
An Analysis of Lexical Errors in the English Narrative Writing Produced By the Tenth Grade Students of SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya in EFL Classroom

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Abstract

The present study aims at examining the types of lexical errors found in the English narrative writing produced by the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya. This study also focuses on calculating the most common lexical error found in the students' narrative writings. The data was collected from the English narrative writings of 39 students. The analysis of the data was based on James' lexical errors taxonomy (1988). The study found a total of 399 lexical errors, with an average number of 10 errors per narrative writing. Besides, the analysis of the data showed that there were only 11 sub-types of formal error and 3 sub-types of semantic error found in the students' narrative writings. Moreover, calque was the most common lexical error with a total of 106 errors, followed by misselection which accounted for 84 errors and using wrong near synonym which amounted to 52 errors. The results of this study confirm that almost all of the students have a serious problem in determining the correct form of lexical items. Therefore, this study suggests that vocabulary teaching and learning in English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts and error correction during the teaching-learning process may become alternative ways to help reduce the number of lexical errors that students may make in their writing.

Keywords: lexical errors, narrative writing, EFL

Introduction

Lexical choice in second language writing remains important issue since the learners almost unavoidable produce various types of errors in the written compositions. Among the various types of errors in written compositions, lexical errors possess the highest number of errors occurring in learners' written compositions (Llach 2005; Shalaby, Yahya & El-Komi 2009; Ander & Yildirim 2010). They also affect to the quality of the learners' writing (Llach 2005; Llach 2007). Besides, native speakers consider lexical errors as the most serious problem compared to the other types of errors (Ridha & Al – Riyahi, 2011).

The inappropriate selection of lexical items in written compositions can provide some impacts to the readers such as the misunderstanding about the content of or the problem in interpreting the text. Moreover, Ridha & Al – Riyahi (2011) claim that the incorrect lexical choice might affect the effectiveness of communication between the writer and the reader. In the same idea, Naba'h (2011) also emphasizes that lexical errors make the foreign language learners are unable in transmitting their ideas as clearly as possible through their text.

Lexical errors occur because the foreign language learners do not possess an adequate knowledge in English vocabularies which has several causes such as the low frequency in reading, the low awareness in expanding new vocabularies, etc. On the other hand, according to Llach (2007, p. 3) lexical errors can be useful as the quality predictors of learners' written compositions and act as the predictor in determining the learners' vocabulary progress, lexical proficiency and general academic achievement.

In spite of the rate of occurrence and importance of lexical errors, there are only few studies which have been published. This may be related to the fact that lexical errors are categorized as the complex problem among the English foreign learners. Hemchua & Schmitt (2006) investigated the production of lexical errors in the English argumentative writing of Thai students who were studying English in their third year. Shalaby, Yahya, & El-Komi (2009) examined the lexical errors made by female students of Tabiah University in their writing exam papers. Suetae (2010) analyzed the lexical errors produced by the fourth-year students at Prince of Songkla University majoring English language in written compositions. Naba'h (2011) studied the lexical errors made by in-service English language teachers in the final exam paper of methods of teaching English. Ridha (2012) investigated the effect of EFL Iraqi college students' mother tongue on their writings in English. She found that there were four types of errors such as: grammatical errors, lexical errors, mechanic errors and word order errors. Lexical errors in this study have become the second common error which occurs in the writing of EFL Iraqi college students'.

However, those previous studies tend to be similar in that they selected students at university level and teachers as the subjects. Therefore, the present study, by contrast, chose the tenth grade students of senior high school as the subjects of the study to investigate the lexical errors found in their narrative writings. More specifically, the present study attempted to answer two questions:

1. What types of lexical errors are found in the English narrative writing of the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya?
2. What is the most common lexical error found in the English narrative writing of the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya?

Lexical Errors

According to Llach (2005, p. 16) lexical error is the inappropriate use of lexical items in a certain context as the impact of the confusion between two words, owing formal or semantic similarity which consists of the L1 or L2 influence. Moreover, the boundary between lexical errors and grammatical errors is still blurred due to the complexity of lexical errors. The problem in differentiating lexical errors and grammatical errors might be derived from the difficulties in describing the word itself. According to Hemchua & Schmitt (2006) lexical errors will only affect lexical words, while grammatical errors will only affect grammatical words. In addition, lexical error reflects the bad sign of writing skill in the part of learner (Llach, 2011, p. 42). Automatically, the more lexical errors occur in the learners' written compositions, the worse quality of the learners' writing skill is.

Lexical Errors Classification

This study adapted lexical errors taxonomy proposed by James (1998) who divides lexical errors in well-ordered list based on the two major types of lexical errors and also gave the detail explanation for each type of lexical errors. The following figure provides the classification of lexical errors based on James (1998).

Lexical Errors Taxonomy	
A. Formal Errors	
1. Formal Misselection	
1.1. Suffix Type	
1.2. Prefix Type	
1.3. Vowel-Based Type	
1.4. Consonant-Based Type	
2. Formal Misformations	
2.1. Borrowing	
2.2. Coinage	
2.3. Calque	
3. Distortions	
3.1. Omission	
3.2. Overinclusion	

- 3.3. Misselection
- 3.4. Misordering
- B. Semantic Errors**
 - 1. Confusion of Sense Relations**
 - 1.1. Using a Superonym for a Hyponym
 - 1.2. Using a Hyponym for a Superonym
 - 1.3. Using Inappropriate Co-Hyponyms
 - 1.4. Using Wrong Near Synonym
 - 2. Collocational Errors**
 - 2.1. Semantically Determined Selection
 - 2.2. Statistically Weighted Preferences
 - 2.3. Arbitrary Combinations and Irreversible Binomials

Figure 1

Formal Errors

James (1998) classifies formal errors into three types: formal misselection, formal misformations and distortions. Furthermore, he divides each type of formal errors into several sub-types which can be seen as follow:

1. Formal Misselection

Formal misselection contains two similar lexical forms which consist of visual and sound similarity. James (1998) classifies formal misselection into four sub-types as follow:

- 1.1. Suffix Type (for instance, *Carbon monoxide has become the main cause of air polluted [pollution]*).
- 1.2. Prefix Type (for instance, *Linda and Mike are waiting unpatiently [impatiently] to watch this movie*).
- 1.3. Vowel-Based Type (for instance, *all of the passenger sets [seats] for the flight on Tuesday have already booked*).
- 1.4. Consonant-Based Type (for instance, *Jack won a price [prize] from raffle*).

2. Formal Misformations

According to James (1998) formal misformations are errors that can be created by the learner from the resources of the target language or in the mother tongue. There are three classifications of formal misformations which can be seen as follow:

- 2.1. Borrowing (for instance, *the cowboy shot the bandit with gun right through his kopf [head]*).
- 2.2. Coinage (for instance, *drinking alcohol can be very nocive [dangerous] to our health*).
- 2.3. Calque (for instance, *I go to [am going to] the mall with my brother*).

3. Distortions

The results of distortions usually are non-existent forms in the target language. James (1998) classifies distortions into four sub-types as follow:

- 3.1. Omission (for instance, *This subject is very intresting [interesting] to me*).
- 3.2. Overinclusion (for instance, *Jane is eating omelet in dinning [dining] room right now*).
- 3.3. Misselection (for instance, *He anger [angry] because he cannot buy those books*).
- 3.4. Misordering (for instance, *Catherine bought a new kettle [kettle] from supermarket yesterday*).

Semantic Errors

James (1998) classifies semantic error into two types: confusion of sense relations and collocational errors. Here are the sub-types and examples of each type:

1. Confusion in Sense Relations

Deese's and Aitchison's study (cited in Hemchua & Schmitt, 2006, p.10) argues that humans store words in terms of sense relations in their mental lexicon, at least to some extent. Below are the sub-types of confusion of sense relations and their examples:

- 1.1. Using a Superonym for a Hyponym (for instance, *could you please call the craftsman [electrician] to fix our electricity?*).
- 1.2. Using a Hyponym for a Superonym (for instance, *do not smash [break] the rule or you will get the punishment from father*).
- 1.3. Using Inappropriate Co-Hyponyms (for instance, *John gives Janet a beautiful vermilion [scarlet] rose*).
- 1.4. Using Wrong Near Synonym (for instance, *she is an excellent [brilliant] scientist*).

2. Collocational Errors

According to James (1998) collocational is a pair of words which is high-frequently used together and it is accepted by the native speakers. James (1998) classifies collocations error into three types as follows:

- 2.1. Semantically Determined Selection (for instance, *crooked stick* instead of *crooked year*).
- 2.2. Statistically Weighted Preferences (for instance, *Julius's army suffered big losses [heavy losses is more preferable]*).
- 2.3. Arbitrary Combination and Irreversible Binomials (for instance, *hikehitch* instead of *hitchhike*)

Method and Procedure

The Participants

The participants of this study were 39 senior high school students who were studying at the tenth grade of SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya 2013/2014. They were consisted of 18 males and 21 females. These students were similar in age, their age were ranged from 16 to 17 years old. Besides, these students were studying at the same class, selected randomly from the total number of classes in the tenth grade of SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya (they were divided into nine different classes, each class consisted of 38 to 40 students).

Procedure

The data of this study was gathered from 39 narrative writings of the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya. These students were asked to write a narrative writing with the minimum length of 300 words, without using a dictionary, and within one hour with concentrating on one story from the two main themes (Fairy Tales – *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Little Red Riding Hood*; Indonesian Legends – *Malin Kundang* and *Sangkuriang*) which were provided by the researcher. The average length of 39 narrative writings was 415 words.

Lexical errors found in the 39 texts were classified into 14 sub-types of lexical errors from the total number of lexical errors' sub-types (18 lexical errors' sub types) proposed by James (1998). In doing the analysis, the researcher did some steps in order to determine and classify lexical errors produced by the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya. The researcher read through all of the students' narrative writings. Then, the researcher highlighted the words which are indicated as lexical errors based on lexical errors classification provided by James (1998). After that, the researcher classified lexical errors found in the students' narrative writings in lexical errors sheet based on the classification. The researcher also calculated the most common errors found in the students' narrative writings and made a general interpretation based on the results of this study.

Discussion

The Results

Based on the data, the researcher found two major types of lexical errors that consist of 11 sub-types of formal errors and 3 sub-types of semantic errors. The following table provides the lexical errors distribution according to the types and sub-types found in the students' narrative writings.

Types of Lexical Errors		Number of Errors
A. Formal Errors		
I)	Formal Misselection	
1.	Suffix Type	25
2.	Prefix Type	1
3.	Vowel-Based Type	3
4.	Consonant-Based Type	7
Subtotal:		36
II)	Formal Misformations	
1.	Borrowing	4
2.	Coinage	1
3.	Calque	106
Subtotal:		111
III)	Distortions	
1.	Omission	44
2.	Overinclusion	16
3.	Misselection	84
4.	Misordering	4
Subtotal:		148
The Total Number of Formal Errors		295
B. Semantic Errors		
I)	Confusion of Sense Relations	
1.	Using a Superonym for a Hyponym	2
2.	Using Inappropriate Co-Hyponyms	50
3.	Using a Wrong Near Synonym	52
The Total Number of Semantic Errors		104
The Total Number of Lexical Errors		399

Table 1 Lexical Errors Distribution according to the types

Formal Errors

Formal error is a particular error in lexical error which affects the form of the word. According to the data of this study, the researcher found three sub-types of formal errors. The examples of each sub-type of formal errors can be seen in the following table below:

Num.	Types & Sub-types of Formal Errors	The Error & Suggestion
I. Formal Misselection		
1.	Suffix Type	Malin became a <i>succesed</i> (<i>successful</i>) man
2.	Prefix Type	The Queen felt <i>unrivaed</i> (<i>rivaed</i>) by Snow White's beauty
3.	Vowel-Based Type	But her mother <i>remain</i> (<i>remind</i>) Malin Kundang about the story before he gone
4.	Consonant-Based Type	The little red riding hood must <i>bass</i> (<i>pass</i>) the forest

II.		Formal Misformations
1.	Borrowing	Malin go to the <i>darmaga</i> (<i>dock</i>) ...
2.	Coinage	Malin Kundang interested by a <i>capten's</i> (<i>captain's</i>) invitation
3.	Calque	The father decided to <i>looking for</i> (<i>make some</i>) money
III.		Distortions
1.	Omission	In there, Malin's mother <i>embarased</i> (<i>embarrassed</i>) Malin
2.	Overinclusion	He met a <i>beautifull</i> (<i>beautiful</i>) woman
3.	Misselection	and their <i>crewmans</i> (<i>crewmen</i>) followed them
4.	Misordering	He ask his mother to allow him to go <i>aboard</i> (<i>abroad</i>)

Table 2 The examples of formal errors (taken from the data of this study)

Semantic Errors

Semantic error is a particular error in lexical error which affects the meaning of the intended word. Based on the data of this study, the researcher only found the errors in the confusion of sense relations while the errors in collocation were absent from the data. The following table provides each example from the sub-types of semantic errors:

Num.	Types & Sub-types of Semantic Errors	The Error & Suggestion
I.		Confusion of Sense Relations
1.	Using a Superonym for a Hyponym	Someone who is on her bed with her grandmother's <i>shirt</i> (<i>pajama</i>)
2.	Using Inappropriate Co-Hyponyms	Who's the most beautiful <i>girl</i> (<i>woman</i>) in this land?
3.	Using Wrong Near Synonym	Sangkuriang did not <i>trust</i> (<i>believe</i>) her and still wanted to marry her

Table 3 The examples of semantic errors (taken from the data of this study)

Interpretation of the Data

According to the data of this study, formal error became the highest frequent errors found in the students' narrative writings (see Table 1). Besides, the result of this study on the production of formal error provides an important issue where most of the students seem to have a serious problem in determining the correct form of lexical items. Moreover, the errors classified as formal errors were mostly derived from intralingual error or intralingual transfer (this term was suggested by James, 1992 and Brown, 2007).

Based on the results of this study, most of the students possess a problem in determining the correct word class of lexical item due to the influence of intralingual error. The other problems which occurred in the students' narrative writings because of the intralingual error are (1) the inappropriate use of suffix or prefix to examine the correct word class of lexical item, (2) the improper spelling of lexical items because of the addition or deletion of one item in the well-formed of one word and (3) a false analogy which affects the students in determining the plural form of lexical item.

Among the occurrences of formal errors sub-types, calque (the sub-type of formal misformations) became the most common lexical error found in the students' narrative writings (see table 1). Even though the major problem of the students in lexical errors were derived from intralingual errors, the occurrences of calque in the students' narrative writings imply an important issue that most of the students also have a problem in transmitting their ideas to their written compositions because of the influence of L1. Besides, the students also seem to have limited vocabularies in the target language.

Furthermore, the result of this study in formal errors contradicted the results of the other studies such as (Hemchua & Schmitt, 2006; and Shalaby, Yahya & El-Komi, 2009). In the other studies, the results of lexical errors showed that semantic error became the most common errors found in the students' written compositions. The possible reason which can explain the difference in the results of the current study with the other studies may come from the subjects of the study. In this study, the researcher chose the tenth grade students of senior high school to become the subjects of this study. These students have different level of language proficiency compared to the students at the university level that participated in the other studies.

On the other hand, the results of this study showed that semantic errors became less common errors found in the students' narrative writings (see Table 1). The results of lexical errors in semantic errors revealed that the errors in using wrong near synonym became the most common error in semantic errors. This result is also similar with the result of Hemchua & Schmitt's study (2006) in which the use of inappropriate near synonym also became the most common errors in semantic errors.

Moreover, the semantic errors found the students' narrative writings were derived from the intralingual error. This result also has a similarity with Hemchua & Schmitt's study (2006) where most of the errors in near synonyms were influenced by the intralingual errors. In the occurrences of semantic errors, some of the students seem to have a problem in differentiating the use of some words which are close in meaning but they are different in their use in certain context. Besides, these students also have a problem in differentiating the relation of inclusion in some lexical items, from the use of some words which are carried more general term rather than a specific one or the inappropriate use of co-hyponyms.

In general, the researcher concludes that most of lexical errors found in the narrative writings of the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya tend to be influenced by the intralingual errors. The influence of intralingual error is also found in another study such as Suetae (2010). In this study, she found that the intralingual error became the most common errors found in the narrative and descriptive writings of the fourth year students in English department of Prince of Songkla University. The students' problems in lexical errors which are derived from intralingual error or intralingual transfer may have a relation to the portion of vocabulary teaching in English subject during the teaching-learning process.

From this phenomenon above, the researcher suggests that vocabulary teaching is needed by the students in order to minimize lexical errors in their written compositions. Besides, by doing vocabulary teaching, the teacher can assist the students to expand their vocabularies richness. The use of English monolingual dictionary during the teaching-learning process may act as an effective tool for the students in eliminating their problems in lexical errors. In this case, the teacher should train the students to use English monolingual dictionary effectively so they can use English monolingual dictionary in the appropriate way by understanding its structures such as the orthography, pronunciation, grammatical information, definition, examples, etc.

The use of remediation during the teaching – learning process may also become one of the alternative ways in minimizing lexical errors in the students' written compositions. The goal of remediation is to assist the students in revising their mental representation about the linguistic rule they were operating with, so that the students can understand their oral or written utterances as errors and these errors will not be repeated again. Moreover, in doing the remediation, the teachers should notice that they cannot just correct the students' errors directly when the students produce some inaccurate oral or written utterances. The teachers can lead the students to the classroom discussion so the students can recognize their errors during their conversations with their classmates and their teacher or when they produce some errors in writing a written composition.

Conclusion

The results of this study revealed that there were 2 major types of lexical errors namely formal and semantic errors found in the students' narrative writings (13 sub-types in formal errors and 3 sub-types in semantic errors) with the total number of lexical errors is 399 errors. According to the data

of this study, the most common lexical error found in the students' narrative writings is calque that amounted to 106 errors. In this case, the possible source of this error is interlingual error which is resulted from the negative transfer of L1.

On the other hand, based on the major classification of lexical errors, formal errors became the highest frequent error occurred in the students' narrative writings. The occurrences of formal errors might have a relation with the major problem of the students (most of them have a problem in determining the correct form of lexical items). Moreover, the researcher found that most of formal errors occurred in the students writings were influenced by the intralingual error.

Therefore, the result of this study implies that the vocabulary teaching is needed by the students to help them in eliminating the number of lexical errors found in their written compositions. Besides, the use of English monolingual dictionary or the use of remediation during the teaching – learning process may become the solutions for the teacher to assist the students in minimizing their problems in lexical errors.

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