

AN ANALYSIS OF WRITERS' ERRORS IN PRODUCING DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS; INTERCULTURAL STUDIES

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: June 2022 Revised: June 2022 Published: July 2022	<i>In EFL context, errors analysis is done to illuminate the comprehension to improve learners' writing processes and products. In grammatical construction, language grammars or structures must reflect the flexibility and conventionality of language usage and language users' knowledge. This study aimed at identifying errors made by international learners at English studies programs in producing descriptive texts. This study was working in qualitative ways. 13 international learners who took master study of English studies are involved in this study. The sample was taken using purposive random sampling. The gender consisted of 7 females and 6 males. The level of English proficiencies is considered as the same level because the sample was bestowed Indonesian, Brazilian, Malaysian, and South Africa scholarship, in which the international English language testing system was achieved the passing grade. To gain the data, the researcher employed writing tests with asking the sample to describe their home town and families. The data are analyzed using qualitative works, i.e., data condensation, data display, and conclusion. Based on the data analysis, international learners still do some errors in producing descriptive texts. The errors covered omission, addition, selection or mis-formation, and mis-ordering. The errors are caused by misconception and misinterpretation of English. They try to transfer their language knowledge from their native language to their national language, then into target language (English). They have three transferring processes in mind. It is a strong possibility that makes them do some language errors in producing their writing products. Therefore, this study can be concluded that international learners who learn English in foreign countries still do such kinds of errors in producing their writing products.</i>
Keywords Writing skills; Error analysis; Intercultural competence;	

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INTRODUCTION

English as an international language has a set of rules. The realization of the rules is learnt through grammar (Ngata et al., 2005; Pajak & Pajak, 2022). English grammar for international learners has been taught from middle schools into higher education. The grammar covers a set of structural rules related to how words, phrases, and sentences are combined and arranged to address certain meanings (Li, Parnow, & Zhao, 2022). Sentences are built up to express ideas for communication and in written forms. Learners coming from inner cycles, referring to countries that using English as their first language, will feel easy to learn and use in practice the language grammar than those coming from outer cycles (English as a foreign language/EFL) (Kazemian et al., 2021; Haerazi & Kazemian, 2021). EFL learners are required to comprehend the set of English rules in order they can address their ideas. In fact, unsuccessful language usage is very often encountered by EFL learners.

The unsuccessful language reflects gaps in EFL learners' knowledge, and it causes they make errors. It is in line with McGrath and Lairdet (2022) who state errors happen in language learners because they doesn't know what is correct. Compared to errors, mistake is

on the opposite. It reflects occasional lapses in performance because they are unable to perform what they know (Asni, Susanti, & Sulistiyo, 2018). But some studies, errors and mistake cannot be recognized easily, and even the meaning of both is interchangeable. Mistake that learners have done in a performance can be said as error in performance (Grisot, 2021). If learners cannot recognize and correct the mistake that they have done, it is called "error in competence". Therefore, errors or mistake cannot be separated in language learning.

Due to an intrinsic nature, English as a scientific language has a series of implicit units that render it completely different from any other languages (Geluso, 2022; McGrath & Liardet, 2022). In practical context, learners as writers sometime are failed to generate writing products in line with the scientific language. According to Xu and Li (2021), scientific language possesses a series of traits which are operating within the scientific expression and thought. Academic writing is recognisable, in terms of wording as well as structures. Because of this, an experienced readers or learners are able to follow the written pathway constructed. In this respect, Choi et al. (2022) promote some lexical and grammatical units or features that have characteristics of scientific language. One of those that have relationship to this study is syntactical structures and omission of articles or preposition to get conciseness. The researcher has been interested in understanding the linguistic aspects of error production in international learners at English studies.

In the study of error analysis, grammar is very often assumed as an established agreement that should be formed regarding to meaningful sociocultural and cognitive behavior (Matsumoto, 2021; Sukasame, Kantho, & Narrot, 2014). In grammatical construction, language grammars or structures must reflect the flexibility and conventionality of language usage and language users' knowledge. It can be constructed through meaning and function with a language form. In real, language learners have very often been failed to construct the language units in line with readers' knowledge. According to Tagarelli et al. (2019), the concept of meaning or function with a form may not be represented in the same way. Therefore, the understanding of another language doesn't rely on identifying rules of structures that are similar to those of the learners' native language but on equivalence between the concepts of structures emerging from facts or cultures and then identifying the proper way of addressing those structures.

Error analysis helped teachers or educators in the comprehension of language errors not merely as a disregarded language phenomenon, but as important information which can be utilized in developing production in written contexts. It is in line with Bice and Kroll (2021); Rodriguez-fuentes and Swatek (2022), who declare that language errors depicted in writing can be used to illuminate the writing learning process and help language learners to comprehend the mechanisms that the non-native speaker applies and adopts (Lohman & Conwell, 2020; Lee et al., 2011; Choi et al., 2022). In top of that, by comprehending those kinds of errors, English teachers can design appropriate strategies to improve learners' writing processes and products in EFL contexts, and the issues of cognitive processes of language production could be counted when analyzing sets of grammatical errors.

The formulation of current research question was formulated as follows; what are the kinds of errors made by international learners in English study department at the University of Southern Denmark? The research questions followed in this study covered how errors of omission can occur, how errors of addition can happen, how errors of selection or misformation can be occurred, how errors of mis-ordering can happen. In addition, the researcher tried to elaborate on the sources of errors from learners. The source of those covered interlanguage errors and intralingual errors. The two were affected by the level of intercultural awareness of learners in learning EFL grammatical knowledge. It is then represented as the formation of conceptual errors in this study. The data found of this study can be used to

illuminate the international learners' writing processes in native speakers' knowledge and determine the learning mechanisms in English studies.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study is designed in a qualitative way to analyse the writers' errors in producing descriptive texts made by international learners coming from Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil, and South Africa. In the qualitative method, the researcher starts from observation activities to recognize and scrutinize symptoms, and then the researcher presents the data with narration forms instead of numbers. In doing so, the researcher seeks to describe an understanding of the learners' errors in producing descriptive texts. 13 international learners are involved in study, in which there are 7 females and 6 males. These participants are chosen purposively from a number of international learners taking different studies in the University of Southern Denmark, who attended the English studies of the master program. The participants are selected based on criteria of outer circles (countries using English as a foreign language). The present study reports on international writers (non-native English speakers or outer circles) about their writing errors in creating descriptive texts. The data of errors are focused on omission, addition, mis-formation, and mis-ordering. The errors are influenced by learners' intercultural competences.

Instruments

The writing tests and semi-structured interview were employed to gain the data from 9 international learners who took Master program of English studies. The writing tests are conducted by the official university in the time of the study program introduction. The results of the test are taken as the data to see the writing errors of the participants. The researcher as one of the official tutors has scrutinized the result of writing products with focusing on the omission, addition, mis-formation, and mis-ordering aspects. The simple descriptive texts are generated by research participants during the study program introduction. The instrument of the writing test is formed in a graphic organizer covering the generic structures of descriptive texts. The writing tests are followed by semi-structured interview to reveal a variety of reasons regarding the writing errors on producing descriptive texts. The interviewees comprised of seven females and six males from different countries regardless the levels and types of their first and second language. The semi-structured interview is done to find out the reasons why they made errors and mistakes, whether it has a relationship with their intercultural competences or does not.

Data Analysis

The data of this study consisted of writing errors producing descriptive texts followed by some reasons which are causing the errors happened. Therefore, the process of analyzing writing errors and reasons causing errors are elaborated inductively and interpretatively. It was applying the content analysis. It strives to keep the richness of textual interpretations by doing some steps of content analysis, including selecting the texts into units of analysis, abstracting the units, focusing the units into the criteria, display the final unit of analysis, and drawing conclusion as the final phase of analysis. Following such an analysis process, the research questions are carefully read and annotated to become familiar with the data during the data collection. It caused the researcher to select the kinds of data taken into units of drawing conclusion. The iterative process of the raw data was carried out because it indicated a plenty of initial codes which could be categorized into units. In addition, color coding was applied for differentiating units of errors and transcripts, and initial codes were associated with each of errors units. When analyzing each unit and transcripts, codes and categories were

compared, and a coding framework was developed during the analysis and interpretation activities. To make sure the validity of the interpretation, the researcher redefines iteratively each of the interpretation to preserve consistency of the coding units across to come in a more accurate synthesis of international learners' writing errors, and reasons caused they made errors.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The researcher does a semi-structured interview on 13 international learners who took English studies at the university of Southern Denmark. The learners consisted of 7 females and 6 males. The researcher believed that the learners had good quality of English because they can pass from IELTS (International English Language Testing System) program. Based on the data analysis, they still made some errors in producing descriptive texts. The errors that they made emerged due to unawareness of differentiating regular and irregular verbs. Because of this, the researcher found that errors of omission, addition, selection, mis-formation, and mis-ordering were seen in the learners' writing products. Table 1 demonstrates some learners' errors do in generating descriptive texts.

Table 1
International Learners' Errors in Producing Descriptive Texts

Kinds of Errors	Transcripts
Omission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The English study at [--/the] university of Southern Denmark is attractive higher education for me... (L1/Learner 1) ○ The learning activities are supported by sophisticated teaching rooms that consist [of] a seminar room, teaching lab, and language center room. ... (L2) ○ In [the] learning activity, learners are demanded to be active learners... (L3) ○ ..and [the] most of them are international learners. ... (L8)
Addition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I am [do] not selecting other universities to take English study program because this university is a good rank in the world... (L1) ○ English teachers always elaborate how [do] learners apply their critical thinking in reading activities. ... (L4) ○ This is because learners in the learning processes [will made/will make] errors... (L6)
Mis-formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The [election/selection] of universities is influenced by the goal of each learner... (L1) ○ In Malaysia, learners have been [selecting/selected] by Malaysian Committee to provide a tuition fee for their education... (L2) ○ Learners can administer [themselves/themselves] to accomplish learning tasks given by teachers. ... (L5)
Mis-ordering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Learners who have higher achievement are [facilitating/facilitated] to [be] [bestow/bestowed] the education scholarship ... (L1) ○ From the middle schools into secondary schools, learners have been [introduction of English courses/introduced with English courses] (L2) ○ ...we have [cultures differentiating/different cultures] from one learner to others... (L7)

The data coming from writing test were followed by semi-structured interview activities. It was focused on sources of learners' errors. In this study, the researcher referred to

the four sources of grammatical errors i.e., interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategies. In addition, the researcher also coded conceptual errors made by international learners. The interlanguage transfer has been caused learners failed to transfer their first language into the target language. The first language interfered upon English writing when they produced descriptive texts. Meanwhile, the data of intralingual transfer are emerged because learners have been failed in understanding of EFL learning. It was caused by lack of EFL knowledge. In this study, the conceptual errors were found when learners were failed to meet their ideas with the correct expression. The excerpt of learners' interview results can be presented in this part as follows.

R	: In your writing, you made an error of omission. You omitted an article, why did it happen?
L1	: actually, I understand how to use English articles, but in this context, I thought university without article 'the' here. The use of article 'the' sometime confused me when it is inserted in sentences of my writing.
R	: In the error of addition, you made it. You have added 'do' in your sentence, why can it happen?
L1	: I have learnt the grammatical rules of English but I am sometime unaware of that error. I often misunderstand the English grammatical rules. Actually, I knew this is wrong grammar.
R	: In your writing, you made an error of omission. You omitted an article, why did it happen?
L2	: Basically, I know the verb 'consist' should be added by 'of' but I don't know why I did not write it in my sentence. I am really good in speaking but sometime I felt an unsuccessful learner in writing, including academic writing.
R	: In your writing, you made an error of mis-formation/selection. Why did it happen?
L5	: I think I misunderstand about the reflective pronoun of 'ourselves'. Ourselves and ourselves are the same meaning. I know it is incorrect. I forget the word 'our' indicates plural and should be used -selves not self.

Discussion

This study aims to investigate the kind of grammatical errors made by international learners in producing descriptive texts. This study was focused on grammatical errors and sources of errors in writing descriptive texts. The categorization of errors displays the features shown in Table 1. The items of sentences are sorted during the data analysis processes. The original texts therefore indicate a divergence from the conciseness of language structures required in technical English. The researcher believes that the compilation of grammatical errors could illuminate the comprehension of conceptual implication in EFL contexts, facilitate learners' progression and development, and teachers' learning material design. It is in line with Lohmann and Conwell (2020), who depicted the result of error analysis can be used as a comprehension to improve learners' writing processes and products. In this study, learners who made errors and mistake demonstrate relatively better writing texts. They can adjust themselves in the next writing assignments. The errors they made might be resulted in the misinterpretation of concepts in the target language (Boggs, 2019; Thwaite et al., 2021).

In the errors of omission, learners are not merely making errors because they do not know the English rules, but it happens because they are unaware in producing texts, including descriptive texts. The researcher found some omission errors made by some learners in writing descriptive texts. Any errors are then marked and corrected. Thus, the researcher categorized the error types and each source of the error. During the error categorization, the researcher annotated learners with corrective written feedback. Corrective feedback is going to help learner to think their errors (Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019; Wang et al., 2017; Van

Beuningen, 2010). Based on the interview, the type of errors was made because they misunderstood the use of English articles. English consisted of the definite article 'the' and indefinite article 'a/an'. This study found the errors of English article resulted from 'underuse', 'overuse', and 'misuse' conception. Di-Genaro (2016) argues the terms 'underuse' refers to omission of an article which is required, overuse refers to an inclusion of an article which is not required, and misuse refers to the use of indefinite article is positioned in place of definite article, or vice versa.

The article usage in producing descriptive texts appears only some international learners. Worth noting is that learners are attempting to apply rules for correct article usage, although the set of rules employed for other meaning of nouns inserting the articles. For instance, the learner wrote '*and [the] most of them...*'. It may have confused the quantifier *most* with the superlative *most*. As with articles, preposition errors covered overuse, underuse, and misuse. These errors appeared in some international learners. It is the same finding found by Di-Gennaro (2013) and Doolan (2013), in which the majority of grammatical errors derived from misuse done by international learners. They felt difficult to differentiate article usage, preposition, fragments, and sentence structure. Another study shown by Doolan (2012; 2014) who informed that international learners who coming from non-native English speakers faced difficulties in producing word choice, word order and word boundaries in the sentence-level grammatical roles.

The view of exhaustive knowledge of the sources or causes of errors gives rise to positive effect on learners, in that it can help them to figure out their learning as non-native English speakers (Castilla-earls et al., 2021; de Kleine & Lawton, 2018). It is also as consideration to highlight aspects of grammatical knowledge which need to reinforce during the teaching writing activities (Biber et al., 2020; Rodriguez-Fuentes & Swatek, 2022). For instance, the data of word form errors in this study presented incorrect lexical categories, namely part of speech provided the context in which those appear, and often derived from missing and incorrectly placed affixes. For international learners, these errors are most commonly found. Therefore, the teachers should separate a learning section for international learners with providing them with writing courses designed specifically for them. It is certainly a better alternative than limiting them with English courses designed for English native writers.

CONCLUSION

This study is aimed at investigating international learners' grammatical errors made by international learners in producing descriptive texts. This study was focused on grammatical errors and sources of errors in writing descriptive texts. The categorization of errors consisted of omission, addition, selection or mis-formation, and mis-ordering. The elaboration of the errors was advanced into errors in terms of underuse, overuse, and misuse. These errors are taken from sentences sorted during the data analysis processes. The original texts therefore indicate a divergence from the conciseness of language structures required in technical English. The researcher believes that the compilation of grammatical errors could illuminate the comprehension of conceptual implication in EFL contexts, facilitate learners' progression and development, and teachers' learning material design. Finally, this study can be expected to help to advance the comprehension of international learners under controlled situation and give proper consideration for future replication studies.

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