The analysis of word class and morphology for Stage2 and Stage 4 texts in ESLL context

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Abstract

This research is intended to present the writing difficulties that second language learners have encounter through their learning process. Linguists have proved that English second language learners (ESLL) face some difficulties in their writing because it is hard to understand ESLL perspectives. Many samples of ESLL writing have been examined and proved that their writing lacks some linguistic features. Coherent, accurate and creative text is the goal for English language teachers to be produced by their students. Word class (parts of speech) and morphology are the key features of language that indicate its linguistic system, especially sentence structure. The researcher tries to analyze word class and morphology in two selected texts of stage 2 and stage 4 in a second language learning center. One of the findings of this research is the use of bound grammatical morpheme (inflectional morpheme) for both texts is to some extent justifiable although the writer of S2 text makes some mistakes in producing the right word to give new meaning.

تحليل اقسام الكلام وتصريفاته لنصوص المرحلة ٢ و ٤
في سياق اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية

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المستخلص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تقديم صعوبات الكتابة التي يواجهها متعلمي اللغة الثانية خلال عملية التعلم الخاصة بهم. أثبت اللغويون أن متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية الثانية يواجهون بعض الصعوبات في كتابتهم لأنه من الصعب فهم وجهات نظر متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية الثانية. وجدير بالذكر انه تمت دراسة العديد من عينات كتابة متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية الثانية وأثبتوا أن كتاباتهم تفتقر إلى بعض السمات اللغوية. ان النص المتماسك والدقيق والإبداعي هو هدف معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية والذي يجب أن ينتجه المتعلمين. ان اقسام الكلام وتصاريفه هي السمات الرئيسية للغة التي تشير إلى نظامها اللغوي وخاصة بنية الجملة. يحاول الباحث تحليل اقسام الكلام وتصاريفه في نصين مختارين من المرحلتين الثانية والرابعة في مركز تعليم اللغة الثانية. توصل الباحث الى أن احدى نتائج البحث هي استخدام المورفيم النحوي المربوط لكلا النصين يمكن تبريره إلى حد ما على الرغم من أن كاتب نص **S2** يرتكب بعض الأخطاء في إنتاج الكلمة الصحيحة لإعطاء

Introduction

Linguists have proved that English second language learners (ESLL) face some difficulties in their writing because it is hard to understand ESLL perspectives. Many samples of ESLL writing have been examined and proved that their writing lacks some linguistic features. Coherent, accurate and creative text is the goal for English language teachers to be produced by their students. Teachers should take into consideration the native language (NL) and cultural background of ESLL which influence the development and acquisition of target language (TL). In addition, most TL teachers are qualified in teaching but may not have the knowledge of cultural background of learners. Moreover,Teachers should always analyze their students work in order to overcome these problems and to give a good feedback of their development in language. Clearly, to overcome these problems we have to

look deeply into how words are formed and classified. Knowledge ofwords plays fundamental role in our ability to use and produce creative language in relation to speaking and writing (Akmajian ; Demers; Farmer and Harnish. 2001). Thus, all languages have a system of classifying words in order for us to understand the sentence structure semantically and pragmatically. Word class (parts of speech) and morphology are the key features of language that indicate itslinguistic system, especially sentence structure.We can make a distinction between words according to their simplicity and complexity McGregor (2010) such as the word **'play'** is simple word because it seems a minimal unit which cannot be brocken into meaningful parts while **'player'** is complex word because it has a structure **'er'**with it and it can be broken. It is assumed that knowing the word class and morphology can assist the students in making their texts coherent. However, it is common that learners of ESL face difficulties in identifying which words are adjective, noun and so on.These difficulties are related to word formation and morphological process. Therefore, these difficulties may create different types of patterns when they write their texts. Thus, writing can be considered the most difficult aspect for the ESL teaching. The variation of writing style would be different from one writer to another. For example, one writer may use many noun phrases while other uses many verb phrases.

Considering the problems mentioned above, this essay tries to examine two texts of ESL learners of stage two and stage four (hereafter, S2 and S4 respectively). Quantitative and qualitative methods are used to see how these students choose sentences patterns and how they perform in their texts. Quantitative methods deal with the occurrences of word classes and morphology, then qualitative method is used to describe the quantitative method findings.

Literature Review

The notion of parts of speech or word classes according to McGregor (2010) 'is that the words in the lexicon language can be put into different classes' (p. $_{83}$). Traditional grammarian defined these classes according to the type of meaning expressed while current linguists consider the grammatical behavior first, although meaning plays role and is regarded as the basis for

marking these classes McGregor (2010). In addition, Crystal (2003) asserts that grammatical behavior of words in the same way may have particular meaning and morphologically words may be categorized to the same word class. First of all, we have to acknowledge the fact that it is not the nature of the sound determine the meaning of a word. For example, the word '*sister'* in English refers to female sibling where in Arabic is '*ukht*' as we can see they have different sound but the meaning is the same. Akmajian, e.tal (2001) state that we have to see how complex words are formed, the relationship between individual words and other words of the language and how to build complex words from a simple ones. This will lead us to study the structure of the form which is called morphology. Matthews (1979) states that' morphology is the study of forms of words'. The complexity of lexical and grammatical rules such as word formation (clipping, backformation) or adding free or bound morpheme to a word such as (inflectional, derivational) (Yule, 1996) make the process of developing learners writing style very difficult since these rules are different from native language. Traditionally, linguists distinguish eight parts of speech or (word classes) in English language. Words are classified into two categories: content (open classes) and function (closed classes). Content words are divided into nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs while function words are divided into prepositions, articles, conjunctions, interjection, auxiliaries and pronouns (Akmajian, e.tal.2001) and Collins (2010).The native language may influence learners to make lexical errors (Swan, 1997 as cited in Hemchua & Schimt, 2006) or learners difficulties may stem from the words themselves (Laufer, 1997 as cited in Hemchua & Schimt, 2006).The distribution rules of morphological and lexical items of SL are considered to be one of the main problems for learners since its language specific. Knowing that the English sentence starts with subject-verb-object or the adverbs end with (ly) does not help the learner to figure out which word is adverb since the rules of the NLdiffer from TL. Nouns and verbs in English language are inflected for number to mark them as plural, singular and possessive for example, (*they speak, he speaks, my book, their books*) which also make it difficult for learner to master inflectional and derivational morphemes as they differ also from NL system.The complexity of english language rules for tenses,word classes and

grammatical items drives learners to commit errors in their writing.Hemchua and Schmitt assume that proficiency and number of errors do not always have a linear relationship.Hinkel (2002)states that the use of noun phrases by non-native speaker (NSS) employed in their texts are significantly more than native speaker.Hinkel also confirms that the use of verb phrases especially past tense by NS is more than NSS while the NNS use more present tense and auxiliary verb.McGregor (2010) asserts that not all languages have all types of part of speech which may results in making the learning process difficult. For example, some languages do not have preposition phrase because they do not have prepositions.In relation to adjectival phrases and adverbial phrases Hinkel highlights that the rate of using these phrases between NSS and NS depends on the text itself.

Acase study by Darus and Subramaniam (2009) on high school students in Malaysia found that the most common errors made by ESLL are the S plural, S with singular third person and the auxiliary verb with present continuous. In addition, Dyson (2010) explores that grammatical errors made by one of the texts analysed and found that the learner made errors with verbs by omitting the *-s suffix (3SG-s)* on lexical verbs with third person singular subjects. All of these related issues to this essay will be discussed thoroughly in the analysis section.

Method

This essay will analyze S2 and S4 texts according to quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative analysis will present the outcome of word classes and morphology in each text. In addition, the number of word classes and morphology are counted in each text and it will be presented in tables which are attached in the appendixes. On the other hand, qualitative method will be used to demonstrate the result of quantitative method in details, to show the differences between the two texts. The use of both methods will help us to understand the difficulties that both writers face and to give a clear picture of the analysis.

Two texts had been written by ESL learners are analyzed according to the methods above. S2 learner is 15 years old who will be ready to go to year nine. He was born in a refugee camp on Thai-border and speaks Karen as his

first language. He studies English for three terms and he was given a task to brainstorm a pirate words using characters pictured then to write a first person narrative. He wrote story composed of 422 words about 'travelling in the sea' as one of the main characters. The writer of S2 mostly used simple past and sometimes present tense. He uses simple word classes and vocabularies which clearly shows his level in English language as a beginner. The type of genre in S2 text is descriptive in which the writer describes his trip into the sea in a compositional way of writing. On the other hand, S4 learner studies in year 10 at standard level. We do not have information about his age, background, first language and school. He was under exam condition in computer room and chose to write an expository piecewhich composed of 264 words about the introduction of identity card in Australia. The writer of S4 used complex word classes and different morphological items to show his level of English. The type of genre is an argumentative in which the writer argues the problems which might Australian face if the government introduced the ID card.

Analysis

Table 1: Word Classes Occurrences

Word class	Number of Occurrence (Stage 2)	Number of Occurrence (Stage 4)
Noun Phrase (np)	116	47
Verb Phrase (vp)	88	58
Preposition Phrase (Prepp)	25	15
Adjective Phrase (adjp)	10	9
Adverbial Phrase (advp)	24	3
Subordinate conjuction (Sc)	15	5
Coordinate Conjuction (Cc)	31	14
Intensifier (int)	1	2

Word classes

The finding from quantitative method for S2 and S4 is clearly showing that the word classes are varied.Quantitative analysis reveals that the writer of S2 text produced 121 times of noun phrases while the writer of S4 text produced 47 times in which consistent with Hinkel (2002). The writer of S2 text produced the following variation of noun phrases: pro, n, det+n, det+adj+n while the writer of text S4 produced the following variation.The writer of S2

text employs around 80 pronouns (*we 22, I 17, they 16*) while the writer of S4 text employs around 17 pronouns (*it 7,our 4*) which shows that the S4 text writer has the knowledge of how to employ pronouns. Interestingly, for example, the use of personal pronoun used in S2 text is 17 times while S4 is only used once. In addition, The S2 student over used determiners such as (*my 14,a 11*).

 The use of verb phrases is congruent with Hinkel's view (2002) as we can see that both writers use morepresent tense than past tense in their textsand also they use more than twenty auxiliaries in each text as in S2 *text (were 9, have8*) while S4 text (*be 7, will 4*). The use of passive voice according to Hinkel reveals that the NNS depends on passive more than NS in advanced levels we can see that clearly in S4 text while S2 text does not produce any form of passive voice. The use of preposition phrases in S2 text is more than in S4 text which reveals that the S2 text writer repeating preposition phrases where he should not do that for example, (*my friend went back to their home and I went back to my home*)which isin line with McGregor (2010).

Adjectival phrases appear in same rate for both writes although the S2 text is a descriptive text and the writer should use more adjectival phrases to describe his story and this correspondent with Hinkel (2002). For example, the writer repeated the same adjective (*afraid*) five times where he should make his writing interesting by including different varieties of adjectival phrases like the writer of S4 text when he used the adjective (*disastrous, more vulnerable*) with few exceptions such he uses two adjectives (*more vulnerable*) where he should write (more vulnerability) because the NS does not produce that in such text. Moreover, the use of adverbial phrase in S2 text is more than S4 text in which the writer of S2 text tend to repeat adverbial phrases (*ready, never, too*) where he may avoid this by connecting phrases and apply one adverb for it with the exception of using one adverb ending with (*ly*) 'suddenly' while the writer of S4 text used all the adverbs which end with suffix (*ly*).

The use of subordinate conjunction, coordinating conjunction and intensifier in both texts clearly shows that the writer of S2 text lacks the understanding of when he should use them which result in cohesion shortcomings. For example the uses of subordinate conjunction is limited with 'then, if,

because' and the coordinating conjunction is limited with 'and' 25 times, 'but' 6 times.While the writer of S4 text he uses a run on sentences in paragraph 1,2,3,5 where he should stop the sentence by using conjunction since the NS does not produce such long sentences. Intensifiers are used nearly in a small rate for both texts because both writers seem unable to use them in a suitable way. See appendixes A for more details.

Morphological analysis

Table 2: Morphological items occurrences

Morphemes	Number of Occurrence (Stage 2)	Number of Occurrence (Stage 4)
Free Lexical Morpheme	163	139
Bound Lexical Morpheme	1	28
Free Grammatical Morpheme	246	129
Bound Grammatical Morpheme	55	29

It is revealed through Table 2 that the morphological items used by both writers differ substantially. Free lexical morpheme in S2 text is 163 items while S4 text is 139and 246 items free grammatical morpheme for S2 text and 129 items for S4 text. In addition, bound lexical morpheme for S2 text occurs once while in S4 text occurs 28 times in relation to use different lexical items which end in derivational morpheme. The use of different verities of derivational morphemes reveals that the writer of S4 text has the ability to include many complex vocabularies in his text while the writer of S2 text lacks such understanding and cannot produce new words. Moreover, the use of bound grammatical morpheme (inflectional morpheme) for both texts is to some extent justifiable although the writer of S2 text makes some mistakes in producing the right word to give new meaning.The writer of S2 text also seem to lack understanding of how to use S plural (*my friend went back to their home*), S possessive(*people ship*, and present and past tenses and future marker (*will started, were die, these places is our places*) which consistent with Dyson (2010).See appendixes A for more details.

To sum up, the errors which are made by S2 text writer is understandable since the absence of linguistic features in native language, influence of native language, individual differences and cultural background play important role in affecting the writing learning process.

Conclusion

This research has attempted to investigate how ESL writing varies in terms of the use of word classes suchas (noun, verb, adverbial and adjectival phrases) and morphological items such as (derivational and inflectional morphemes). This research also highlights the weak points of SLL writing compared to NL writing and the difficulties that face SLL through the learning process. It is assumed that the level of studying, individual differences, the influence of native language and cultural background may contribute to the writing style. In addition, the learning context plays a major role in achieving writing proficiency as ESL learners are exposed to the language more than learners of English as a foreign language. Teachers should have a broad knowledge of texts analysis in order to spot the shortcomings of their students and to be well equipped with linguistic features and socio-educational issues which influence the teaching and learning process. The analysis of texts may help teachers in creating different strategies to the writing style and to produce a fruitful lesson.Teachers should also concentrate on making their students aware of the relationship between the writer and the reader. Moreover, teachers should understand that word classes, morphological rules, phrase types and sentence patterns of English language is different from other languages which make learners committing errors by applying their own native language rules of writing.

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