

L1 USED DURING L2 FREE WRITING: A LOOK AT BEGINNING WRITERS

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the composing process and writing strategies of the beginning writers' free writing product dealing with the writing problem and theory of the writing process. It is seen from their grammar (minor grammatical errors, such as –s on verbs in third person singular), vocabulary (knows most words needed to express ideas but lacks vocabulary for finer shades of meaning), sentence (uses several sentences pattern), organization (somewhat sequenced), and fluency (writes several sentences). It focuses on how the beginning writers' L1 influence their L2 free writing product. Twenty five (25) students invoked by producing twenty five (25) different topics. The result shows that there is an influence of L1 knowledge to L2 language production in which the participants translate their ideas in L1 knowledge to L2 language directly without considering the structures and forms.

Keywords: free writing, beginning writer, writing process, scaffolding

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, information can be obtained from others' writing. Yet, many people complain that writing is not an easy skill. It is because putting our ideas in paper has to do with some steps in our brain. Moreover, in academic writing students have to be able to put their ideas in order as their purpose whether they want to persuade others or give their argument about an issue. According to Myles (2002), academic writing requires conscious effort and much practice in composing, developing, and analyzing ideas. Al-Khasawneh (2010:1) also says that English plays an important role in education and students are expected to communicate effectively in institutions where English is the medium of instruction.

In 2009, Nambiar examined the learning strategy used by bilingual Malaysian learn to read bahasa Melayu (L1) and English (L2) and whether there are similarity or different in the learning strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation, meta-cognitive, affective and social). In addition, this research is based on second language acquisition, Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, and discourse analysis (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983).

The method of this study is descriptive qualitative. The researcher chooses six participants based on their high English and Bahasa Melayu grades and high MUET (Malaysian University Entrance Test) score. Then, they are given one text in English and one text in bahasa Melayu with the

same difficulty level. They are asked to use think aloud protocols, retrospective recalls, and reading passage.

The findings show that the participants use different strategies to comprehend those two texts. In reading Bahasa Melayu text, they utilize cognitive in understanding the text; in reading English text, they utilize metacognitive in understanding the text. Nambiar shows that the complexity of English text becomes an obstacle for some participants; that is why they need more strategies (2009: 114).

These findings support behaviorist in which the learners' L1 knowledge would interfere their L2; and when L1 and L2 are similar, L1 will assist L2 learning (Ellis, 1995). Nambiar describes that the participants get difficulties in reading L2 text because it is not familiar with their L1 (2009). On the other hand, they read L2 text using L2 in their think-aloud affects them to be more comfortable reading L2 text. Yet, this research does not explain about cross linguistic transfer in detail which is occurred while understanding those two different texts.

Therefore, this research examines about cross linguistic transfer at beginner second language writers' product. Besides, there are some other problems that investigate in this research such as composing process and writing strategies dealing with the writing problem and theory of the writing process that is writing traits matrix.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

The primary data are from second language writer products from general English course of nursing class in the first semester. They are native speakers of bahasa Indonesia. Since the students can produce several sentences, they are considered as beginner writers (Peregoy, Boyle, and Cadiero-Kaplan, 2008:255). From 25 texts, the researcher only takes 3 of them based on the number words they produce; it is 250 words with different topics which produce some errors.

Procedure

The method of this research is descriptive qualitative. The data are collected by observation and documentation. Since the researcher is the lecturer then she observes the learning process in her writing class. After observing, the researcher conducts documentation by collecting the final products of her students. Then, the researcher reads the writing products then selects 3 writing products randomly. Last step, analyzing the data based on the theory.

Researcher uses scaffolding graphic to help students organize their ideas and supporting ideas. According to Ovando, Collier, & Combs (2003:345) She also uses the writing traits matrix (Peregoy, Boyle, and Cadiero-Kaplan, 2008:244) to find out the cross linguistic transfer on the descriptive text which can be seen from students' writing problems. She limits the writing traits matrix on grammar and vocabulary.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This discussion presents data and analysis. The data are got from observing 3 different descriptive writing products of nursing students. The data reveal about the organization, grammar, and vocabulary (Peregoy, Boyle, and Cadiero-Kaplan, 2008:244). In addition, the data are in the form of words and sentences.

Since the L1 (bahasa Indonesia) is different from L2 (English), the L1 knowledge will interfere L2 (Ellis, 1995). It means that the knowledge of bahasa Indonesia interferes students' English learning.

In data finding, words which are bold are grammar error, and italic words are inappropriate vocabulary.

Datum 1

Title: Avenged Sevenfold

Outline:

Paragraph 1: Introducing his favourite band

Paragraph 2: Describing the music genre of Avenged Sevenfold

Paragraph 3: Describing the meaning of the name (i.e., Avenged Sevenfold)

Paragraph 4: The album

Paragraph 5: Conclusion about the writer's opinion of the songs

From the outline above, it shows that the organization of the writing is well order or sequenced. After introducing that the writer like Avenged Sevenfold, he describes its music genre, then the meaning of Avenged Sevenfold, mentioning the realized album. He closes the text with his opinion of the songs.

Grammar and Vocabulary:

Par.1, line 4: Alternative metal is a music genre **which using** *another instruments*.

The “**which using**” should be which uses or using only. It is relative clause in which after “which” then put “verb”. Yet, the writer is confused whether he has to use verb or gerund. Meanwhile, the “*another instruments*” should be another instrument or other instruments. Since another cannot be followed by plural thing. Here, his L1 knowledge inferences his L2 word choices.

Par.2, line 2: The **member** of Avenged Sevenfold **are**....

In fact, Avenged Sevenfold consists of five personnel, so the word “**member**” should be members then it is followed by “are”. Here, his L1 knowledge inferences his L2 word choices; since in bahasa Indonesia, the speaker or the writer of bahasa Indonesia can express thing in plural just say the name or add word “banyak” or “para”.

Par.3, line 1: *Origins of the name Avenged Sevenfold* **is come** from *Christian Bible*....

The original sentence shows that the writer translates the bahasa Indonesia sentence directly to English. "Christian Bible" is shortened into "Bible" because everyone knows that Bible belongs to Christians. Then the sentence should be "Avenged Sevenfold is originated from Bible". The sentence is also shortened.

Par.5, line 1: ...the **lyrics** *iseasy to listen*.

The word "**lyrics**" are plural so it should use (to be) are. Here, his L1 knowledge inferences his L2 word choices; since in bahasa Indonesia, the speaker or the writer of bahasa Indonesia can express thing in plural just say the name or add word "banyak" or "para".

Then, "easy to listen" should be "easy listening" because after adjective should be noun. So it should be "... the lyrics are easy listening".

Par. 5, last line: ... They **willheld** a concert in Jakarta at 1st May 2012.

Since it is the last sentence, the researcher gives an advice that it should be given conjunction such as "in addition". Besides, this sentence is in the form of future tense; so after will it should use present participle (hold). Whereas in bahasa Indonesia there is no present or past participle. Here, the writer is distracted by the word-choice. The sentence should be "In addition, they will hold a concert in Jakarta at 1st May 2012".

In short, datum 1 is found that the organization of the writing product is sequenced. It can be proved with the outline. Yet, the writer needs to add a conjunction for the conclusion. Besides, it is found that the writer uses inappropriate relative clause (Par.1, line 4); chooses to infinitive than gerund (Par.5, line 1), past participle than present participle (Par. 5, last line), and inappropriate to be (Par.5, line 1).

Datum 2

Title: My Ideal Girl

Outline:

Paragraph 1: Describing the appearance

Paragraph 2: Describing the character

Paragraph 3: Conclusion

From the outline above, it shows that the organization of the writing is well order or sequenced. First, the writer describes the appearance. Then he describes the girl's characteristic, attitude. He closes the text by convincing the reader that his ideal girl is perfect for him no matter she has weaknesses in others' point of view.

Grammar and vocabulary:

Par.1, line 1: I have a dream **marry** *with* my ideal girl.

The word “**marry**” should be *marrying* because in the sentence has already a verb. “**marry**” is not followed by conjunction. The writer chooses to infinitive than gerund. This sentence proves that the writer translates his idea in bahasa Indonesia to English directly.

Par.2 : For *specifically* of my ideal girl, from hair, she has a *straight, natural, and black hair*. From skin, she has *a bright skin but the skin is not too black and not too white*. From face, she has *interested face* or sweet face.

The word “*specifically*” should change into “*ideally*”. Then, the rest of the words and the sentences can be combined or simplified into “*Ideally, my girlfriend has to have straight natural black hair, tan skin, and sweet face.*”

Par. 3, line 3: ...feminine, *funny*, stand alone, and *importantly* she can...

The word “*funny*” should change into “*cute*”, and “*importantly*” should change into “*the most important*” because it semantically is inappropriate.

Par.3, line 4: ... if **I beside** her...

This sentence (S + conjunction) does not follow marked construction (S + to be + complement). It should be “... if I am beside her...”

In short, datum 2 is found that the organization of the writing product is sequenced. It can be proved with the outline. Besides, it is found that the writer chooses to infinitive than gerund (Par.1, line 1), uses longer sentences (Par.2), chooses inappropriate word (Par. 3, line 3), and inappropriate marked construction (Par.5, line 1).

Datum 3

Title: My Cute Cat

Outline:

Paragraph 1: Introducing the cat

Paragraph 2: Describing the appearance

Paragraph 3: Describing the treatment

Paragraph 4: Conclusion

From the outline above, it shows that the organization of the writing is well order or sequenced. First, the writer describes the cat comes from. Then he describes the appearance. After that, she describes how she treats the cat. She closes the text by convincing the reader that she really loves her cat.

Grammar and Vocabulary:

Par.2, line 1: He always **follow** me.

The word “**follow**” should be “follows” because the subject is third person singular. As we know that bahasa Indonesia does not differentiate the use of verb for certain subject.

Par.2, line 3: He **isverylike**

This sentence (S + to be + adj + verb) does not follow marked construction (S + Verb + Object). It should be “He likes very much....”

Par.2, line 6: ... his nose very big.

This sentence (S + Adj + Noun) does not follow marked construction (S + Verb + Object). It should be “His nose is very big.”

Par. 3, line 6: I like **carry** him.

The writer chooses infinitive than gerund. Whereas the sentence should be “I like carrying him.”

This sentence proves that the writer translates his idea in bahasa Indonesia to English directly.

In short, datum 3 is found that the organization of the writing product is sequenced. It can be proved with the outline. Besides, it is found that the writer does not follow marked construction (Par.2, line 3; Par.2, line 3; Par.2, line 6 and Par. 3, line 6).

CONCLUSION

These findings of this research support the assumption of behaviourist that learning L2 will be influenced by L1 knowledge. This study answers the problem that there is cross linguistic transfer negatively in the writing products. In other words, the knowledge of first language influences the use and transfer of foreign language that is English. It supports the findings of Nambiar’s research even though Malaysians are familiar with English rather than Indonesian. It means that the familiarity of the second language will not always assist them in comprehending and producing the target language.

From the analysis above, the writers do not face any obstacle in organizing their ideas. It is because they utilize scaffolding graphic to organize ideas and supporting details. That is why, using scaffolding to help our students in their academic writing activity is recommended; moreover there are many researchers who use scaffolding graphic in their writing research. Yet, they make some writing problems on grammar and word choice. They translate their ideas directly from bahasa Indonesia structure to English without considering the structure. Most of them choose inappropriate word choice.

As the same with Nambiar who says that the learners need to apply various strategies to comprehend L2 text, here the researcher suggests the intermediate second language writer to use

scaffolding graphic in arranging the ideas. Besides, Nambiar suggests the learners to use the L2 in their think-aloud protocols in comprehending the L2 text, either the second language writer does.

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