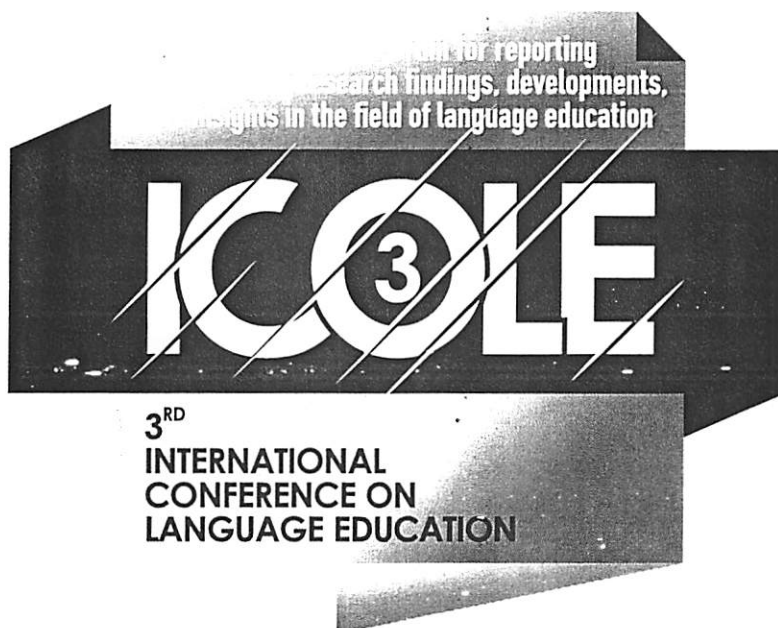


PROCEEDING



main theme

Information and
Communication Technology (ICT)
and Language Education

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The Readiness of International Class Students to Write Academic Writing in English
(A Case Study in MBTI International Class of Telkom Economics and Business School)

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Abstract

Currently, mastery of English is a must to be able to compete in the globalization era. The demand for international class where English used as the instruction is getting higher. Many people want to be students in this class in order to be fluent in English and gain global insight but is their English adequate to do many requirements to finish their study? One of the requirements is able to produce academic writing in English. Telkom Economics and Business School offers international class where almost all students come from Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to determine the readiness of students to write academic writing and look for the most common errors made in their English writing. The population is 23 final year students of MBTI International class of Telkom Economics and Business School. The data is taken from students' writings in E-Commerce project. The analysis shows that 20 of 23 writings are still considered to be dissatisfactory. There are many mistakes made by students such as: sentence structure, preposition, word choice, word form, subject-verb agreement, the passive voice, punctuation, verb formation, incomplete structure, and noun-pronoun. This suggests that students still need to practice and be trained to produce good academic writing. They are strongly influenced by the first language by using direct translation from Indonesian to English. They need to be helped to understand that certain rules in Indonesian cannot be applied when they write in English.

Keyword: English Academic Writing

Introduction

In this globalization era, more people aware of the importance of English in order to be able to compete globally. International schools, from kindergarten to university level, are mushrooming everywhere. High tuition fee is not a problem anymore for the parents. However, there are many challenges for international schools. They do not only provide lessons in English, follow abroad curriculum but also make the students apply English language into their daily life, which in turn it is applied to the subjects received by the students.

Among the four skills taught to the students (writing, reading, speaking, and listening) in English, writing is the most complex aspect but very important to learn. Students who have the ability and competence to write in English will be able to express themselves effectively, especially when they are writing their mini thesis, especially in schools with international-labelled school.

For students of MBTI international class, they must use English in any given subjects and should pass from them. Unfortunately, because most of the international

students are from Indonesia, they still use Indonesian in their interactions. Therefore, they are not overly exposed to English language (only in a class) and do not have enough practice in using English. Although they write in English in doing their assignments and exams, there are many errors made by the students. Errors should not happen again, especially since they are already at the end of study and will soon be writing their mini thesis.

Research Questions

Based on the problems mentioned above, the research questions of this study are:

1. Are the students of MBTI international class ready to write their mini thesis in English correctly?
2. What are the types of errors or mistakes occurred in their English writings?

Literature Review

There is big differences between English writings written by native and ESL learners. ESL learners have more than one language when they write in English than native speakers. Because they have more than one language in their mind, they have more problems. ESL learners tend to change those languages interactively, causing a lot of confusion, especially in terms of structure and meaning. Analysis and classification of the causes of confusion can provide a clear picture for the learners about their problems so that they can eventually produce better written text.

In the past, the focus of attention on the study of writing in a second language is the similarity of the writing process of L1 and L2. The difference between L1 and L2 writing does not get enough attention which ultimately leads to misconception aspects of L2 writing, a decreased ability to write on L2 writers. In the domain of L2 writing, a fundamental difference between L1 and L2 writing is that either L2 writers have the skills or not, he will write back and forth from L1 to L2 and vice versa. As found in previous studies that the L2 writers use their L1 to plan their writing in producing text (Jones & Tetroe, 1987), transfer their knowledge from L1 to L2 writing contexts (Edelsky, 1982; Friedlander, 1990; Lay, 1982) and develop ideas and generate text content and organization of the text (Lay, 1982) in Darus and Ching (2009). In short, the author always uses L1 first and then translate it into L2 in writing text in L2. This suggests that L1 affects L2 writers in L2 writing process, and the effect can be positive or negative.

Corder (1967) in Darus and Ching (2009) mentions that there are two types of errors: first, the frequent errors made by the authors is a sign of lack of teaching writing technique, second, we live in an imperfect world so that although we have done our best, the errors will still occur. According to Corder (1967) in Darus and Ching (2009), the errors can be defined as a systematic and consistent characteristics of deviation in the learner's linguistic system. Meanwhile, Dulay et al. (1982) defines the error as "...the flawed side of the learner's speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviates from selected norm of mature language performance." (Dulay et al., 1982: 138). In this study, the authors have taken more definitions set forth by Dulay et al. (1982) which classifies errors as defective parts in a text. Errors are made if the writers do not follow the rules in the target language.

Meanwhile, according to Brown (1994) and Connor (1996) in Darus and Ching (2009) errors are classified into two categories: first, errors resulting from L1

influence; second, errors resulting from the L2 system itself. The first category is caused by the transfer between languages. The language transfer errors are due to L1 influence. While the second category is the errors between the languages and the errors in the development of writing. These errors can be caused by insufficiency of learning, difficulties in the target language, teaching error, confusion in both languages (Ho, 1973), or in other words, Richard in Darus and Ching (2009) tried to reveal that the general characteristics of learning language is generalizing something but it is wrong, applying the rules but it is not perfect, and failure in understanding the conditions of implementing the rules, the learners try to build hypotheses about the English language based on their limited experience with the language itself (only in the classroom or textbook).

In some previous researches that had been done in analyzing the problem of writing in English, the aims of the researchers are to identify the errors occurred, to analyze the errors to find out the cause and to find a solution that makes it possible to resolve the issue. While, Lim (1990) analyzed the grammatical errors made by the Mandarin-speaking students from two private schools in Kuala Lumpur. 50 ESL essays produced by a test was used as a data source. Researcher used free writing and guided writing tasks to compare the results. Together with the previous studies, the errors are classified into eight categories: tenses, articles, prepositions, spelling, pronouns, wrong choice of words, singular and plural forms and agreements. The two main factors that contribute to students' mistakes in their writings are transferring process between and within language itself.

Darus and Subramaniam (2009) examined the types of errors made by 72 Malaysian students in writing their results. The results of this study indicate that the mistakes made by students are essentially the grammar errors. Students also still have a limited vocabulary and made mistakes in applying the sentence structure into English. This study concludes that students have difficulty in understanding the rules of English grammar.

Types of Errors in English Writing

Language learning involves four skills--speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The errors are normal in the writing process. Types of common errors in writing English can be divided into 3 (three), namely: mechanical, grammar, and usage errors (Shoebottom, 2012). They will be explained as follows:

1. Mechanical errors are errors related to orthography (spelling and capitalization) and the use of punctuation. Every person who writes in English usually makes errors, not only native speakers but also ESL learners. In many cases, mechanical errors are as the consequences of writing where the focus of the writing is the content not the written form.
2. Grammar errors are rare in the writings of native speakers but they happen in the writings of non-native speakers whose mother tongue can "disrupt" the production of correct writing English. Non-native students tend to make mistakes in verbs, improper tenses selection, improper tenses form, use of article a, an, the (especially in Asia where the students do not use the article), and word order. Grammar errors in the results of writing are usually quite disturbing the understanding of the text. However, this type of errors will disappear along with the students' understanding of grammar systems so that knowledge of grammar will come out intuitively.

3. Usage errors are errors in the use of the word or set of words in sentences that are grammatically possible, but not common in English standard. Native speakers rarely make this type of errors, but the non-native students very often do it. The errors often occur when the students search for a word in their native language and yet choose the wrong English equivalent for the word or phrase they want to express.

Research Method

The Method

Research method used in the study is descriptive to analyze the types of errors that are often made by students when writing in English. Techniques of data collection in this study using primary and secondary data.

Population and Sample

A total of 23 students from MBTI international class participated in this study. Most of these students are from Indonesia, and a few others are from Tajikistan and Malaysia. They use Indonesian language to interact with each other in their daily life except in the classroom. Students write in Indonesian both in formal and informal situations. They only write in English when working on assignments, exams, or final project.

Data Collection Techniques

In this study, the data collection techniques used to obtain primary data are:

1. Writing sample results

Halliday and Hassan (1976) states "writing allows writers to demonstrate their ability to construct a string of well-connected sentences that are grammatically and logically correct," or in other words, through writing the students can demonstrate their ability to construct interrelated sentences. In this study, students wrote their project of E-commerce subject. The writing samples for this study were 23 writings. The number of words in their writing is ranging between 50-150 words. However, from the 23 writings, only 20 were analyzed because the other 3 writings are considered quite good (not too many errors).

2. Secondary Data

Secondary data, according to Sekaran (2003:60), refers to information gathered from existing sources. While according to Suryabrata (2003:39), secondary data are usually arranged in the form of documents. To obtain secondary data, researcher conducted a literature study or library research.

Data Analysis Techniques

To identify errors made by the students, the error classification is categorized into classification made by Darus (2007) in Darus and Ching (2009) that has been modified by the researcher. The categorization consists of 25 types: tenses, subject verb agreement, capital letter, preposition, incomplete structure, conjunction, word choice, passive voice, punctuation, article, word form, gerund, word order, the native language equivalent, dangling modifier, sentence structure, verb formation, conditional if, spelling, relative pronoun, noun-pronoun, question form, parallel

verbs, quantifiers, plural form. This categorization is based on previous identification and then it is analyzed descriptively.

Results

From 20 essays that have been identified, the following is a summary of the discussion above:

Table 1:
Types of Errors

No	Types of Errors	Number	(%)
1	<i>Sentence Structure</i>	44	17.89
2	<i>Preposition</i>	26	10.57
3	<i>Word Choice</i>	22	8.94
4	<i>Word Form</i>	22	8.94
5	<i>Subject-Verb Agreement</i>	15	6.10
6	<i>Passive Voice</i>	15	6.10
7	<i>Punctuation</i>	13	5.28
8	<i>Verb formation</i>	13	5.28
9	<i>Incomplete Structure</i>	11	4.47
10	<i>Noun-pronoun</i>	7	2.85
11	<i>Plural form</i>	7	2.85
12	<i>Tenses</i>	6	2.44
13	<i>Article</i>	6	2.44
14	<i>Capital letter</i>	5	2.03
15	<i>Conjunction</i>	5	2.03
16	<i>Native Language Equivalent</i>	5	2.03
17	<i>Question form</i>	5	2.03
18	<i>Relative pronoun</i>	4	1.63
19	<i>Word order</i>	3	1.22
20	<i>Spelling</i>	3	1.22
21	<i>Paralel verb</i>	3	1.22
22	<i>Dangling modifier</i>	2	0.81
23	<i>Conditional if</i>	2	0.81
24	<i>Gerund</i>	1	0.41
25	<i>quantifier</i>	1	0.41
	Total	246	100

From the table 1 above, it can be concluded that sentence structure is the most common error committed by the student in their writing (17,89%), and then preposition (10,57%) and word choice (8,94%). It can be concluded that the MBTI International students still have problems in understanding the fundamental grammar in which it should not be occurred since they are now in their last semester and will soon begin to write their mini thesis. This phenomenon also identifies what is the problem, whether it is caused by a lack of students' grammatical competence, a low quality of students' English proficiency, or an inadequate reinforcement of English language materials given to the students. Therefore, if this is the problem, the institution should publish the regulation to overcome it, for instance: conducting

English matriculation before they begin their study or otherwise they will have to struggle with their English for all subjects taught for them.

In addition to errors in grammar, students also have problems in terms of writing techniques, for instance: in paragraph development, unity, and coherence. This suggests that the MBTI International students do not understand how to produce a sentence into a good paragraph. They do not pay attention to the rules of the sentence that a sentence must contain a minimum of two (2) elements--the subject and the predicate. They tend to ignore these elements. In addition, they also do not pay attention to punctuation, pretty much forget the dot and comma, so that the sentence becomes very long and inefficient (mechanical errors).

The tendency of students to make a long sentence can also be caused by their ignorance of the sentence types. They do not know independent or dependent clause in a sentence they produce. Thus, the sentence made by the student can confuse readers (usage errors). While the writer has responsibility to make the reader understand what they have written. They also do not use appropriate reference.

Discussion

It can be concluded that the MBTI International students are not skillful in developing ideas, produce correct sentences, and develop the paragraph correctly. It can be caused by the way of thinking that they use is like the way of thinking when they talk. Of course, this is different because when speaking, they are less likely to use formal language. Meanwhile, in the context of writing, it takes a formal especially in academic writing.

Moreover, in their writing students also do not pay attention to the rules of unity and coherence in the paragraph. They do not state the topic sentence or the main idea. They tend to ignore that the topic sentence should be supported by detailed sentences. They also do not aware of the irrelevant sentences. A paragraph should be coherent and the topic sentence should be developed orderly and logically into the next sentences so that the paragraph flows smoothly (Kies, 1995; Oshima and Hongue, 1988 in Padmawati, 2007). Difficulties experienced by students is how to develop a topic sentence into supporting sentences to form a coherent paragraph. Students write but what they have produced is not a coherent paragraph or text. Hence, it can be concluded that the MBTI International students still do not have the sensitivity to feel if their writing flows smoothly or not. They also rarely use conjunction so the writing produced is a bit stiff.

Next is their inability to make a lengthy paragraphs. Indeed, there is no standard number of sentences in a paragraph. Karim and Rachmadi (1996) in Padmadewi (2007) stated that the length of a paragraph depends on the completion of an idea / topic to be discussed in a paragraph, thus supporting sentences must be able to clarify the idea in the topic sentence and be able to put out irrelevant sentence. Students' problems mostly lie in their inability to make the sentences that support the main idea. They tend to make repetitious sentences. Moreover, they do not write in a form of paragraph but only points while they are asked to make paragraph. It shows incompetency or inability to develop a paragraph.

Difficulty in writing academic writing in English, especially for Indonesian students, who learn English as a foreign language is double. Difficulties faced by the students are not only with the writing itself, organizational structure and contents (Brown, 2006; Paltridge & Stairfield 2007 in Emilia, 2009), but also related to the

English language skills, such as using grammar, expression, and the right choice of words (Emilia, 2009).

Errors usually committed by Indonesian people in written English. These errors are also called syntactic errors. They are indeed often occurred in the context of EFL because the process of writing is different between a foreign and mother language. Contributing factor will be different. According to Sukyadi (2009), syntactic errors in the writing process in the mother language is often caused by carelessness or low awareness of the language. Thus, in the process of academic writing in the target language required (in this case English language), can be caused by differences in grammar between Indonesian and English. Hence, when the students write, what is in their mind is the concept of Indonesian language. They do not realize they still use the grammar rules of Indonesian or local language.

In learning a foreign language, in this case learning English, the mother tongue can be quite an impact. Brown (1994) in Sukyadi (2009) states that there are two kinds of interference from the mother tongue to foreign language acquisition-interfering and facilitating. Syntax errors can occur in them because of interference from the mother tongue which may cause students assume that a foreign language has the same grammar with native language. So, as a lecturer, we should be able to sensitize the students that every language has rules and characteristics of each language are of course different from each other.

In addition, Brown (1994) in Sukyadi (2009) also states that the syntactic errors made by students caused by the interference of the mother tongue can be improved, for example, teachers introduce these common errors when learning a foreign language. In addition, teachers should make the students aware of knowledge in the mother tongue and it can also be utilized in learning the target language.

Meanwhile, the acquisition of facilitating can be used in learning the target language so that the syntactic errors caused by mother tongue interference can be prevented by asking students to think directly in the target language. The implementation of facilitating can be maximized by linking it directly with other subjects through the use of books, assignments, and discussions in English and in fact it is highly applicable to International MBTI class. So far, the MBTI International students have always made writing directly in English. According to Lengkanawati (1990) in Sukyadi (2009), there is a correlation between the ability to write in the mother tongue and in foreign language. If the students write something in the mother tongue well, they will write well too in a foreign language. It also happens in the opposite, if they write badly in English, it will also mean their Indonesian writing is not good. It can be happened because most of the MBTI International students are from regions in Indonesia which means they have their local language other than Indonesian. Meanwhile, the international students are not native speakers because most of them are from the Tajikistan or Uzbekistan. It can be concluded that English is still considered as a foreign language for them.

The vocabulary of MBTI international students is very limited so that they sometimes use Indonesian vocabulary for some words in English. Students do not know the equivalent word in English for a very simple word in Indonesian. Actually to overcome this problem, the students can paraphrase the sentences to explain the word that they forget the equivalent in English. Paraphrasing is another skill that must be mastered by the students so that in their writing, they cannot use the

Indonesian word to explain something just because they do not know what the equivalent of the word. So as to facilitate writing skills in English, the students are encouraged to read because through reading, they can automatically add and expand their vocabulary (Johnson, 2003, in Emilia, 2009).

According to Emilia (2009), reading the book in English will greatly help in improving vocabulary. English has a very large vocabulary (more than one million words) compared to other international languages (Matthews, Bowen and Matthews, 2000:158 in Emilia, 2009). However, the pleasure of reading books in English for MBTI international students is still questioned whether they just read their textbook only for working on assignments or doing exams or it has become part of their life.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It can be concluded that MBTI International students are still not ready to write their mini thesis in English, there are still many errors in their academic writing especially in sentence structure. Therefore, there are several things that can be taken into consideration to improve the students' writing skills as follows:

1. Conducting matriculation for preparing students to use and have English skills before they begin their study.
2. Giving additional meeting in teaching and learning process to practice academic writing, giving them more exercises in writing so that they will learn how to write correctly and these exercises will sharpen their critical thinking in English.
3. Giving assistance in writing mini thesis intensively, so their mini thesis is qualified to be put in the library.
4. Providing feedback on the results of students' assignments at least in terms of content of what they have written. Therefore, lecturers can measure the level of the students' critical thinking in facing new things to enrich their knowledge.
5. Encouraging students to read because through reading activity, they can automatically add and expand their vocabulary.

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