

An Analysis of Lexical Error in the Descriptive Text Writing Produced by the Eighth Grade Students of MTs. Wahid Hasyim Kunir

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***Abstract:** This research was intended to investigate the lexical errors types, to calculate the percentage and to analyze the causes of each lexical error type found in the descriptive text writing produced by the eighth grade students of MTs. Wahid Hasyim Kunir. The area determination method of this research was conducted by using purposive method. The subjects were the eighth grade students at MTs. Wahid Hasyim Kunir in the 2015/2016 academic year. The data of this research were obtained from 30 students' descriptive writing test. The analysis of the data was based on Llach's lexical errors taxonomy (2011) which divides lexical error types based on the sources of errors and major types of error. The study found a total of 86 lexical errors in five types of lexical error. Misspelling was the most common lexical error with a total of 26 errors and the percentage is 30.23%. It happened because the students were influenced by intralingual transfer. The results of this study confirm that almost all of the students have a serious problem in determining the correct spelling of lexical items in the target language. Hence, 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 in minimalizing the number of lexical errors in students' writing.*

***Keywords:** lexical errors, writing, descriptive text.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian students are taught writing as one of four language skills in learning English based on the 2006 institutional based curriculum. Nation (2009: 113) says that writing is an activity that can usefully be prepared for the other skills of listening, speaking and reading. It is considered as the most difficult skill and is important to be learnt. It is supported by Kane (1988: 17) who states that writing is a complex activity. Besides, vocabulary is the most important language component in language learning since it is the basic to learn the other language skills and language components. The linguist David Wilkins in Thornbury (2002: 13) summed up the importance of vocabulary learning who states "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." In writing, the students must state the ideas clearly and use the appropriate lexical choice in order to avoid the readers' misunderstanding about the content of their writing. However, the vocabulary of the target language is different with the vocabulary of mother tongue which causes the students to make vocabulary errors which are generally called as lexical errors. According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982: 146) there are some types of errors based on linguistic category and one of them is lexical error. Llach (2011: 75) defines lexical error is a deviation in form and/or meaning of a word in the target language.

In contrast, lexical error is an issue that is rarely investigated although it remains as a crucial issue in English as Foreign Language learning. Llach (2011: 70) states that despite being more numerous than grammatical errors, lexical errors are a particular type of error

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which has received little attention. This study adapted lexical errors taxonomy proposed by Llach (2011:125) who divides lexical errors in well-ordered list based on the two major types of errors: a) Formal error is a particular error in lexical error which affects the form of the word; and b) Semantic error is a particular error in lexical error which affects the meaning of the intended word. Besides, Llach (2011:125) divides lexical error types based on the sources of error: a) Interlingual Transfer happens because of the interference of students' mother tongue (native language); and b) Intralingual transfer happens because of the target language interference.

The following table is the distribution of lexical error taxonomy according to source and type proposed by Llach (2011: 125).

Table 1. The Distribution Of Lexical Error Taxonomy According to Source and Type Proposed by Llach

		Type	
		Formal	Semantic
Source	Mother tongue	Borrowing Coinage	Calque
	Target language	Misspelling Misselection	Semantic confusion

Llach (2011: 123-124) explains further the six main categories of lexical errors as follows:

- 1) In this research, borrowing refers to the error made by the students in using mother tongue without any attempt to adjust them to target language. For example: My grandmother is *sakit* (Eng. sick).
- 2) In this research, coinage refers to the error made by the students in using lexical item that consists of the adaptation of an L1 word to the L2 orthography or morphology that sounds like the target language. For example: I will study harder to improve my *prestasi*. (Eng. Achievement, Ind. prestasi)
- 3) In this research, calque refers to the error made by the students in using the words of target language by translating them literally. For example: My *table study* is pink and big (Eng. desk).
- 4) In this research, misspelling refers to the error made by the students in using the spelling or orthography of the words in target language. For example: I am Biutiful for 'beautiful'.
- 5) In this research, misselection refers to the error made by the students in using the words of the target language that have sound similarity or look similarity with the words of students' mother tongue. For example: She is *angry* because she has not eaten yet (angry for hungry).
- 6) In this research, semantic confusion refers to the error made by the students in using two words of the target language which are having semantic similarity. For example: There are *very* shops in the city (very for "many").

Based on the previous explanations, the researcher decided to conduct another research about the type of lexical errors made by Indonesian junior high school students in writing different type of text that is descriptive text. Descriptive text is one of the texts which are taught in Indonesian junior high school. Wong (1999: 373) states a descriptive text is used

to describe a person, a place or an object so precisely that the reader “sees” the item clearly in his or her imagination. Furthermore, Wardiman et al. (2008: 16) states that descriptive text has two generic structures namely identification and description. This study attempted to answer these following questions:

1. What types of lexical error made by the eighth grade students of MTs. Wahid Hasyim Kunir in writing descriptive text?
2. How is the percentage of each lexical error made by the eighth grade students of MTs. Wahid Hasyim Kunir in writing descriptive text?
3. What are the causes of lexical errors made by the eighth grade students of MTs. Wahid Hasyim Kunir?

RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this research was descriptive research because it described the lexical errors made by the eighth grade of junior high school students in writing descriptive text as stated in research objectives in the previous chapter. McMillan (1992:144) says that a descriptive study simply describes a phenomenon. The researcher got the data from the students’ writing test in writing descriptive text. There were 30 descriptive text writings about animal. The respondents of this research were taken from the eighth grade students of MTs. Wahid Hasyim Kunir in the 2015/2016 academic year as the population. In this research, 30% of the respondents were taken proportionally from the three classes since the total numbers of all the eighth grade students were 100 students.

The learning material of the test was descriptive text and the English teacher has taught the learning material to the students. The content of the test was constructed based on the 2006 Institutional-Based Curriculum (KTSP 2006) for junior high school and has been consulted to the English teacher before the test was given to the respondents. The respondents were assigned to write a descriptive text by choosing one of the pictures provided. The writing test was not conducted to measure the students’ writing ability in writing descriptive text but to find lexical errors found in students’ writing. Hence, the writing test was administered to get the data about the students’ lexical errors in writing descriptive text. The other types of errors that were found were ignored and not calculated. The writing test was conducted in 60 minutes. They were required to write 10 to 12 sentences in two paragraphs. The students were allowed to consult with their dictionary.

In this research, the researcher used the procedures suggested by Corder (1974) in Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005: 57) to conduct error analysis research. First, the researcher collected the data for the error analysis from the research respondents through writing test. Secondly, the researcher identified the lexical errors made by all the students in their descriptive text writing test. In this step, the researcher read the students’ work, identified the lexical error and colored the errors using different color for each type of lexical error. Green for borrowing, pink for coinage, orange for calque, yellow for misspelling, purple for misselection, and blue for semantic confusion. Then, the researcher described lexical errors made by the students based on the data tabulation. After identifying the lexical errors made by the students, the researcher made a table as the data tabulation then described the results of the data tabulation of lexical errors made by the students. After that, the researcher explained the errors that are classified into 6 types of lexical errors which have been identified. The

researcher gave explanations of each lexical error type based on the source of error and major type of error. Lastly, the researcher evaluated the lexical errors made by the students. It involved deciding which one should receive more instruction based on the criticalness of each lexical error type. The researcher analyzed why there was a certain type of lexical error mostly made by the students and the least made by the students. The researcher used the following formula which was adapted from Healey (2010: 30) to calculate the result from data tabulation:

$$\% = \frac{f}{N} \times 100$$

Notes:

% = the percentage of the students' lexical errors of each component

f = the number of lexical errors of each component

N = the total number of errors made by the students

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the results of the writing test, the researcher found 86 total numbers of lexical errors made by the eighth grade students of MTs. Wahid Hasyim Kunir in writing descriptive text. After identifying the writing result, it was known that the students made five types of lexical error namely borrowing, calque, misspelling, misselection and semantic confusion based on Llach's lexical error taxonomy who categorizes lexical error into six types. The researcher also calculated the percentage of each lexical error type made by the students. The percentage can be seen in the following table:

Table 2. The Percentage of Each Lexical Error Type Made by The Students

No.	Types of lexical errors	Percentage
1.	Borrowings	5.81%
2.	Coinage	0%
3.	Calque	23.26%
4.	Misspelling	30.23%
5.	Misselection	15.11%
6.	Semantic confusion	25.59%
Total of percentage		100%

The researcher explained the students' lexical errors which have been identified in the first step of error analysis based on the source of errors and major type of errors. The following is the explanation table of lexical error based on the source of errors and major type of errors.

Table 3. Lexical Error Based on The Source of Errors and Major Type of Errors

No.	Lexical Error Type	The Classification of Lexical Error Type Based on the Source of Error and Major Type of Error
1.	Borrowing	Interlingual-Formal
2.	Coinage	Interlingual-Formal
3.	Calque	Interlingual-Semantic
4.	Misspelling	Intralingual-Formal

No.	Lexical Error Type	The Classification of Lexical Error Type Based on the Source of Error and Major Type of Error
5.	Misselection	Intralingual-Formal
6.	Semantic confusion	Intralingual-Semantic

The causes of lexical errors made by the students were different. It can be seen from the different types of sources of error and the major types of each lexical error classification.

1. Misspelling

The researcher found that misspelling dominated lexical error types found in the students' writing test as many as 26 errors. The students had a serious problem in determining the correct form of lexical items. It might happen because they only learn English at school and most of them do not take additional course outside the school time, so they are not familiar with English words spelling.

2. Semantic confusion

It seems that the students who made semantic confusion lexical error type have already had enough English vocabulary but they do not know the usage of the words in the sentences. They know two or more English words which have the same meaning. However, the students do not know although the words have the same meaning. They have different usage based on the word class.

3. Calque

This lexical error type happened because the students were still influenced by their mother tongue since the source of error calque is interlingual error. The students have already had enough English vocabulary but they translated the word of Bahasa Indonesia to the English word literally based on their known English vocabulary either they consult with their dictionary or not.

4. Missellection

Missellection lexical error type might happen because the students are confused with the English words which have similar spelling or meaning. As a result, they wrote English words which have same numbers of syllables, same initial consonants or shared phonemes. Moreover, they also wrote English words which have same initial consonants between the error words and the English target word in their writing.

5. Borrowing

From the observation, it seems the students who made borrowing lexical errors did not make enough effort to search the English word of the intended word in the dictionary although they were permitted to check their dictionary to help them write the text.

It seems that lexical error still becomes problem in learning language for various level of ESL or EFL students in many countries. This study of lexical errors focused on junior high school learners in Indonesia. Some researchers in different countries also found different results in investigating lexical errors made by students of different grade in various countries. For instances, Hemchua & Schmitt in 2006 found near synonym as the most lexical errors

type made by Thai students who were studying English in their third year in a university in Bangkok. Then, Shalaby, Yahya, & El-Komi (2009) discover that most of female students who were studying in preparatory year program of Tabiah University in Al Madinah Al Munawwarah, Saudi Arabia produced wrong choice of a suffix lexical error type in their essays. Lastly, Andre and Jurianto's research result in 2015 showed that most of the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya made calque lexical in their narrative writing.

In this study, the highest lexical error made by the students in their descriptive text writing was misspelling. It reached 26 errors 30.23% of the whole errors. Spelling errors derive from the gap between orthography and pronunciation in English. There was an empirical study conducted by Llach which has the same result where she found misspelling as the highest lexical error type found in young Spanish EFL learners. It is in contrast with the research which was conducted by Shalaby, Yahya, & El-Komi in 2009 about lexical errors in which they found that misspelling was the third type of lexical error made by the students. The second rank of lexical errors made by the students was semantic confusion as many as 22 errors or 25.59% of the whole errors. The learners only have little knowledge about the words they used in their writing. This result is different with Hemchua & Schmitt's (2006) research finding in which semantic confusion is the ninth rank of lexical error type among twenty three types of lexical error in their respondents' writing. The third rank of lexical error made by the students was calque. It reached 20 errors or 23.26% of the whole errors. It is different with the research result conducted by Andre and Jurianto (2015). The finding showed that calque is the highest lexical type of error found in the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 9 Surabaya. The fourth rank of lexical error made by the students in their descriptive text writing was misselection. It reached 13 errors or 15.11% of the whole errors. In doing misselection lexical error type, the students used two or more English words which have same numbers of syllables, shared phonemes, or same initial consonants. Then, borrowing occupied the fifth position in the frequency of appearance of lexical errors made by the students. That was 5 errors or 5.81% of the whole errors. When the learners do not know a word in English, they use their mother tongue words to fill the gap of their sentences in writing. Moreover, Dewaele (in Llach 2011: 150) claims that learners feel safe to include Spanish (as mother tongue) words in their English texts since their audience would understand them. Lastly, coinage is the least frequent category of lexical errors identified in this research data because there were no students who create new words by adapting the words of Bahasa Indonesia to English morphology as the target language. Hemchua & Schmitt (2006) also did not find any coinage lexical error type in their study and they did not give any explanation why it did happen.

Generally, the researcher got the answers dealing with the research problems of this research. Based on the discussion above, it was known that the students made some lexical errors in their descriptive text writing. From the data calculation, the researcher know the types of lexical error and the percentage of leach lexical error type made by the eighth grade students of MTs. Wahid Hasyim Kunir. The most lexical error type found in descriptive text writing is misspelling as many as 26 or 30.23% of the whole lexical error types. This type of lexical error should receive more instruction from the teacher than the other lexical error types made by the students. It might happen because the learners have lack of lexical competence. Many learners are still influenced by their mother tongue in learning English.

Based on the results of this study, most of the students have a problem in determining the correct form of lexical item due to the influence of intralingual error. Learners will usually know what the word means and how to use it, but the lack knowledge of how to deliver the word correctly in writing causes them to make some misspelling. This error can be decreased by writing frequently using the words of target language with correct spelling.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

According to the result of data analysis in the discussion of the students' descriptive text writing test, it could be concluded that among the six types of lexical error, the error of misspelling dominated others. The misspelling errors as many as 26 errors or 30.23%, semantic confusion errors as many as 22 errors or 25.59%, calque errors as many as 20 or 23.26%, misselection error as many as 13 errors or 15.11%, borrowing errors as many as 5 errors or 5.81% and there is no students who made coinage error, so the percentage is 0%.

On the other hand, based on the major classification of lexical errors, misspelling as the highest is categorized as formal error in the students' descriptive writing. Formal errors became the most frequent errors in which most of the students made many errors that affect the form of the word. It might reflect the students' problem in learning English. Most of them often write English words with incorrect spelling. They still do not used to write English words with correct spelling because they rarely practice their writing skill at school like what the teacher said that he teaches writing once to twice during one semester. Moreover, misspelling error also classified as intralingual error based on the sources of errors in which the learners have been influenced by their partial knowledge of the target language.

Therefore, by knowing the result of this study, the researcher suggests the teacher to do some actions to minimize the students' lexical error. The teacher should train the students to accustom themselves in writing the English words with correct spelling such as by teaching writing skill more frequently and the teacher should oblige the students to bring their dictionary in learning English so that the students can consult with the dictionary when they find difficulties in writing English words.

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