were most common (354) and that there were only 8 errors in word order and 2 in voice.

Then, Tavakoli, M., Ghadiri, M., Zabihi, R. (2014) had done a research toward the improvement of writing ability of foreign language learners through translation method and direct method. The research showed that translation method was not useful for the students, while direct method was not as direct as it was supposed to be. It was because the students were still thinking and drafting in Persian rather than directly using English. It suggests that foreign learners need practice in doing writing. Other researcher had done a research to investigate the relationship between students' L1 and EFL writing. Ying (1987) as cited in Heydari & Bagheri (2012) examined 120 Taiwanese EFL students' compositions and sorted errors on the basis of three criteria of overgeneralization, simplification, and language transfer. A total of 1250 errors were detected in the 120 compositions, among which 78.9% of the errors were a result of language transfer, 13.6% of the errors were overgeneralization of the target language, and 7.5% were forms of simplification.

Specifically, Wu & Garza (2014) seeks to explore five 6th grade EFL learners' major writing problems by analyzing the nature and distribution of their writing errors and it also investigates factors that cause errors in their writing in English through email communication. The study examined EFL learners' writing samples and followed taxonomy: grammatical, lexical, semantic, mechanics, and word order types of errors. Findings showed that participants made more mistakes on interlingual/transfer errors than on intralingual/developmental errors. Students used their L2 habits, rules, and patterns in the second language writing. However, students also had intralingual errors due to the overgeneralizations and partial exposure to the target language. In addition, students also included internet linguistic features in their writing. Learners also had difficulty in distinguishing vocabulary and the diction used in writing (Silva, 1992).

The previous research above dealt with error analysis in writing. Many problems faced by the foreign learners to employ writing, since writing is a complex process that is needed to do the planning, (Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2002), idea or content generation (Beare & Bourdages, 2007; Knutson, 2006), linguistic problem solving (Beare, 2000; Centeno-Cortes & Jimenez Jimenez, 2004; Lay, 1982) stylistic choices (Knutson, 2006), and preventing cognitive overload (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Knutson, 2006). However, the researcher wanted to find out what errors are frequently found in Indonesian-English EFL students, and to see what factors cause the errors in EFL writing samples since the students showed a wide knowledge of vocabulary and good proficiency in English. The method, result and the implication of the research will be discussed as follows.

Method

The research was held in one of private schools in Bandar Lampung, Lampung, Indonesia. This research wanted to see how a 6th grader reacts into intralingual error in term of writing a narrative story. The subject was asked to write stories throughout his English class in the first semester of academic year 2017/2018. Since it is a private school and surprisingly a new school, the student in grade 6 is only one bright student. He is a student who has been familiar and using English since he was in playgroup (4 years old). Yet at home, he more often uses Bahasa Indonesia than English. So, based on that, the researcher wanted to see how intralingual errors happen in term of error in writing. Then, the researcher asked the subject implicitly to write stories. Fortunately, the subject agreed and even liked to do the story-writing. It made the research at ease. Then throughout the English class in the first semester, the subject had written fifteen texts (samples of the text in appendix). Then the researcher analyzed the text for the errors, then tried to draw a red line to how interference occurred in a 6th grader student of a private bilingual school in Lampung, Indonesia. After doing the analysis, the researcher thought that it was needed to dig further information toward the sample since he was showing a wide knowledge of vocabulary as well as good proficiency in English. So, interview was being done with his parents about him.

Result

The writings were then examined thoroughly. After examined the writings, the errors made by the student were counted and put into table with percentage of occurrence (Wu & Garza, 2014). The steps are presented in the table below:

Table 1
Steps to analyze errors

Steps		Definition	Examples
Step 1	Collect data	Written data	15 writing samples were collected
Step 2	Identify errors	Different types of errors	1. (prepositions, articles, singular/plural, adjectives, relative clause, verb tense, singular/plural, nouns, pronouns, tense, articles, preposition, verb formation, subject-verb agreement, and fragment) 2. Word choice 3. Meaning 4. Use of punctuations.
Step 3	Classify errors	It is an error of agreement? Is it an error in irregular verbs?	Grammatical type error Syntactic type error Lexical type error Semantic type error Mechanics type error
Step 4	Quantify errors	How many errors of total?	How many errors of each feature occur?
Step 5	Analyze source	Cause of these errors	Intralingual (developmental errors) Interlingual (interference errors)

The results of the study presented are based on the two research questions posed. The answers to the first questions focused on categories of grammatical errors, frequency of occurrence of each error, percentage of each error out of total errors. The answers to the first question include categories of grammatical errors found in the students' writing, their frequency of occurrence, and the percentage and rank order of each error type.

Then, the writings were treated as the way it should to form an easier view. The detail on the result are presented as follows.

Table II
Type of errors

Types of error	#	Error category	Frequency	Percentage	Rank order
Grammatical error	1	Verb tense	93	35.09%	1
	2	Sentence structure	2	0.75%	12
	3	Coordination	18	6.79%	4
	4	Relative clause	1	0.38%	17
	5	Singular/plural	2	0.75%	13
	6	Verb omission	3	1.13%	10
	7	Subject omission	0	0.00%	20
	8	S-V agreement	8	3.02%	6
	9	Fragment	1	0.38%	18
Lexical error	10	Noun	1	0.38%	19
	11	Pronoun	8	3.02%	7
	12	Verb	3	1.13%	11

	13	Adjective	0	0.00%	21
	14	Adverb	0	0.00%	22
	15	Article	6	2.26%	9
	16	Preposition	2	0.75%	14
	17	Word form	2	0.75%	15
	18	Interjections	2	0.75%	16
Semantic error	19	Word choice (Meaning)	14	5.28%	5
Mechanic error	20	Punctuation	46	17.36%	2
	21	Capitalization	46	17.36%	3
	22	Spelling	7	2.64%	8
Total			265	100%	

In the above analysis of the type of errors made by the sample, it can be seen that the most frequent errors made by the sample was grammatical errors on the verb tense used (35.09%). The second and third most frequent was mechanic errors on punctuation and capitalization (17.36%). The fourth most frequent error was coordination in grammatical (6.79); the fifth was word choices (5.28%). Other errors like the use of verbs, pronoun and subject or verb omission were found, yet the percentage was not as higher as the mentioned above. Beside putting the errors into percentage, the errors were also analyzed based on intralingual/development errors and interlingual/transfer errors (Wu & Garza, 2014).

Table III
Distribution of errors

Types of error	#	Error category	Frequency	Intralingual	Percentage	Interlingual	Percentage
Grammatical error	1	Verb tense	93	87	93.5%	6	6.45%
	2	Sentence structure	2	2	100%	0	0%
	3	Coordination	18	12	66.7%	6	33.3%
	4	Relative clause	1	1	100%	0	0%
	5	Singular/plural	2	1	50%	1	50%
	6	Verb omission	3	3	100%	0	0%
	7	Subject omission	0	0	0%	0	0%
	8	S-V agreement	8	6	75%	2	25%
	9	Fragment	1	1	100%	0	0%
Total			128	113	88.3%	15	11.7%
Lexical error	10	Noun	1	1	100%	0	0%
	11	Pronoun	8	5	62.5%	3	37.5%
	12	Verb	3	0	0%	3	100%
	13	Adjective	0	0	0%	0	0%
	14	Adverb	0	0	0%	0	0%
	15	Article	6	6	100%	0	0%
	16	Preposition	2	0	0%	2	100%
	17	Word form	2	2	100%	0	0%
	18	Interjections	2	2	100%	0	0%
Total			24	16	66.7%	8	33.3%
Semantic error	19	Word choice (Meaning)	14	5	35.7%	9	64.3%
Mechanic error	20	Punctuation	46	46	100%	0	0%

21	Capitalization	46	46	100%	0	0%
22	Spelling	7	7	100%	0	0%
Total		99	99	100%	0	0%
Total		265	233	87.9%	32	12.1%

Above is the distribution of errors based on interlingual and intralingual erros suggested by Richard (1974). By seeing the distribution, it can be seen that on grammatical errors, most of the errors are intralingual errors (88.3%). On the lexical errors, the interlingual errors are 33.3 % while the intralingual errors are 66.7%. In semantic errors, the data showed that the interlingual errors are 64.3% while intralingual errors are 35.7%. On mechanic aspect, the data showed that all errors are intralingual. Overall, the errors are mostly intralngual (87.9%). The implication of the result will be drawn in the next part of the article.

Discussion

People ought to say that data is witness. If there is no data, so there is no witness(es). In this article, the data was presented in form of percentage. In the first table, it can be seen that the subject found difficulties in grammatical area, mainly verb tense. That is in line with the finding of Wu & Garza (2014). The possible explanation is because of the influence of the first language. The subject is an Indonesian student. And in Indonesian language, there is no past verb form. Then in the writings, it often found that the subject used present verbs instead of past verbs to express past action.

The second and third most frequent errors are capitalization and punctuation. Even when English and Indonesian share the same mechanic rules, the subject still made errors. And that is why the errors were categorized into intralingual errors. It is not interlingual errors since English and Indonesian share the same mechanic rules, so there is no influence of the first language here. The fourth most frequent error is coordination. In this area, the subject seemed to forgot to put coordinate conjunction. Besides, it was also found out that the conjunction used in one of the writings was interlingual errors, since it did not meet the English rules. It was merely a translation from Indonesian to English (Tavakoli, M., Ghadiri, M., Zabihi, R. 2014). The fifth most frequent error is word choices. The chosen words were often interlingual errors. It was maybe the subject merely translate the word into English without paying attention to the rules in English. Takes for example, in one of the writing, the subject wrote "African human" in reference of "African people". That was because the first language interfered with the target language.

Besides, by looking at the attributes of the errors, it can be seen that the subject made intralingual errors more than interlingual errors. Then the researcher did an interview with the parents, yet the it was more like casual talking so that the parents could answer freely. The questions cover up when the sample started to communicate in English, the exposure of English for the sample, the way the sample communicate at home and school, as well as the history of

learning English for the sample. The answers were: he started to get exposure of English by watching Cartoon Network and did simple English talking with his mother. Then, he moved to a classical school in which the school demands English in daily conversation. Then the most was that he was often playing games. He plays games approximately 6 hours a day. The kind of games he play were online games in which he could talk to other players, and the other players were using English. Even the literature he used to read was written in English, and even published originally in English spoken country. So, the possible explanation for that is because the subject has been using English since he was in second grade of elementary (7 or 8 years old). It means that he is fluent in expressing his idea in English so that the first language influence less. That may be the possible answer of why the subject made intralingual errors than interlingual errors.

Conclusion

The study showed how a 6th grader student of a bilingual school in Indonesia made errors in his writing. The data showed that the subject made grammatical and mechanic errors the most, and also intralingual errors were made more than interlingual errors. The possible explanation is because the subject has been using the target language since he was 7 or 8 years old, so the first language influence less the target language.

Suggestion and Recommendations

This research still lacks of deeper analysis of the children's language acquisition. So, the possible future research is by looking at the process of how a foreign language learner can acquire such ability, and also to see whether this happens to other students with different traits or not. Moreover, research about the effect of online games in children's second language acquisition is also interesting to be observed. Hopefully, by having other researchers conducting the further investigation, we could fill in gaps in language learning altogether.

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