THE USE OF THE HIGH FREQUENCY VERB MAKE IN OPINION ESSAYS BY VIETNAMESE EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract. This article explored how Vietnamese English as a foreign language (EFL) students used the high frequency verb MAKE in their written opinion essays, with the aim of understanding the patterns of MAKE uses and errors. The freeware AntConc (Anthony, 2020) was used to identify the different forms of the target MAKE and their frequency in 200 opinion essays written by Vietnamese EFL university students in three English writing classes as progress tests. Each concordance line in the AntConc output was subsequently examined to discover the patterns of uses of MAKE according to Altenberg and Granger's (2001) framework. The instances of MAKE in use were further analysed for errors that occurred. The results show that causative and delexical uses of MAKE were most common and students still committed errors with MAKE. The findings have important pedagogical implications for feedback giving and EFL writing instruction.

Keywords: the high frequency verb MAKE, opinion essays, patterns of use, errors

1.   Introduction

High frequency words are the words that are learnt early and account for a large proportion of the running words in English as a second (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) texts (Crossley, 2020; Laufer & Nation, 1995; Nation, 2013). Yet, how EFL students use specific high frequency words in their classroom-based written language production has received limited attention. Despite its being one of the most common verbs (Altenberg & Granger, 2001), how EFL students used the verb MAKE in EFL writing is under-researched, in comparison with a burgeoning body of quantitative research on lexical measures (e.g., González, 2017; Maamuujav, 2021; Zheng, 2016). Little has been known about how Vietnamese EFL students use the high frequency verb MAKE in their writing. The present study thus fills these gaps by exploring how Vietnamese EFL university students use the verb MAKE in their written opinion essays.

As a common verb, MAKE tends to be associated with error-free use. However, the question of whether MAKE is really 'safe' has attracted the attention of many scholars (e.g., Altenberg & Granger, 2001; Kim, 2015). The current study, therefore, examined the patterns of use of MAKE and its erroneous use if any in Vietnamese EFL students' opinion essays. While research has called attention to encouraging students to use diverse and advanced words in their writing (e.g., González, 2017; Maamuujav, 2021; Zheng, 2016), it is equally important to seek understanding of how students use high frequency words in their writing. Insights into uses of MAKE could inform writing instruction and feedback giving for language development.

The present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What was the frequency of the verb MAKE used in Vietnamese EFL students' opinion essays?

2. What patterns of the verb MAKE did Vietnamese EFL students use in their opinion essays?

3. What types of errors did they commit while using the verb MAKE in their opinion essays?

2.   Literature review

This section first introduces high frequency words, high frequency verbs, and how they are used. It then describes different uses of MAKE and reviews research on MAKE uses, the focus of the present study.

1.   High frequency words, high frequency verbs and their uses

High frequency words are the words that occur most frequently in a language and have the most extensive coverage in oral and written texts (Vilkaitė-Lozdienė & Schmitt, 2020). They are useful in helping learners to understand the majority of words in these texts and thus should be prioritised in instruction (Crossley, 2020). Given their usefulness, high frequency words are often taught and learnt in the early stages of language teaching and learning (Nation, 2013). In Vilkaitė-Lozdienė and Schmitt's (2020) words, "the high-frequency end of the continuum is definitely worth attention in any classroom, as it provides a platform for all language use" (p.91). Many studies have shown that high frequency words make up the large majority of words in English essays by EFL and ESL learners (e.g., Laufer & Nation, 1995; Maamuujav, 2021; Nasseri, M., & Thompson, 2021; Park, 2013; Ryoo, 2018).   Yet not much has been known about the patterns and quality of use of these common words in written language production.

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High frequency verbs, a subgroup of high frequency words, are common verbs that occur in a wide range of texts. There are fifteen most common verbs in English, namely *have, do, know, think, get, go, see, say, come, make, take, look, give, find and use* (Altenberg & Granger, 2001). According to these authors, as high frequency verbs are learnt and taught early, they tend to receive limited pedagogical attention afterwards. Research on specific high frequency verbs such as HAVE with Chinese EFL learners (Zhou, 2016), and GET with Japanese EFL learners (Suzuki, 2015) shows that EFL learners have difficulty using the polysemous and collocational meanings of these target verbs. Other research has shown that high frequency verbs are still prone to errors (e.g., Crosthwaite, 2018; Fathema, Hakim, & Karim., 2015), and these errors have often been explained by reference to inter-lingual and intra-lingual factors. The first language (L1) influence, and negative transfer could be a source of inter-lingual (L1-induced) errors while inadequate control of basic and polysemous uses of the target verbs, constraints on where and when to use are often offered to account for intra-lingual errors (errors related to the target language) (Llach, 2010). Another explanation could be that learners tend to overuse the core meaning of high frequency verbs without taking into account their other semantic constraints (Vilkaitė-Lozdienė & Schmitt, 2020). Knowing a word entails knowing not only its form, meaning, and use, but also its contextual restrictions of use such as collocational, idiomatic, polysemous meanings (Nation, 2013). This becomes more challenging if students only know the very basic meanings of high frequency words.

The "learning burden" of an English word for EFL learners also depends on its "patterning", learners' L1 backgrounds, instruction and course materials, among other factors (Nation, 2020, p.15). According to Qian and Lin (2020), EFL learners face two major challenges. First, little exposure to the target language outside the classroom inhibits acquisition of different semantic and syntactic dimensions of English vocabulary. Second, as EFL learners have an established L1 lexical system, their L1 could be a useful resource that facilitates their learning of English words. However, overdependence on L1 could lead to misuse or errors.

Although error analysis suffers criticisms as it seeks to portray the deficiency of learners, that is, what they are unable to do (errors), it is pedagogically useful, since the errors that learners make provide insights into their meaning-form mapping process that can usefully inform feedback giving and instruction (e.g., Lee, 2020; Llach, 2010). Errors are "potential indicators of the developmental stages learners are likely to have reached" (Thewissen, 2013, p. 78). Such important roles of errors, together with the facilitation of available software analysis tools have revived research into analysing learner language, especially the errors they make in written language production (Chan, 2010; Crosthwaite, 2018; Laufer & Waldman, 2011; Llach, 2010; Thewissen, 2013).

2.   The verb MAKE and related research on its uses in written language production

2.1   The verb MAKE and its uses

MAKE is conceptualized as a common verb and has multiple uses (Altenberg & Granger, 2001, p. 181). According to these authors, MAKE has eight main uses. In the first use, MAKE has the meaning of 'produce' or 'create' (e.g., *make a cake, make a hat*). The second use involves MAKE acting as a causative verb. In this sense, its causative uses are further categorized into three structures: i) make someone/something + adjective (Adjective structure) as in *make her sad*, ii) make someone/something do something (Verb structure), as in *make him read more often*, and iii) make somebody + noun (Noun structure) as in *make her a star*. In the third use, MAKE semantically functions as a delexical verb. Delexical verbs are described as "a small group ofvery common transitive verbs which take as their object a noun which can also be used as a verb" (Allan, 1998, p.1). For example, delexical uses involve the use of MAKE as a delexical verb + noun/noun phrase (e.g., *make a decision (decide), make a claim (claim), make a contribution (contribute)*). Note that the noun that follows the verb does not always have an equivalent verb (e.g., *make an effort, make friends (with), make fun (of)*). Delexical verbs are named as such "because of their low lexical content and the fact that their meanings in context are conditioned by the words they co-occur with" (O'Keefe, McCarthy & Carter 2007, p. 38). In the fourth use, MAKE has the meaning of *earn* as in '*make a fortune' or 'make a living*.' The fifth use of MAKE is the idiomatic use of 'Make it', referring to the meaning of MAKE that is not inferred from the parts of the verbal phrase. One example is "*They couldn't make it on Friday.*", which means "*They were not able to come on Friday."* The next related use of MAKE involves phrasal or prepositional meanings (e.g., *make out, make up*). MAKE additionally functions as a link verb similar to *be, become,* etc. (e.g., *I believe he will make a good leader.*). The last group of MAKE uses are what Altenberg and Granger (2001, p.181) named "other conventional uses" (e.g., *make good,* or *make one's way*).

The categorisation of MAKE uses has provided a framework for analysing uses of MAKE in written output in a number of studies which will be reviewed next.

2.2   Related research on uses of MAKE in written language production

There are two stands of research on MAKE. One is research on general errors in writing where misuse of MAKE is explored as a side product, and the other specifically focuses on the verb MAKE.

In the first strand of research, Llach (2010), in a study on lexical errors by primary and secondary school Spanish EFL students, found that MAKE was an "all-purpose" word learners frequently used to compensate for lexical gaps that they encountered, and inappropriate use

occurred due to word for word translation resulting from L1 interference. In a Thai context, Kittigosin and Phoocharoensil (2015) investigated delexical verbs and also uncovered that MAKE was difficult for Thai EFL learners who used literal translation quite often in their writing, which contributed to misuse. Other research has documented both inter-lingual and intra-lingual errors (e.g., Fu, 2006; Nesselhauf, 2003) or documented learners having difficulty with restrictions of collocational uses, polysemy and register (Ang, Tan, & He, 2017; Wang, 2016).

Research that focuses on the particular verb of MAKE is still limited. Altenberg and Granger (2001) documented frequencies of uses of MAKE in writing by Swedish and French learners of English and compared with uses of MAKE by native speakers. The learner corpus in their study were extracted from International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) and the native one was sourced from Louvain Corpus of Native Essays (LOCNESS). In both corpora, the written texts were argumentative essays of an average length of 600 words from a variety of topics. Their study revealed that causative uses of MAKE were common in the learner corpus while delexical meanings were used at a much lower frequency than in the native one. Learners committed most errors with the delexical structure and misused MAKE in place of other verbs. They also used numerous clumsy English constructions due to L1 influence.

Turning to the Asian EFL context, Lin and Lin (2019) examined how instances of MAKE were used in writing by different groups of EFL learners in Asia. They employed ICNALE corpora (Ishikawa, 2014), which contain large samples of written essays from university students in 10 Asian nations and from native writers of English from Britain, Australia, USA, and Canada. They found causative uses were most frequent for all the Asian groups of learners while a greater variety of delexical structures were used in the native corpus. This study specifically analyzed errors by Taiwanese learners, and uncovered that much erroneous use was related to delexical structures.

With a particular focus on Korean EFL learners, Kim (2015) explored uses of MAKE in Korean EFL writing. General findings showed that causative and delexical uses were common and misuse occurred most with delexical structures. In comparison with native use, the EFL learners used delexical structures less frequently than native writers. Instead, they oversued causative structures of MAKE.

The few MAKE-focused studies reviewed here provide a useful lens into how learners of different L1 backgrounds use the high frequency verb MAKE in their writing in terms of its patterning and misuse. However, this line of research follows the same method of analysis by using existing corpora to source learner and native data. The conditions in which the essays were produced are not known to the reader. Contrastive analysis (comparison between native

and non-native uses) while being useful in allowing documenting underuse and misuse of the target MAKE for the two groups, subjects EFL learners to the position of being inferior and inadequate. As Larsen-Freeman (2014) argues, "by continuing to equate identity with idealized native speaker production as a definition of success, it is difficult to avoid seeing the learner's IL [interlanguage] as anything but deficient" (p. 217). More research is needed with authentic classroom data which should be analyzed in its own right.

3.   Methodology

3.1.   Participants

One hundred and nineteen third-year English-majored students at a Vietnamese university participated in this research. However, the data from 100 of these students was used for the present paper (See Data set). They were in the three respective writing courses taught by the first author at the university. At the time of data collection, they were about 20 years old and their proficiency levels varied from intermediate to upper-intermediate. Most of them (80%) were female, and only 20% were male. They came from different high school backgrounds in Vietnam when they entered university.

3.2.   Writing tasks

Three writing classes totaling 119 students taught by the first author were informed of the research and were willing to participate in this research. Each student hand-wrote two opinion essays, one was about the topic of Facebook and the other was School (See Appendix 1 for the task prompts) in their normal class hours as a progress test. The time interval between the two was one week because a longer time interval might affect learners' language development (Laufer & Nation, 1995). Students were asked to write about 250 words, in 45 minutes. This minimum word length was set for the present study, since minimum text lengths of 200 words are believed to provide consistent results in terms of vocabulary use (Laufer & Nation, 1995). Students were not allowed to use dictionaries, grammar books, or any other resources while writing their essays. They were not allowed to ask for help from the teacher or their peers. The writing tasks functioned as a test to see how students wrote independently. They were not provided with any linguistic items before they wrote, except the task prompts.

3.3.   Data set

Only the essays from the students who wrote both essays were included for the current analysis because some students were absent on the task day. In addition, handwritten essays that were not reliably readable were excluded. For these reasons, in total there was 100 essays per task, yielding a sampleof 29,799 and 30,048 running words in the Facebook and School

essays respectively. The effects of writing topics on uses of MAKE was beyond the scope of the present study.

3. 4.   Data analysis

All the collected handwritten essays were typed and saved as doc. files, checked carefully by the first author, and double-checked by another EFL teacher. Then the Antfileconverter, a free software (available at https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antfileconverter/) was used to automatically convert the doc.files into plain text files. These latter files were then inputted   into   the   Antconc   software   (Anthony,   2020)   (available   at https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/), a free ware for concordance analysis of the patterns of use of MAKE in key word in contexts (KWIC). Different forms of the verb MAKE were searched by keying in 'mak*' in the search box and a concordance of MAKE was created. The AntConc output also displayed the number of source texts (*range*) where each MAKE form appeared. The concordance output of MAKE searches from the written essays was transported to an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate coding and frequency calculation.

First, each concordance line in the AntConc output was examined to explore different uses of MAKE. These uses were then categorised into eight groups as guided by Altenberg and Granger's (2001) framework (further see Section 2.1.). These eight categories of uses are summarised in Table 1. Two irrelevant instances that did not involve using 'make' as a verb were removed ("*To click into the make-friends invites"*, and "*he was a perfect made for it*").

Table 1. Uses of the verb MAKE

1. Produce something	*make furniture, make a hole*
2. Delexical uses	*Make a distinction/a decision*
3. Causative uses	*Make somebody do* something (verb structure), *make something possible* (adjective structure), *make it such a popular social network* (noun structure)
4. Earn (money)	*Make a fortune, make a living*
5. Link verb uses	*She will make a good teacher.*
6. Make it (idiomatic)	*If we run, we should make it.*
7. Phrasal/prepositional uses	*Make out, make up, make out of*
8. Other conventional uses	*Make good, make one's way*

(Adapted from Altenberg & Granger, 2001, p. 177)

Next, since words are not used in isolation, but conjunction with surrounding words (Nation, 2020), in the present study errors related to the verb MAKE itself or the phrases that collocated with it were included. Erroneous use of MAKE was detected and annotated manually in the Excel version of the AntConc output. MAKE errors were coded in an open iterative manner as they emerged from the data. Errors are defined as deviated or non-targetlike forms (Llach, 2010). Analysis was also guided by the structures of uses of MAKE (Altenberg & Granger, 2001). Reference was made as needed to online Cambridge English dictionaries and other larger corpora such as the British National Corpus (BNC), COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English), or American National Corpus (ANC).

Table 2 presents the different types of errors and their examples as they originally occurred in the collected essays. The suggested correct forms are provided in square brackets.

Table 2. Error types with MAKE and examples from students' essays

Error type	Examples from students' essays
1. Adjective forms Inappropriate adjective forms in the causative structure	Facebook makes meeting new people **easily.** [easy] It makes your brain more and more **slowly.** [slower] This make them **depression.** [depressed] Facebook makes people **addict** [addicted]
Redundant 'be' that accompanies the adjective collocate	That make them *be* used to their parents. [~~be~~] The development of the Internet makes the social network *be* more popular. [~~be~~]
2. Verb forms Inappropriate verb forms that follow the verb MAKE in the causative verb structure	The teacher make children **to concentrate** on the subject. [concentrate] Facebook make you ***wasting*** your time. [*waste*] .., which makes you **became** passive and slow … [become]
Literal translation from Vietnamese to English in the causative verb structure which led to clumsy non-target like structures.	Many years ago, the distance **made people cannot contact** together [made it impossible for people to contact…] (prevented people from contacting …) Facebook make children **do not feel lonely**. [Facebook makes them feel less lonely/ reduces loneliness]
3. Plural nouns Omission of the inflectional morpheme –*s* that marks	Children make **mistake** again. Then, we have good characters … [mistakes]

plurality of countable nouns in delexical uses	Facebook helps us make **friend** with others. [friends]
4. Third person singular Omission of the inflectional morpheme –s that marks the third person singular present tense	Facebook **make** people relax …[makes] It **make** the life of people more interesting [makes] Playing with friends **make** students have behaviours like students and friends. [makes]
5. Verb choice MAKE was used where other verbs would be more appropriate	This wasted time could be used to *make* useful activities like talking and cooking together. [do] School **makes** an important role on creating the characteristics. [plays] Nowadays, the development of social networks **makes a controversy** [causes /has caused]
6. Others Other errors such as incorrect pronouns/ prepositions with noun collates with MAKE	It make *their* have a closer relationship with their parents. [them] Facebook is one of the means to make *we* waste time. [us] I can make friends *to* many people. [with]

Inter-reliability

First, 30% of the concordance lines with MAKE of the Excel output version of the AntConc were randomly selected. They were first coded by the first author and then independently by another EFL teacher for errors related to the uses of MAKE. The overall percentage agreement in coding errors with MAKE was 86%, which indicated satisfactory inter-reliability, according to Yin (2015). For a few cases of uncertainty, and differences, the two coders discussed to reach agreement. The first author then coded the remaining instances of MAKE uses for errors.

4. Findings

4.1. Frequency of MAKE

The occurrences of use of MAKE in its various forms are presented in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, in total there were 181 occurrences of MAKE, 120 in the Facebook task and 61 in the School task. The Range column shows the number of essays in which the target MAKE form occurred. MAKE was used in 88 and 45 out of 100 essays per topic. This suggests that not all the essays contained the verb MAKE.

Table 3. Occurrences of MAKE

Uses of make	Facebook (N= 100)		School (N= 100)	
	Frequency	Range	Frequency	Range
make	83	56	41	30
makes	29	25	12	10
making	5	4	3	3
made	3	3	2	2
Total	*120*	*88*	*61*	*45*

4. 2.   Patterns of MAKE uses

Different uses of MAKE were explored based on Altenberg and Granger's (2001) framework and the results (Table 4) show that for both tasks, causative uses were the most popular, accounting for about half of the total uses of MAKE, 52.5% in the Facebook task and 45.9% in the School task. Delexical uses made up about one third of the total uses, 32.5 % and 36.1% respectively. Uses of MAKE with the meaning of 'produce' constituted 7.7% in total, slightly more frequently in Facebook (8.3%) than School (6.5 %). Uses of MAKE meaning 'earn' were not popular. MAKE with 'phrasal meaning' was rarely used with only two instances in the School topic. 'Other conventional uses'; were rather infrequent, at 3.3% in Facebook and 4.9% in School. No instances of link verb uses and MAKE it as an idiomatic expression were found.

A breakdown of causative uses (Table 5) show that noun causative structure was rare, with only four occurrences in both tasks while verb and adjective structures were more frequently used, accounting for about 51% and 45% respectively in all the essays.

Table 4. Different uses of MAKE

	Facebook	School	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
1. Produce	10 (8.3)	4 (6.5)	14 (7.7)
2. Delexical uses	39 (32.5)	22 (36.1)	61 (33.7)
3. Causative uses	63 (52.5)	28 (45.9)	91 (50.3)
4. 'Earn'	4 (3.3)	2 (3.3)	6 (3.3)
5. Link verb uses	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
6. Make it (idiomatic)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
7. Phrasal uses	0 (0)	2 (3.3)	2 (1.1)
8. Other conventional uses	4 (3.3)	3 (4.9)	7 (3.9)
Total	*120 (100)*	*61(100)*	*181(100)*

Table 5. Causative uses of MAKE

	Facebook	School	Total
	n (%)	**n (%)**	**n (%)**
Adjective	32 (50.8)	9 (32.1)	41 (45.1)
Verb	30 (47.6)	16 (57.1)	46 (50.5)
Noun	1 (1.6)	3 (10.7)	4 (4.4)
Total	*63 (100)*	*28 (100)*	*91(100)*

5. 3. Errors with MAKE

Table 6 shows the frequency of errors with MAKE that the students committed in the essays of the two tasks (Facebook and School). In total, there were 77 instances of non-target-like use (42.5%) out of a total of 181 MAKE occurrences.

The most common type of errors was the omission of the inflectional morpheme –s marking the third person singular tense of MAKE, accounting for 35.1% of the totality. Omission was also found with the inflectional form –s that indicates plural forms of countable nouns collocating with the verb MAKE, though at a lower frequency (18.2%). Errors involving adjective and verb forms in the causative structure constituted about one-third of the total errors (31.2%), with 18.2% recorded in the former and 13% in the latter. Mis-selection of verbs (9.1%) occurred where the students used MAKE instead of other more appropriate verbs.

Other mixed errors accounted for 6.5%. They were concerned with incorrect pronouns that function as an object after MAKE (e.g., make they happy), or incorrect prepositions that follow a noun/noun phrase after MAKE (e.g., make friends to me).

Table 6. Errors with MAKE

	Facebook	School	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n(%)
Adjective forms	12 (21.1)	2 (10)	14 (18.1)
Verb forms	7 (12.3)	3 (15)	10 (13)
Plural nouns	11 (19.3)	3 (15)	14 (18.2)
Third person singular	22 (38.6)	5 (25)	27 (35.1)
Verb choice	4 (7)	3 (15)	7 (9.1)
Others	1 (1.8)	4 (20)	5 (6.5)
Total	*57 (100)*	*20 (100)*	*77(100)*

6.   Discussion

The present study explored how Vietnamese EFL students used the high frequency verb MAKE in their opinion essays. The findings show that a large majority of uses of MAKE were in the causative and delexical categories. Despite being a high frequency verb, MAKE was not error-free for many students in the present study. A large proportion of errors were also found with the omission of the plurality marker –s for countable nouns followed by the adjective and verb forms in the causative structure. The findings are broadly in line with previous research

(e.g., Altenberg & Granger, 2001; Lin & Lin, 2019; Kim, 2015; Kittigosin & Phoocharoensil, 2015; Llach, 2010) showing that EFL students frequently used causative structure of MAKE and MAKE was prone to errors. These findings point to the concern that the students tend to rely on the basic meaning of high frequency verbs, but using them appropriately in its contextual constraints is problematic (e.g., Crosthwaite, 2018; Fathema et al., 2015).

The frequent uses of the causative structure of MAKE in the present study could be attributed to the congruency between English and L1 Vietnamese in causative expressions. For example, the Vietnamese also has the causative adjective structure *làm cho ai + tính từ (làm cho ai vui/buồn/giận dữ [make someone happy/sad/angry])* and the causative verb structure *làm cho ai làm gì (làm cho cô ấy rời đi/mất tập trung [make her leave/distract her attention]),* which are equivalent to the English causative structures, make somebody +adjective and *make somebody +verb* respectively. However, it is interesting to note that a high frequency of use of this structure was associated with a great number of errors.

The issue of literal translation is worth some elaboration. The examples below show close word-for-word matching from the Vietnamese meaning the students had in mind, which deviated from the English verb structure (make somebody + bare infinitive verb). Indeed, these constructions are clumsy and non-target-like. Instead, students could have used other English structures as suggested in square brackets to express the same meaning.

"Many years ago, the distance **made people cannot contact** together."

("*Cách đây nhiều năm, khoảng cách làm cho con người không thể liên lạc với nhau.*")

[Many years ago, the distance made it impossible for people to contact …/ prevented people from contacting …]

Facebook makes everyone **can negatively affect**. *(Facebook làm cho mọi người có thể bị ảnh hưởng tiêu cực.)*

[Facebook has/exerts negative effects/impacts on everyone.]

That learners drew on literal translation to encode the intended meaning might well indicate that they were very likely to have inadequate control of the English causative structure of MAKE, or they simply lacked other lexical means of single causative verbs such as *prevent, cause, enable, allow*, etc., to convey their intended meanings.

According to Llach, 2010), "the degree to which the L2 and L1 words correspond will determine the 'learnability', that is the degree of ease of learning of L2 items" (p. 7). Since Vietnamese is an isolating language with no inflectional forms to mark plurality of countable nouns or third person singular present tense (Ngo, 2001), omission of these forms in written

production could be understandable due to L1 Vietnamese influence. This finding echoes other research showing that plurality or tense marking is challenging for Vietnamese EFL learners, though in oral language production (McDonald, 2000; Siemund & Lechner, 2015) and for other learners whose L1s are non-inflecting languages (e.g., Muftah, & Rafik-Galea, 2013; Wee, Sim, & Jusoff, 2010). Furthermore, the low communicative value of these inflectional forms (Goldschneider & DeKeyser, 2001) could partly account for the issue of omission, especially under communicative pressure (Students wrote their essays as timed performances).

Beside L1 Vietnamese as a potential factor, the errors with MAKE in the present study could well be indicators of insufficient linguistic knowledge, or inadequate control or use on the part of the learners (Altenberg & Granger, 2001; Llach, 2010). Inappropriate verb choice instead of MAKE points to the challenge of using a word in its collocational use, and it depends on the size of students' vocabulary (Nation, 2013). Yet, errors with MAKE simultaneously provide a window into the meaning-making process involved in writing where the students were mapping the English forms to their intended expressions.

7.   Conclusion and implications

The study set out to examine the uses of the high frequency verb MAKE by Vietnamese EFL students. The results show that causative and delexical uses of MAKE were prevailing and despite being a common verb, MAKE was still problematic for this group of students. Since the MAKE errors that the students committed might indicate linguistic gaps that they had, "preventive" and "remedial" activities (Llach, 2010) should be called to attention. Exposure to uses of the target item in different native corpora such as BNC, COCA, or ANC would be useful. Follow-up awareness-raising activities could enhance heightened attention to its uses that are problematic for students (causative verb / adjective structure in the present study), thus preventing errors. Providing data-driven feedback and correction on inappropriate uses of MAKE as a follow-up activity would help remedy errors.

Altenberg and Granger (2001) noted that MAKE is usually introduced early in the course materials and instruction, but due attention to it and other high frequency words is often neglected afterwards. The overreliance on literal translation or clumsy uses of MAKE due to L1 Vietnamese influence should be brought to students' attention through corrective feedback. It would be beneficial to pinpoint differences between L1 Vietnamese and the target language in MAKE structures.

In addition, teachers could introduce other single causative verbs such as *cause, help, allow,* and *enable* as additional lexical resources for students to diversify their language use, and

at the same time avoid awkward non-target-like uses with MAKE where necessary. Textbook and materials designers should also incorporate multiple senses of MAKE and its different uses appropriately for students' proficiency levels. Above all, developing "well-rounded, usable vocabulary knowledge" (Nation, 2020, p. 15) of high frequency verbs or any other high frequency words might need time and concerted efforts from materials designers, teachers and students.

The AntConc used in the present study allowed us to focus on a specific target language item in the corpus and find its patterns of uses and errors. While assumedly students might make a wide range of errors in their writing, focused feedback on uses of certain high-frequency verbs such as MAKE would be less taxing for the teacher and students. This is to reduce overcorrection because excessive corrective feedback could be demotivating and overwhelming for students (e.g., Mahfoodh, 2017; Nguyen, Nguyen & Hoang, 2021). The study suggests that teachers could use the AntConc as a useful tool to structure focused feedback on specific verbs or lexical items that might be problematic for students (see Nguyen, 2021).

The present study has some limitations. First, it only focused on uses of MAKE in 200 opinion essays. Future studies could examine high frequency verbs in larger samples with other writing genres. The spotted errors might not represent all kinds of errors with MAKE. Since errors might well indicate linguistic problems that learners encounter, one line of future research could attend to language proficiency as a potential variable, and see whether learners of different proficiency levels might have different patterns of use and the frequency of errors might differ. Explanations of the errors committed could be tentative, since it was the learners who channeled attention during the process of making meaning in writing. Interviews with students could provide further explanatory insights into the process of mapping meaning onto linguistic forms in the process of writing as a problem-solving act.

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Appendix 1. The writing tasks

Writing task 1

> *Some people say that Facebook is a positive development that benefits humankind while some others say that it has negative effects on many aspects of life.*

What is your opinion? Provide reasons and examples to support your position.

You have 45 minutes to plan and write your essay. You should write about 250 words.

Writing task 2

> *"School plays a more important role than family in shaping one's personality."*

What is your opinion? Provide reasons and examples to support your position.

You have 45 minutes to plan and write your essay. You should write about 250 words.