

The Causes of Grammatical Errors Made by EFL Students in Writing Essay

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Writing an essay is one of challenging assignment for students, even an English department student get confused in writing a descriptive or narrative essay. Hence, there are many students who make some grammatical errors in writing an essay. This study aimed to investigate the causes of grammatical errors made by sixth semester English Study Program students in writing essay. The design of this study was qualitative with descriptive method. The researcher took 66 students as the subject of the study and open ended questionnaire as the instrument. The finding of this study showed that there were three causes of grammatical errors made by students, namely; carelessness, first language, and translation and the dominant cause was translation. The researcher also found that another causes of grammatical error were lack of vocabulary and lack of grammar. Mostly the students made error because of the translation method by using google translate or online dictionary. It can be concluded that the causes of grammatical error made by the students in writing essay at sixth semester students in the English Education Study Program at University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu were carelessness, first language, and translation. Moreover, the dominant cause of misformation error done by the students was translation. It is suggested for the students to practice writing more frequently to minimize the errors in writing essay. It will be better if the students did not use google translate or online dictionary much. For lecturer of writing subject, the results of this study can be one form of evaluation that can be used to know the students' causes of grammatical errors in order to find out some relevant strategies to overcome the causes. By overcoming the causes of misformation and giving motivation to the students to write carefully, the lecturers can carry out better quality teaching and learning activities especially in writing skill.

Keywords: Writing essay, grammatical error, EFL Students

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of basic language skills which is very important in teaching and learning process. Writing involves some language components, such as spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. Writing is an activity to pour the thoughts, ideas, and feelings expressed in written language. Writing is one of language skills. In the division of language skills, write and capabilities gained from listening, speaking, and reading is then poured into written form. According to Gebhardt and Rodrigues (1989), writing is one of the most

important things you do in college. Good writing skills play an important role in the success, whether it is writing a report, proposal or assignment in college.

Furthermore, writing is a process which may refer to two activities: the inscribing characters on a medium, with the intention of forming words and other lingual constructs that represent language and recording information to be conveyed through written language. It means that the writers need a process to record something and write about it. Furthermore, Rao (2007) states that writing is useful in two ways. First, this motivates students' thinking, organizes idea, analyze, and criticize. However, writing has always been a big problem for students in term of language usage and grammar structure, the biggest problem is that more complex writing the tests one's ability to use language and the ability to express ideas (Norrist, 1983) and writing requires someone to write not only coherently but also effectively. In writing, all the elements of language skills to be concentrated in full in order to get results really good there are several forms of writing and one of them is writing an essay.

An essay is a piece of writing that is written to convince someone of something or to simply inform the reader about a particular topic. According to Bradshaw (2008), essay writing has important skill development and educational functions. It allows the students to practice and develop transferable skills that are valuable to them not only while they are a student but also when they graduate and have to write in a professional role. Writing an essay is one of challenging assignment for students, even an English department student get confused in writing a descriptive or narrative essay. Hence, there are many students who make some grammatical errors in writing an essay.

Regarding to preliminary study of this research which was done by the researcher at sixth semester students at English study program in University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu on March 28th 2019, it revealed that some students admitted that they still did some mistakes and errors in writing an essay. English learners made errors in many ways but mostly in misformation errors. In doing the preliminary study, the researcher asked twenty students in the sixth semester to write an essay. Then, the researcher found that most of them did misformation errors in writing their essay. As one of example of error, they write "*the government should be fair for we in the law*" (correction: the government should be fair for us in the law). Another example is "*the students must compose an academic article which have some criteria in writing them*" (correction: the students must compose an academic article which has some criteria in writing them). As the consequence, those errors absolutely influenced the students' writing quality and the readers' understanding in reading the essay.

There are many previous studies which related to the analysis types of grammatical errors made by students, as example a study from Seitova (2016) who found that the seven most common errors committed by the participants were, pluralization, subject-verb agreement, omission or misuse of articles, wrong choice of words, omission or misuse of prepositions, spelling, misuse of like+Ving form. Then, Yusuf and Jumriana (2010) also used Politzer and Romirez's theory in analyzing the Syntactical errors. This study found the errors made by students were in the term of noun phrase, verb, verb construction, and transformation. Then, the most frequent error found was in the noun phrase term. There are many previous studies above found about the types of grammatical erros made by English students, however there is no study which investigated the causes of grammatical errors made by the students.

Moreover, there are three types of causes of errors classified by Norrish (1983), they are; carelessness, first language interference, and translation. First, carelessness is often closely related to lack of motivation. Many teachers will admit that it is not always the student's fault if he loses interest, perhaps the materials and/or style of presentation do not suit him. Second, first language interference, as Norrish (1983) states that learning a language (a mother tongue or a foreign language) is a matter of habit formation. When someone tries to learn new habits the old ones will interfere the new ones. This cause of error is called first language interference. And third, translation. It is one of the causes of errors. This happens because a student translates his first language sentence or idiomatic expression in to the target language word by word. Therefore, the researcher conducted this study guided by a research question; "what are the causes of grammatical error made by the students in writing essay at sixth semester students in the English Education Study Program at University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu?"

METHOD

The design of this study was qualitative with descriptive method. According to Gay (1990: 189) descriptive methods are used to determine and report as is. In this study, the researcher investigated the causes of misformation error made by the students in writing essays at sixth semester English Education Study Program at the University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. The subject this study was the sixth semester students of English study program of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu who were enrolled Scientific Writing subject in 2018/2019 Academic Year. There were 66 students who became the subject of this research.

Since this research is a descriptive study, the researcher used open ended questionnaire of the causes of grammatical errors. The researcher constructed the questionnaire based on Norrish (1983) who classifies causes of error into three, namely; carelessness, first language, and translation. The researcher did some procedures to collect the data; first, the researcher distributed the questionnaire, the researcher classified the causes based on the questionnaire result, and the researcher calssified the questionnaire result. To analyze the data, the researcher did some steps, they were; explaining the causes of errors , evaluating the errors, counting the percentages of causes of errors, interpreting the results of questionnaire, and concluding the result based on the data that has been analyzed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research was aimed to investigate the causes of grammatical error made by the students in writing essay and to find out the dominant cause of error made by the students in writing essay at sixth semester students in the English Education Study Program at University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. The data of this research was collected by using *open ended questions* modified and adapted from Norrish (1983) who classifies causes of misinformation error into three types, they are *carelessness, first language interference, and translation*. The questionnaire was divided into two questions then the research chose their response and write some reasons related to the response.

The finding of this study was also classified based on the result of questionnaire analysis of each class. First, the questionnaire result of class A showed that there were 4 students who answered carelessness as the cause of error, then there were 2 students who answered first language, and then there were 13 students who answered translation as the error cause. Mostly the students make error because of the translation method by using google translate or online dictionary. As one of students said that the meaning of the English word or sentence is different from what it should be meant. Therefore, it might make the students' errors in wrting an essay. Another student also said that "because the translation is not using the grammatical so it became the different meaning with what we want". To sum up, the dominant cause of error in class A was translation.

Second, the result of class B showed that there were 9 students who answered carelessness as the cause of error, then there were 3 students who answered first language and then there were 12 students who answered translation as the misinformation error cause. Mostly the students make error because of the translation method by using google translate or online

dictionary. As one of students said that they often used google translate to translate some sentences. Therefore, it might make the students' errors in wrting an essay. Another student also said that "Because if error of translation, usually mistake in meaning and other people will difficult to understand". Moreover, the carelessness also becomes the cause of erros, as student said that "I always carelessness in reading because I not know about the vocabulary and make me often carelessness in reading". To conclude, the dominant cause of error in class B was translation.

And the last is class C, it was found that there were 7 students who answered carelessness as the cause of misformation, then there were 4 students who answered first language and then there were 10 students who answered translation as the misformation error cause. Mostly the students make error because of the translation method by using google translate or online dictionary. As one of students said that they often used google translate to translate some sentences. Therefore, it might make the students' errors in wrting an essay. Another student also said that "Because translation make me confuse like translation in google translate, there is a high words that we do not reach it before. We just understand about simple words because it is easy to write down". Moreover, the carelessness also becomes the cause of erros, as student said that "Because sometimes I am lazy for reading a book, so it makes me not too good in writing essay and because of it, it makes me lack of vocabulaies so when I write an essay it feels difficult". To conclude, the dominant cause of error in class C was translation.

Besides asking about the causes of errors, the researcher also asked another causes of errors. The students' answered was summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Another Causes of Grammatical Errors

Students	Causes
CLASS A	
FA	Because I never focus learn English since elementary school
NR	Because sometimes i forgot about the rules of grammar
DE	I often missed word. I mean i am often stuck when i am writing and i difficult to relate one paragraph to other paragraph
HD	Because the first language make a troule so the contiou the next material
WRA	The reason is the knowledge, general knowledge, sometimes I dont know what the topic taht talking or topic of writing
CLASS B	
AM	Lack of vocabulary
EB	Because I am lazy to find some source to suppport my essay
NA	When my friend told me about some vocabulary and I dont know what the meaning of words
MH	Besides of these reasons, sometimes I did not know and made several mistake in grammar
SA	Because I not too like to writing so I need much time just to make one essay

HNS	Because I very lazy in understanding English grammar so my English grammar is worst
CLASS C	
AR	Because I am confused with the vocab and the role of grammar
RA	Because I did not master grammar, making my writing incorrect
L	Becasue my master of grammatical structure is very bad
ED	Whan I communication with other people the happens mistake
RA	Because I have another cause like grammatical error

Based on the finding above, the students admitted that they have another causes of errors besides carelessness, first language, and translation. Mostly the students answered that another causes of errors were lack of vocabulry and lack of grammar. They had limited vocabulary and often dismiss the rule of grammar while writing essay. Moreover, the conclusion of the causes of grammatical errors from Class A, B, and C was in the following table.

Table 2. Summary of Total Causes of Grammatical Errors

Causes of Errors	A	B	C	Total
Carelessness	4	9	7	20
First Language	2	3	4	9
Translation	13	12	10	35

Regarding to table above, it was found that there were 20 students who answered carelessness as the causes of errors, then there were 9 students who answered first language, and 35 students who answered translation as the causes of errors. Therefore, it can be concluded that the dominant cause of errors was translation. Moreover, another causes of students' errors were lack of vocabulary and grammar.

The finding of this study showed that there were three causes of grammatical errors, namely; carelessness, first language, and translation. However, the dominant cause was translation. Another causes of grammatical errors were lack of vocabulary and lack of grammar. Mostly the students made error because of the translation method by using google translate or online dictionary. As one of students said that they often used google translate to translate some sentences. Therefore, it might make the students' errors in wrting an essay. Another student also said that "Because translation make me confuse like translation in google translate, there is a high words that we dont reach it before. We just understand about simple words because it is easy to write down". Moreover, the carelessness also becomes the cause of erros, as student said that "Because sometimes I am lazy for reading a book, so it

makes me not too good in writing essay and because of it, it makes me lack of vocabulaies so when I write an essay it feels difficult”. As Norrish (1983) stated that translation is one of the causes of errors. This happens because a student translates his first language sentence or idiomatic expression in to the target language word by word. This is probably the most common cause of error.

This finding was also supported by Hutchins and Somers (2012) who stated that the translation produced by Google Translate seems to be awkward sometimes, hence, there is still a need to have a human touch to ensure the quality of output of the target text. Likewise, Juan (1994) suggests that the problem of using machine translation lays on the output of language, meaning as well as the cultural differences that are produced by machine translation, as some of the languages might not have culture similarities like the use of figurative language. Moreover, the students admitted that they have another causes of errors besides carelessness, first language, and translation. Moreover, mostly the students answered that another causes of errors were lack of vocabulry and lack of grammar. They had limited vocabulary and often dismiss the rule of grammar while writing essay.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding, it can be concluded that the causes of grammatical error made by the students in writing essay at sixth semester students in the English Education Study Program at University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu were carelessness, first language, and translation. Moreover, the dominant cause of error done by the students was translation. Based on the result of this research, the researcher suggests for students to practice writing more frequently to minimize the errors in writing essay. It will be better if the students did not use Google translate or online dictionary much to minimalize the causes of malformation error related to the translation. For lecturer of writing subject, the results of this study can be one form of evaluation that can be used to know the students' causes of errors and find out some ways to overcome the causes. By overcoming the causes of errors and giving motivation to the students to write carefully, it can carry out better and quality teaching and learning activities especially writing skill.

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