

Morphological Errors in Descriptive Students' Writing

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the morphological errors that occurred in students' descriptive writing using surface strategy taxonomy in error analysis. Further, this qualitative research describes the common morphological errors that appeared in students' descriptive writing. The data were derived from 70 students' descriptive writing of grade XI consisting of 2 classes. They were taken by using a simple random sampling method. The data were classified by using surface strategy in error analysis and were analyzed by using qualitative data analysis. The result of the research showed that some errors occurred at the morphological level. They include inflection, derivation, preposition, article, copula be, pronoun, and auxiliary verbs. Inflection is a common error that mostly appeared with a percentage of 39%, while preposition is the lowest number of morphological errors with a percentage of 2 %. It also found that 73 % of omission errors frequently appeared in students' descriptive writing. Thus, it illustrated that many students still mostly omitted some inflection, derivation, preposition, article, copula be, pronoun, and auxiliary verbs.

Keywords: morphological errors, error analysis, descriptive writing

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian students have studied English since an early age. They learn English from primary school to secondary school because they are growing up in a digital era (Faridah, 2021). In this digital era, today, they can easily access, share, or use information electronically accessible (Haris Adnan Rizal, 2016). Smartphones or computers are modern devices that they use for playing games, receiving or sharing information, calling someone, or even studying. All modern devices used by them would require the English language to access. Thus, English basic must be learned by them at a very young age in order to help them to access all modern devices. In Indonesia, English, itself, is considered a foreign language. It is taught from primary students to secondary students. The students and the teacher often use their mother tongue in the teaching and learning process (Pratiwi et al., 2022). It means that English still appear as a foreign language in English classroom and they mostly use their first language (L1) to communicate. In the EFL classroom, the use of the mother tongue should be minimized or prohibited because it can cause some negative impacts on students. For example, it could lead to conveying the errors, such as the wrong meaning of words translation and errors at the lexical or morphological level (Hawa et al., 2021).

Morphology is the study of word formation. It consists of and how words are built from or by combining roots or morphemes. (Huseyin, 2014). Roots are words that can stand

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alone, while morphemes are may or may not stand alone. The root is the core of the word and it conveys the main lexical meaning of the word (B, 2023). Morphemes, on the other hand, are the smallest items carried information about meaning or even function. It is commonly, but not always words. According to Gareth Evansam & Siswanto (2017), A morpheme is divided into two; a free morpheme and a bound morpheme. Free morphemes are morphemes that can stand alone while bound morphemes are morphemes that cannot stand alone and must be attached to another morpheme such as affixes (prefix or suffix). Affix refers to an additional element placed at the beginning, in the middle, or even the end of a word, and it will change the meaning and the function of the word (Natalia & Wulandari, 2017). In English, there are two common types of affixes. They are prefixes and suffixes. A Prefix is a letter placed at the beginning. It is usually used to convey the negative meaning, e.g. the opposite of the word *happy* is *unhappy*, the opposite of the word *possible* is *impossible*, the opposite of the word *perfect* is *imperfect*, etc. A suffix, on the other hand, is a letter placed at the end of a word. It is usually used to change part of speech and meaning, e.g. we can add *-ity* to the adjective *popular* to make the noun *popularity*, add *-ful* to the noun *success* to make the adjective *successful*, add *-er* to the verb *teach* to make the noun *teacher*, etc., (Roaini & Ansar, 2019). In English, prefixes and suffixes can be derivational morphemes, while the suffixes that function as a plural marker (*-s* or *-es*), possessive marker (*'s*), third person present singular marker (*-s*), past tense marker (*-ed*), Progressive marker (*-ing*), past participle markers (*-ed* or *-ed*), comparative marker (*-er*), and superlative marker (*-est*), can be inflectional morphemes (Yusuf, 2017). Examples are *show* and *shows*. These two words are morphemes. The first-word *show* is the free morpheme, it can't be shortened because it can stand alone and has a specific meaning, while the second-word *shows* is the bound morphemes. The word *shows* can be comprised of *show* and the suffix *-s* and the suffix *-s* is considered an inflectional morpheme.

Morphology has a correlation with writing. According to Chi & City (2023), the knowledge of morphology can improve students' writing skills. In writing, it is helpful for students to recognize the meaning easily and prevent some errors. However, some different types of errors still occurred in English Foreign Students' writing. Hutagalung (2017) found that some English Foreign Students (EFS) confirmed that writing was the more difficult productive skill. They have trouble arranging and organizing ideas, even making morphological or lexical errors is unavoidable. In order words, writing skill is quite challenging and hard for student in English Foreign classroom. Therefore, many mistakes and errors naturally arise in EFS' writing.

Mistakes and errors are the main studies in error analysis. Mistakes are considered performance errors, such as spelling errors or pronunciation errors. Whereas, errors include phonological errors, syntactic errors, and morphological or lexical errors (Botley, 2015). Morphological errors are some errors that occurred in morphological errors. It happens because the students lack lexical understanding related to word formation. Moreover, it also happens due to the lack of students' knowledge and understanding of the target language (L2). Moreover, the error analysis, itself, is a study error made by language learners both in speaking or writing. EA can also be used by the researcher for a procedure to collect the samples of learner language (EFL students), identifying the errors, describing the errors, or even classifying the errors (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012). It means that EA is defined as the process to observe, analyse, and classify the errors.

There are generally four types of writing. They are narrative writing, descriptive writing, expository writing, and persuasive writing. (1) Narrative writing tells a series of events and it can be fiction or nonfiction, such as novel and short stories (2) Descriptive writing describes a person, place, or thing and it is a style of writing to help the reader visualize the story, such as descriptive text (3) Expository writing explains a topic using facts, such as text book or scientific writing (4) Persuasive writing is writing attempts to convince the reader, such as advert and newspaper. According to Masagus & Syahri (2022), some errors on EFL students occurred in the descriptive paragraph writing. They found that

there are 325 errors exist in EFL student's writing. The highest number of errors is disordering errors. Additionally, these errors happens due to the lack of knowledge in lexical grammar. Therefore, the descriptive writing is used in this research.

Observation has been made at SMA Negeri 1 Bangkinang Kota and it showed that some students still make errors in writing, particularly in morphological errors. For example, they use inappropriate verb (*He play as a striker*) and article (*she is the younger*). The first sentence is omitting the inflection morpheme *-s*. The suffix *-s* should be added at the end of the word *play* because it functions as the third-person singular. The second sentence is about misformation errors. The inflection morpheme *-er* should be replaced with the suffix *-est*. Replacing the suffix *-er* with the suffix *-est* in the word *young* would make the superlative. Based on the observation, this study was conducted to identify and describe the types of morphological error mostly committed by students at SMA Negeri 1 Bangkinang Kota. This study focus on the errors occurred at the morphological levels and the types of error include omission error, addition error, misformation error, and disordering error.

METHOD

This study uses the qualitative research method because it is qualitative research that aims to describe the morphological errors that occurred in students' descriptive writing at grade XI of SMA Negeri 1 Bangkinang Kota. Qualitative research is research that involves collecting and analysing non-numeric data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), while qualitative research method is a method used to answer questions about the data that can't be counted or measured (Hammarberg et al., 2016). The participant was 70 students of grade XI of SMA Negeri 1 Bangkinang Kota derived from 2 classes. The participant was taken through a random sampling technique. The subject of the study is the students' writing. The error classification sheet is used for the instrument for this study. The procedure of the research consists of (1) collecting data (2) identifying data (3) describing the data.

1. Collecting the data

To collect the data, these students were asked to write a descriptive text about their favorite idols. The text consists of not less than 200 words. After 30 minutes of completing the writing, they submit it to the English teacher. Then, the researcher asked for the paper from the teacher.

2. Identifying the data

There is probably one error or more found in a student's clause or sentence. These errors, then, classify based on surface strategy taxonomy (Esmalde, 2020). The surface strategy taxonomy categories are omission, addition, misformation, and disordering. Then, the data were analysed through error analysis (EA). The data, further, counted trough the percentage of error analysis, as follows;

$$P_{(\text{percentage})} = \frac{\text{frequency of each types of error}}{\text{total frequency of four types of errors}} \times 100 \%$$

3. Describing the data

The data were described and explained systematically according to the type of errors (omission, addition, misformation, and disordering). Then, the research showed the result of the research and describe each types of errors clearly.

Finally, the conclusion was made of the research findings and discussion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on analysis of students' writing, some errors occurred at Morphological level.

Table 1. Research Findings

Types of Error	Omission	Addition	Mis-formation	Dis-ordering	Total	Percentage
Inflection	123	17	12	0	152	39%
Derivation	12	12	0	0	24	6%
Preposition	3	3	0	0	6	2%
Article	47	1	18	0	66	17%
Copula Be	73	0	7	0	80	20%
Pronoun	28	0	9	0	37	9%
Auxiliary	1	0	27	0	28	7%
Total	287	33	73	0	393	100%
Percentage	73%	8%	19%	0%	100%	100%

Morphological Errors

Table 1 illustrates some facts about some errors that occurred at the morphological level. The errors include inflection, derivation, preposition, article, copula be, pronoun, and auxiliary verbs. It showed that 39% of errors occurred in the use of *inflection*. It is the highest number of errors in students' writing, whereas; the lowest number of errors is found in the use of *prepositions* with a percentage of 2%.

Omission

An omission is an error characterized by missing one or more English linguistic items from a sentence.

Table 2. Errors of Omission

Types of Error	Errors
Inflection	(1) He has two <i>sister</i> . (2) He <i>speak</i> English fluently.
Derivation	(1) Neymar is a <i>Brazil</i> Footballer. (2) His mother is an <i>Algeria</i> .
Preposition	(1) He is the founder Ø former chief executive officer of e-commerce giant Amazon. (2) She is studying Ø Stanford.
Article	(1) He is Ø famous singer. (2) Taehyung is Ø oldest child.
Copula Be	(1) He Ø thin and tall. (2) He Ø 186 cm and 83 kilograms.
Pronoun	(1) Ø is a german Professional Footballer. (2) Ø is a boy group from South Korea.
Auxiliary	(1) She Ø joined the team since 2009.

Table 3 shows that students omit linguistic items that result in errors in a sentence. The error of omission include (1) inflection; omission of inflection *-s*, (2) derivation; omission of inflection of *-ian* and *-n*, (3) preposition; omission of preposition *of* and *at*, (4) article; omission of article *a* and *the*, (5) copula be: omission of be *is*, (6) pronoun: omission of personal pronoun *He*, (7) auxiliary: omission of auxiliary *has*.

Addition

An addition is an error characterized by the presence of an English linguistic item in a sentence. It should not appear in a well-formed sentence.

Table 3. Errors of Addition

Types of Error	Errors
Inflection	(1) He has <i>makes</i> several innovation. (2) Cristiano Jr. is his <i>sons</i> .
Derivation	(1) She is a political <i>activistian</i> . (2) He also has over 520 million <i>following</i> on Instagram.
Preposition	(1) He is <i>of</i> a Sundanese. (2) He plays at <i>to</i> Lakers.
Article	(1) She has <i>a</i> blonde hair.

Table 3 shows that some students add some useless words in a sentence. The error of addition include (1) inflection; addition of *-s*, (2) derivation; addition of *-an* and *-ing*, (3) preposition; addition of *of* and *to*, (4) article; addition of *a*.

Misformation

Misformation is characterized by the use of inappropriate English linguistic items.

Table 4. Misformation Errors

Types of Error	Errors
Inflection	(1) His fandom has some <i>mens</i> . (2) This <i>days</i> , They are holding a concert around the world
Article	(1) He is <i>a</i> <i>Argentinian</i> . (2) Messi is <i>an</i> <i>UNICEF</i> Goodwill Ambassador.
Copula Be	(1) Her children <i>is</i> still younger than others. (2) His parent <i>are</i> in the USA.
Pronoun	(1) <i>Lisa</i> is a member of BLACKPINK and <i>he</i> has slim body. (2) He is good at dancing, so <i>her</i> fans like him.
Auxiliary	(1) She <i>have</i> four children. (2) He <i>have</i> an outspoken personality.

Table 5 shows that some students misuse appropriate words in a sentence. The misuse of appropriate words include (1) inflection; addition of inflection *-s*, (2) article; misformation of *a* and *an*, (3) copula be; misformation of present be are and *is*, (4) pronoun; misformation of *he* and *her*, (5) auxiliary; misformation of *have*.

CONCLUSIONS

There are seven common morphological errors occurred in descriptive students' writing. Those are inflection, derivation, preposition, article copula be, pronoun, and auxiliary. These morphological errors are found in types of omission, addition, and misformation. Based on the finding, we found that (1) students mostly do not put the inflection morpheme, the derivation morphemes, preposition, article, copula be, pronoun, and auxiliary in their sentences with a percentage of 73% (2) students add unnecessary linguistic items, such as inflection morpheme, the derivation morphemes, preposition, and article in their sentence with a percentage of 8% (3) students use inappropriate English linguistic items, such as inflection morphemes, article, copula be, pronoun, and auxiliary in their sentence with a percentage of 19%. Therefore, the highest number of errors in students' writing is the omission of inflection while the lowest number of errors in students' writing is the omission of auxiliary and the addition of article.

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