



Lexical Features of Senior High School Students' Writing on Recount Text

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Abstract

This study was aimed to find out the lexical features of senior high school students' writing on recount text. The corpus being analyzed in this study consists of 38 recount texts. The corpus was analyzed by using text analyzer online application. It was found that students' vocabulary has exceeded over 853 words family. The lexical density of the students' writing was 35.8%, and its beta alternative (readability factor) was 70.7. In accordance with the high frequency words appearing in the recount text, they were categorized into five prominent lexical classes. They are noun-pronoun to identify objects being involved in events, action verbs which refer to events, conjunction and time connectives to sequence the events, adverbs and adverbial phrases to indicate place and time, and adjectives to describe nouns. These five prominent word classes of recount text existed in the students' writing.

Keywords: corpus, lexical features, recount text

A. Introduction

There have been many studies on negative evidence of learners' interlanguage; for instant research which focuses on errors made by second language learners like error analysis, contrastive analysis, and language transfer (Ellis, 2012). Those studies mostly perceive learners' interlanguage in a negative way. Instead of perceiving L2 learners' interlanguage from negative perspective, a research study which tries to look at learners' interlanguage from opposite perspective is also important. It tries to look at learners' interlanguage in a positive way. In other words, instead of finding what learners' errors are, it tries to find out what the L2 learners at their level can do. It seems unfair for learners if their interlanguage errors are persistently explored, but their interlanguage never perceived as a kind of achievement. Thus, it is also a good idea if we also look at their interlanguage from a positive perspective. This of course will be a kind of appreciation for learners' effort on learning. In addition, this kind of research can make the distribution of literature on learners' interlanguage equal not only emphasized merely on their negative achievement, but also on their learning achievement positively.

Many researchers have undertaken large-scale analyses of published corpora that include fiction, newspaper texts, academic publications, formal spoken texts, such as sermons and speeches, and transcribed informal conversations (Hinkel, 2008: 11). Some of such researchers focused their studies on analyzing lexical features contained in those corpora. For instant, a study which was carried out by Jireghie, Biris, & Banciu (2012) focuses on analyzing lexical features contained in Business Meeting. Similar study but with different text was also done by

Gui-ying (2007). He conducted a research on lexical features of contract English. His study tries to view the lexical features from the perspective of formal words, archaisms, technical terms, common words with uncommon meanings, reduplication of words, deliberate use of vague words, and avoidance of pronouns. Researching lexical features, Wang, Li, & Cao (2012) also investigated series of corporate annual reports. To add, Huang (2010) also studied lexical features of commercial English from perspectives of word length, lexical density and frequency distribution. However, there is little research done to investigate L2 learners' lexical feature. One study investigating learners' writing based on lexical and syntactic features was done by Ferris (1994). She conducted a study on four groups of learners from Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, and Spanish by comparing those four groups' compositions. However, so far, there have not yet been any research focuses on lexical features of Senior High School students' writing especially on recount text. Thus, this research is worth doing because it goes into detail aspect of second language learners' writing.

This study was aimed at discovering lexical features of English learners' writing on recount text. From this study, it was expected to find out whether the learners' writing on recount text had qualified as an acceptable recount text in English.

B. Methodology

The present study is based on one small corpus related to recount text which was designed to find out lexical features in the whole recount texts. In this way, the corpus-based study focuses on frequency data, lexical density, readability, and the unique words which are attributed to recount text

1. Data collection

The corpus consists of 38 students' works on recount text with 8,102,762 running words. The students come from SMA Negeri 1 Cawas. Since the students were required to publicly upload their recount text into a web-log, all of the students' works could directly be downloaded from the web-log websites. Accordingly, in building the corpus, the first step is to convert students' works from html format to txt format.

2. Analytical approach

After the corpus was converted into txt format, then the data were processed with a text analyzer which is provided in <http://textalyser.net> to obtain frequency data, lexical density, and readability. In addition, the frequency wordlists were also obtained from such text analyzer website. Then the frequency wordlist obtained was categorized based on lexical categories of recount text (Board of Studies NSW, 1998). The categories cover verb, adjective, adverb, noun as well as pronoun, and conjunction. Since there were many words resulted from this on-line application program, only words with frequency more than five or 0.5 % were displayed in the table analysis.

C. Findings and Discussion

In this part, the researcher is going to categorize lexical features that exist in the recount texts produced by L2 learners in Senior High School. So, to test out Textalyzer, the researcher ran the corpus which has been in the *txt* format through the program. The results are tabulated below.

Table 1: Result of Text Analyzer

Total word count :	4663
Number of different words :	853
Complexity factor (Lexical Density) :	35.80%
Readability (Gunning-Fog Index) : (6-easy 20-hard)	4.7
Average Syllables per Word :	1.49
Sentence count :	491
Max sentence lengths (words):	43
Average sentence length (words) :	9.65
Min sentence lengths (words):	4
Readability (Alternative) beta : (100-easy 20-hard, optimal 60-70)	70.7

Table 1 shows that the corpus of this study consists of 4663 words. Among these words, there are only 853 word families used in this recount text. Thus, it can be inferred that the vocabulary size of Junior High School Students has reached more than 853 words. While its lexical density is 35.80%. It means that the learners' vocabulary is considered to be easy.

In the readability score of Gunning Fog, lower is more readable, and the range is six to 20. Unfortunately, the corpus earns a score 4.7 which is below 6.0. It means that the corpus being analyzed was totally very easy. It can be seen in the unique word lists table in which most of the vocabularies used were words without affixation. In the alternative readability score (last row), the higher the score, the more readable the text is. Here, the gained score of the text is seventy point seven. And it is toward greater readability, which is never a bad thing.

Sentence length averages within 9.61. The maximum sentence length is within 43 words. The maximum sentence produced by the learners can be seen in the following excerpt.

(John lived in Magelang and he came from Paris I and john walked around of the temple, in the afternoon I and family stayed in hotel It was beautiful hotel, we had a dinner in a beautiful café, that was my best experience)

Excerpt 1: Learners' Maximum Sentence

Based on excerpt 1, it can be seen that the learners still have problem in sentence fragment. In terms of complex and compound sentence, they still cannot separate one sentence and another correctly in order to make them coherent each other. However, the words used in the sentence are still readable and understandable.

The minimum sentence produced by learners is 4 words. It can be seen in the following excerpt.

I was so afraid.

Excerpt 2: Learners' Minimum Sentence

Comparing the learners' maximum and minimum sentence length, it can be seen that the learners can perform better if they make a short sentence. When they produce a sentence which is too long like complex or compound sentence, it can be syntactically defective. Based on the excerpt above, it can be concluded that the shorter the sentence the learners produce, the more correct the sentence is.

Lack of familiarity of text feature appropriate to the certain genre like recount may prove to be severely awkward (Atkinson, 1991 & Poole, 1991 in Heinkel, 2002:170). This case mostly found in the writing produced by most of Non- Native speaker students. In relation with the corpus of this study, the learners' lexicon attributed to recount text has been used proportionally. It can be seen in the following table.

Table 2: Word lists of Recount Text in the Corpus

Noun-pronoun	day, home, school, friend, friends, bus, brother, Jakarta, night, bath, island, time, field, camp, years, o'clock, teacher, experience, year, beach, tour, foot, hotel, day, sea, family, sister, hours, zoo, rice, man, father, camping, house, afternoon, village, holiday, Karimun, java, competition, morning, bag, experience, street, bali, tv, fire, students, way, trip I, we, my, me, it, our, he, them, they
Adjective	That, happy, last, one, some, many, next, this, tired, first, two, bad, afraid, beautiful, big, ready, angry, fast, new, good, other, three, enjoyed, all
Adverb	then, very, there, together, ago, back, late, too, again, finally, not, near, suddenly, today
Conjunction	and, after, because, but, so, when, before, who, while
Verb	arrived, go, played, got, saw, walked, take, break, hope, study, have, playing, watched, took, bought, like, said, visit, built, run, wanted, spent, ate, came, would, wait, fell, woke, started, do, come

As mentioned before, there were 852 word family found in the corpus. However, not all of them were listed in table above. The words whose occurrences do not exceed 5 were not listed in the table because it will take more spaces. The first row contains nouns and pronouns used

by the learners in their recount writing. These nouns and pronouns were used to identify people, animals, or things involved in their recounts. Word 'day' was the most frequently used. It appeared 39 times. Then it was followed by words 'home (36 times), school (28 times), friend (26 times), bus (16 times), brother (15 times), Jakarta (15 times), night (13 times), bath (12 times). 'Island' and 'time' were 9 times respectively. Words 'field, camp, years, o'clock, teacher, experience, year, beach, tour' occur 8 times respectively. Words 'foot, hotel, day, sea, family, sister, hours, and zoo' occurred 7 times. Words 'rice, man, father, camping, house, afternoon, village, and holiday' occurred 6 times in the text. While words 'Karimun, Java, competition, morning, bag, experience, street, Bali, tv, fire, students, way, trip' appear only 5 times in the corpus. In terms of pronoun, 'I' was the prominent personal pronoun used in the text. It occurred 241 times. Then it was followed with 'we' (195 times), my (140 times), me (28 times), it (28 times), our (14 times), he (11 times), them (7 times), they (7 times). Based on the data of these pronouns, the use of pronoun 'I' was highly used because the recount text mostly talked about their personal experience. Thus, the use of first person singular was high. The result probably will be different if the study was applied to other text types.

The second row is the lists of adjectives. The highest adjective is demonstrative adjective. It was used 27 times. Then it was followed with happy (21 times), last (18 times), one (17 times), some (16 times), many (15 times), next (14 times), this and tired (12 times), first and two (10 times), bad and afraid (8 times), beautiful (7 times), big, ready, angry, and fast (6 times respectively), new, good, other, three, enjoyed, and all (5 times for each). Those adjectives are mostly used to describe nouns involved in the event. It can be seen in the following excerpt.

*It was a **beautiful** fire works.
 Suddenly I hit **big** mirror.
 The **next** day, we arrived...*

Excerpt 3: Samples of the Use of Adjective

The list of adverbs is in the third row. According to the data, adverb 'then' was the most frequently used in the text. Its frequency was 49. Then it was followed by very (44 times), there (35 times) together (11 times), ago (10 times), back (9 times), late (8 times), too and again (7 times), finally and not (6 times), near, suddenly, and today (5 times respectively). Among those adverbs, only 8 adverbs were obviously used to indicate place and time in recount text i.e then, there, ago, again, late, suddenly, near, and today. These 8 words are prominent words in recount text.

In terms of conjunction, it can be seen in the fourth row that there were 9 conjunctions which were commonly used by learners in their recount text. Conjunction 'and' was used 155 times. Then it was followed with after (37 times), because (26 times), but, so, and when (25 times respectively), before (8 times), who (6 times), and while (5 times). However, among those conjunctions, only four conjunctions become prominent vocabularies used in recount text. They are after, before, when, and while. Those conjunctions are used to connect sequence of events in a recount text. However, looking in detail, conjunction 'and' was also used by learners to sequence events. It can be seen in the following excerpt.

*Eventually we tired of playing **and** decided to go home.
 ...we packed our bags **and** got ready to go home.
 ...here we watched some technology in a big room **and** we bought some souvenir...*

Excerpt 4: Samples of the Use of Conjunction 'And'

The last row is the list of verbs. Based on the data, word 'arrived' was frequently used by learners. It was used 16 times. Then it was followed with go (14 times), played and got (13 times), saw (12 times), walked and take (10 times), break, hope, and study (9 times respectively), have and playing (8 times), watched, took, bought, like (7 times), said, visit, built, run, wanted, spent, ate, and came (6 times), would, wait, fell, woke, started, do, and come (5 times for each). In accordance with recount text, verbs which become distinctive features of recount text are action verbs to refer to events. To sum the verbs up, the action verbs which were obviously used by the learners in their writings were arrived, go, played, saw, walked, take, playing, took, bought,, built,

run, ate, fell, started, and do. Such words were used to indicate actions which were done by objects being involved in the event.

D. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that learners' writing on recount text in Senior High School level is readable and considered accepted as a form of English recount text. Their prominent lexicon used in recount text has already fulfilled the criteria of acceptable recount text which cover the use of noun-pronouns, verbs, adjective, adverb, and conjunction. However, their lexicon is still simple. We can see their vocabularies which were lack of inflections. Due to this factor, it makes their complexity factor low. In spite of having low complexity factor on lexicon, Senior High School students still can develop their lexicon as the time goes because they are still in progress of learning. Of course, teachers have significant roles in the classroom to keep these vocabularies develop rapidly from time to time until learners can achieve native like proficiency.

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