Ideational Metaphor Analysis on EFL Students' Academic Writing

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Abstract—Over the last decade, research on the quality of EFL students' English academic writing has increased. However, research on EFL students' academic writing that incorporates grammatical metaphors is regarded scarce. As such, this study seeks to elucidate the occurrences of ideational metaphors in students' academic writing essays. The qualitative descriptive method was used in this study. This research involved a total of 25 undergraduate students from the University of HKBP Nommensen Medan, Indonesia, English Department, Faculty of Language and Arts, who studied Academic Writing course in the third semester. Students were required to submit a 350-word essay on the subject "Learning Challenges during the Coronavirus Pandemic." The research's data corpus totals 10,252 words. The results indicate that the students' writings contain 281 clauses comprising the ideational metaphor. It is deemed little in comparison to the corpus's overall data set of 10,252 words. Material processes dominate the incidence of ideational metaphors, followed by mental processes, relational processes, behavioral processes, and existential processes. This finding implies that the essay structure of EFL students is unlikely to have a large proportion of solid grammatical metaphor clauses. The pedagogical implication of this research is that EFL students, lecturers, teachers, and other educational practitioners interested in teaching English academic writing should be aware of grammatical metaphors in writing texts as a proxy for the quality of scientifically academic writing.

Index Terms—academic writing, ideational metaphor, SFL, students' essay, writing skill

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is an activity that is often done by people worldwide. Consciously or not, people do writing activities almost every day. People may do routine business writing or be involved in social media communication with various platforms that exist today, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or WhatsApp. The purpose of writing activities on social media is generally for fun or daily interaction communication. Writing can also be an activity used as a profession, such as journalists, book authors, or blog writers. In other words, writing can be made into a hobby, or it can also become a profession if practiced well.

Writing skills can be self-taught or acquired from lessons at school or university. Writing is a fun activity to learn, but writing can be a challenging and tedious activity for some people. Different perspectives depend on a person's experience in learning to write. Writing skills are language skills that are very challenging for language learners to master. Since writing skills are a matter of word choice or grammar and how a student expresses writing ideas clearly and coherently, it takes patience, tenacity, and a solid commitment to practice writing skills.

In actuality, EFL students confront numerous barriers when it comes to developing their academic writing abilities. When students write academic reports or course assignments, they commit numerous errors. Pasaribu et al. (2021) discovered that students frequently commit writing faults when preparing a thesis. This writing fault contributed to the bad quality, content, and language of their thesis. The low quality of student writing in academic writing is a result of interference with the language, followed by translation and negligence (Pasaribu, 2021).

Additionally, Lestari (2020) examined the obstacles faced by undergraduate students when preparing theses. The data for this study were gathered using questionnaires and interviews. Students' limited English proficiency contributes to the difficulty of writing this thesis; poor time management; ignorance of research methodology; and students' motivation, attitude, and commitment to thesis writing, the latter of which was facilitated by the students' communication with their thesis supervisors.

Özkayran and Yilmaz (2020) also discovered writing faults in the English writing assignment of EFL students in Turkey. This study demonstrates that the students commit academic writing errors involving prepositions, the usage of the verb "be," singular and plural nouns, spelling, articles, and tenses. This inaccuracy is frequently caused by a lack of knowledge about proper academic English writing. As a result, professional educators such as lecturers and teachers should foster a pleasant, favorable, and enjoyable writing environment and encourage students not to be afraid of making errors when writing.

Khatter (2019) and Nurruzaman et al. (2018) did additional research on academic writing faults (2019). They conducted research on writing errors produced by Saudi Arabian university students. These two studies discovered that the majority of faults in academic writing are in the sphere of English grammar. This error occurred as a result of interlingual and intralingual transfer, as well as deficiencies in knowledge and comprehension of grammatical issues, insufficient practice, and educational background. Based on prior research, it can be inferred that the majority of errors

in academic writing in universities occur in the field of grammatical mastery, as a result of students' inadequate comprehension and competency with their grammar (Casal & Lee, 2019).

Along with study on academic writing faults, Zhang et al. (2021) and Al-Saadi (2020) did research on a variety of themes linked to students' academic writing (2020). They investigated the effect of author gender on the quality of writing. Additionally, Kim and Kessler (2021), Casal and Lee (2019), Xuan and Chen (2019), and To (2018) did research on writing quality, examining the effect of lexical bundles and linguistic complexity on writing quality. Meanwhile, Naghdipour (2021), Thipatdee, (2019), and Chanyoo (2018) attempted to analyze the quality of writing in relation to writing pedagogy and other aspects.

From the foregoing explanations of prior research, it can be stated that academic writing research in general tries to identify writing errors done by students. The factors that contribute to writing errors are also fascinating, and are frequently investigated by teaching practitioners or educational scholars. The following section contains research that demonstrates the relation of teaching methods or techniques, gender disparities, and environmental studies on students' writing ability or quality of writing.

The study of writing quality through the lens of grammatical metaphors is still in its early stages. Using grammatical metaphors from Systemic Functional Linguistics, Zang (2018) and Liardt (2018) attempt to assess the quality of students' academic writing at Chinese universities (SFL). They stressed the importance of pupils understanding how to utilize linguistic metaphors in their academic writing. To (2018) also evaluates the quality of a series of English textbooks in terms of lexical difficulty in Vietnam. The texts read became more sophisticated as the students' levels progressed, according to this study. The research on grammatical metaphor used to paraphrase the mechanical text was employed by Marr (2019). She discovered that grammatical metaphor was useful to explicitly paraphrase the mechanical text.

Tavernier (2018), on the other hand, compares the relationship between grammatical Metaphor and grammaticalization in the context of SFL theory. This study found a link between grammatical metaphors and text grammaticalization. Yang (2018) investigated a series of grammatical metaphors in SFL to challenge the theory of textual metaphors. Ideational and ideational metaphors are considered more solid and robust than textual metaphors, both in theory and in their implementation in the text.

Suhadi (2018) did study on grammatical metaphors in the Indonesian setting in order to determine the extent to which the theory of grammatical metaphors is applicable to analyze clauses in Arabic, Indonesian, and English. This research established that the grammatical metaphor theory, which encompasses ideational metaphor and interpersonal metaphor of mood, was successful and suitable for assessing a variety of discourses in the three sampled languages. Additionally, Mahmuda et al. (2018) sought to elucidate the form and lexical shifts associated with grammatical metaphors used in students' theses. This study discovered that students' theses were written in nominalization, a collection of nouns, or short sentences.

Despite the abundance of study on academic writing quality based on grammatical metaphors, research on academic writing quality based on grammatical metaphors is still rather rare. In the Indonesian setting, educational scholars at the university level continue to conduct scant study on writing quality. As such, this study assesses students' writing quality in terms of their capacity to use grammatical metaphors, particularly ideational metaphors, into their writings. This study will provide an additional viewpoint on the writing quality of students' essays in terms of grammatical metaphors, based on research.

II. Review of Literature

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a linguistic theory that regards language as a process of meaning construction and grammar as a tool for communication goals (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Eggins, 2004)). Language meaning is an essential part of oral and written communication. Language's meaning potentials are no longer limited to congruent and specified expressions. The use of linguistic forms in an incongruent and abstract manner is mostly accomplished through grammatical metaphors. Changes in the level of clauses, groups, words, and morphemes are involved in the transference of expression from one congruent representation to another incongruent realization (Suhadi, 2018).

The grammatical metaphor theory is an essential part of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory developed by Halliday (Yang, 2018). A grammatical metaphor is a lexico-grammatical structure shift that incorporates incongruent coding. Ideational metaphor and interpersonal metaphor are the two types of grammatical metaphor. Incongruent coding involving changes in transitivity structures is known as ideational metaphor and the type of clauses. In addition, the ideational metaphor is suitable to analyze the students' essays since the essays are considered one way of communication (Eggins, 2004; Suhadi, 2018). Interpersonal metaphor is divided into two types: mood interpersonal metaphor and modality interpersonal metaphor. The incongruent use of the speech function in terms of mood alteration or transference is referred to as interpersonal metaphor of mood. Changes in the modality used in interpersonal metaphor involve changes in the modality utilized, although this topic is not discussed in this study (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Suhadi, 2018).

The ideational metaphor is the incongruent forms of clauses, phrases, words in the transitivity construction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). There are six different types of transitivity: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and

existential processes. The form of metaphor in the material process is instanced in "the making", "the use of". The instances of the mental process are "thinking", "feeling", "vision", and so on. The instances are "being", or "appearance" in the relational process. The examples are "smile" "laughter" in the behavioral process. In the verbal process, the instances are "saying instead of say" "words instead of say". The existential process can be seen in "existence" or "being".

III. METHOD

The goal of this study is to determine which clauses are grammatical metaphors used by students in their essay writing regarding their learning experiences during the coronavirus outbreak. The descriptive qualitative method is used in this study. The research data set comprises of essays written by 25 undergraduate students from the English Department of the Faculty of Language and Arts at the University of HKBP Nommensen Medan, Indonesia, who completed Academic Writing courses during the third semester. Students were required to compose a 350-word essay on the topic "Learning Challenges During the Coronavirus Pandemic." This writing assignment was gathered via the WhatsApp group Academic Writing course. The data corpora total 10,252 words.

The analysis of data makes use of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics ideational metaphors. The researcher's focus on ideational Metaphor is because students' essays are regarded one mode of communication that lends itself to ideational Metaphor analysis (Eggins, 2004; Suhadi, 2018). The following are the steps involved in data analysis: Each phrase is identified and classified according to its transitivity construction into ideational metaphors, including material, mental, relational, behavioral, linguistic, and existential processes. Nominalization, grouping of nouns and clause simplicity are all observed grammatical metaphors. The data analysis is described in terms of the linguistic context in order to obtain the correct categorization of ideational metaphor phrases.

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study is aimed to examine how EFL students use ideational metaphors when writing essays. The students attempted to convey their feelings during the covid-19 pandemic that began in early 2020. To discover the ideational metaphor, a total of 25 essays including 10, 252 words were analyzed. It is a particular form of grammatical metaphor that refers to the subject of transitivity. The data analysis revealed that the essays as a whole had 281 ideational metaphors. With 134 occurrences, the material process is the most prevalent form of ideational metaphor, followed by the mental process with 83 occurrences, the relational process with 34 occurrences, the behavioral process with 34 occurrences, and the existential process with one occurrence. The writings, on the other hand, were absence of the verbal process. The following table summarizes the students' essays' use of ideational metaphors.

TABLE 1
TYPES OF IDEATIONAL METAPHOR IN THE ESSAYS

Types of Ideational Metaphor	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Material Process	135	48.04%
Mental Process	83	29.54%
Relational Process	34	12.10%
Behavioral Process	28	9.96%
Verbal Process	-	-
Existential Process	1	0.56%
Total	**281**	**100%**

The following table summarizes the interesting findings on the occurrences of the ideational Metaphor in the students' essays. To begin, the 281 occurrences of ideational metaphors are regarded insignificant in comparison to the 10,252 terms in the data corpus. In essays, incongruent expressions account for only 2.74 percent of all expressions. That is, the writings of the students are classified as non-scientific literature (Zhang, 2018; Suhadi, 2018). Second, ideational metaphors are most prevalent in the material process type, accounting for over half of all found ideational metaphors, 48.04 percent, followed by the mental process, accounting for 29.54 percent. These findings suggest that the students are more conversant with metaphorical phrases in physical and mental processes. Meanwhile, the number of metaphorical expressions in relationship and behavioral processes tends to decline dramatically. Surprisingly, the existential process contained only one metaphorical phrase, while the verbal process contained none.

The following discussion addresses the study's major findings, their resemblance and dissimilarity to earlier research, and the educational implications of the study's conclusions. Additionally, how to implement the ideational Metaphor for each sort of transitivity in the students' essays is explained. The material process is discussed first, followed by mental, relational, behavioral, linguistic, and existential processes.

A. Material Process

The material process is a subcategory of transitivity that refers to action. It refers to the concept of an entity acting on another entity. In other words, the actor (participant 1) fulfills the role of the objective (participant 2). Even though the clause does not mention it directly, every material process clause has an actor as the action taker. The objective

(participants 2) is the subject of the action. The following paragraph illustrates a material process with a metaphorical expression. The verb utilized in the material process has the property of being convertible into the present participle form. The material process is characterized by verbs such as "make," "watch," and "write."

Extract 1

*Taking better care of health and **maintaining cleanliness.***

Extract 1 demonstrates the sentence's incongruent expression. The gerund form of "taking" is derived from the verb "take." The verb "maintaining" is derived from the verb "maintain," while the noun "cleanness" is derived from the adjective "clean." The sentence can be congruent as in "It is preferable to look after one's health and keep it clean." The verbs "take" and "keep" are classified as action verbs in the text; as such, they are considered to be a form of material process.

Extract 2

*I started **studying** and doing online assignments, after **finishing** online hours, I didn't forget to communicate with my classmates about lessons.*

The use of the gerunds "studying" and "ending" in the sentence is likewise highlighted in Extract 2. The root forms of the verbs "learn" and "end" were used to create both terms. The gerund derivation is the most metaphorical term realized in the literature, according to the findings. This finding suggests that the students were well-versed in the gerund derivation procedure. This conclusion backs up the findings of Mahmuda et al. (2018), who found that nominalization was the most common grammatical metaphor in their study. The most common form in the texts was noun derivation, such as gerund.

B. Mental Process

The mental process is the sensory process. It is the process that describes what occurs in the mind's internal universe and includes such activities as thinking, imagining, desiring, liking, and seeing. Affection (liking, hating), cognition (deciding, comprehending, knowing, etc.) and perception (seeing, hearing, etc.) are the three types of mental processes (of seeing, hearing, and other verbs of sense.). In mental processes, there will always be a human-like participant who can feel, think, or sense. To put it another way, the participant should be conscious. The "senser" is the name given to this human-like participant. The item that is sensed, felt, thought, or seen is the other participant in the phenomenon.

Extract 3

*Sometimes, there is a sense of **longing** to learn.*

The clause in extract 3 demonstrates that "desiring" is a mental process. The term "longing" is classified as part of the affection process. The whole clause could be expressed as follows: "At times, there is a sensation of longing for face-to-face instruction." The clause is incoherent since the term "longing" is derived from the verb "long." This clause is congruent with the following sentence: "Sometimes, I feel longing to learn."

Extract 4

*While studying at home, there is an unpleasant **feeling***

The congruent version of the clause "...there is an unpleasant feeling" is shown in this excerpt. The metaphorical process took the form of a gerund as well. This clause is consistent if it is stated in the following format: "I do not feel pleased." Because the word "feeling" refers to the perception process, the ideational Metaphor is classified as a mental process.

C. Relational Process

The term "relational process" relates to the being process. That is, a relationship is established between two distinct entities, but without implying that one thing has any effect on the other. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the English system is characterized by three distinct types of relational processes: (l) Intensive, like in the case of John, who is a student. (2) Circumstantial denotes location, time, and company. Nancy, for example, was at school yesterday. (3) Possessive refers to a situation in which the participant possesses something or someone. Each of these is available in two unique modes: attribute-based and identity-based.

Extract 5

***Being** students, we must study hard and do our best.*

Extract 5 categorizes the clause as a relational process. This is a form of intensive identification. The phrase "being a student" is an incongruent variant of the phrase "we are students." The process of derivation from "be" to "being" is denoted by the gerund form of the grammatical metaphor.

Extract 6

***Having** so many friends **studying** is so nice and enjoyable.*

This clause illustrates that the terms "having" and "studying" are linguistic metaphors. The process of derivation of noun forms from the verbs "have" and "study" is believed to be part of the grammatical process. However, in the type of relational process metaphor, only the line "having so many friends..." is provided. It is classified as a possessive process.

D. Behavioral Process

The behavioral process is concerned with the physical or psychological functions of the individual. Breathing, coughing, smiling, sleeping, and seeing are examples of physical or psychological functions that are addressed by the

behavioral process. Due to the lack of clearly defined traits, behavioral processes are difficult to separate from other processes. There is just one participant denoted by the term "behavior," and that person is typically a conscious creature. There may be an additional player in some clauses: the Range, which is not a genuine participant in the process but just adds specialized action to the process (Zhang, 2018).

Extract 7

Cries and sadness are sometimes with us during the online learning during the days.

The incongruent clause is seen in extract 7. This is because the word "cried" is used as the clause's participant. The change in the definition of "cries" from a process to a participant position renders the clause incoherent. This clause may take the following congruent form: "We sometimes cry and feel sad during the online learning during the days." This clause demonstrates the psychological state of the initial participant or perpetrator of the action.

E. Verbal Process

"Verbal process" is a term that relates to the act of speaking. As a result, someone or something must act as the "sayer" who conveys the message. Nevertheless, the term "saying" should be taken liberally. It refers to any type of symbolic meaning exchange. Another participant is the Receiver, who is the recipient of the saying. Additionally, there are two additional factors: verbiage and what is stated. The data analysis revealed that the students' essays lacked an ideational metaphor in the linguistic process. The students appeared to be inexperienced with the ideational metaphor formation process during the verbal procedure. As a result, all sentences utilizing verbal processes were written in congruent forms.

F. Existential Process

It is a representation of anything that exists or is occurring. It expresses an entity's existence without anticipating anything else about it. Existential processes are unique in comparison to other types of processes. Typically, existential sentences begin with the verb "be", and the common clause structure is the "there" be a clause; for instance, "there is a glass on the floor," and "Is there any letters for me?" While the verb "be" is similar to relational processes, other verbs used in existential processes are distinct from either attributive or identifying verbs (Zhang, 2018). These verbs signify "to exist" or "to occur," and include exist, persist, arise, occur, come about, take place, and occur.

Extract 8

Being at home is boring. And I mostly just watch television and played my handphone.

The use of the word "being" in this passage is incongruent. "When I'm at home, I become bored..." is an example of a congruent sentence. The verb "was" is used to produce the word "being," which is implied in the clause. The definition of "being" demonstrates that the clause's participant exists. Thus, in the existential process, this clause is classified as a metaphorical expression.

Five types of transitivity were found in the ideational metaphor expressions. The data analysis, on the other hand, did not reveal the verbal process. The mental procedure was used to realize the most common sort of ideational Metaphor. Suhadi's (2018) findings and Mahmuda et al (2018) findings support this conclusion. They stressed that in their compositions, EFL students are often ignorant with the grammatical metaphor. Furthermore, certain grammatical errors can be seen in the essays, indicating a low level of academic writing by the students. This problem arose as a result of students' poor grammar skills and academic writing ability (Pasaribu et al., 2021; Pasaribu, 2021).

V. CONCLUSION

The research attempted to elicit ideational metaphor forms from students' essays written in an academic writing class. One of the pupils' exceptional academic writing characteristics is their use of grammatical metaphor. Using grammatical metaphors in academic writing, it can result in a higher quality of writing by students. In other words, academic writing should appear official, structured, and succinct. This research discovered that students' essay writings contain a modest amount of ideational metaphor clauses. As a result, this outcome adds to the low quality of academic writing produced by pupils. Another intriguing discovery was that the ideational Metaphor was most frequently associated with a material process. Additionally, the students were most familiar with the technique of deriving nouns from infinitive verbs, referred to as gerunds.

The research findings have led to the pedagogical implications of academic writing in EFL classes. To begin, students should be more conscious of the importance of condensing and solidifying their writings through the use of grammatical metaphors. Second, lecturers must establish a teaching technique that enables students to improve their academic writing skills, particularly in the use of grammatical metaphors in their writing. Appropriate instructional materials, such as EFL practice books in academic writing that explain grammatical metaphors, must be used to ensure that students' writing is of the highest possible quality.

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