A MORPHO-SYNTACTIC ERROR ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' WRITING AT THE STATE MADRASAH TSANAWIYAH OF SUKOHARJO

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Abstract

English is considered as an Indonesian students' foreign language which is not used frequently in their daily conversations. Since writing in English is a challenging experience for Indonesian students, they sometimes commit errors in grammar and sentence structures. Learners' errors were considered as the best sources to identify students' writing skills deficiency. They can be useful for teachers, learners, textbook providers, education system and so on. This descriptive qualitative research investigated the Indonesian EFL linguistics taxonomy of morpho-syntactic errors and the sources of the errors. The participants of the study were the third graders of the State Madrasah Tsanawiyah Sukoharjo. They were asked to write a descriptive text about their mother. After collecting the data and categorizing and identifying the erroneous areas in their work, the data were analysed using the linguistic taxonomy of errorscoined by Keshavarz (2006). The results of this study showed that the most frequent part of the students' errors based on morpho-syntactical errors was "errors due to a lack of concord" and the minimum frequency was found to be "wrong word order". Then, the most common error viewed from the sources of the errors was overgeneralization error, and the minimum frequency was related to "faulty categorization".

Keywords: *EFL learners; error analysis; linguistic taxonomy; morpho-syntactic errors.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian people are not the native of English. It means that their mother tongue is not English. There are Javanese people who usetheir local language (Javanese language) as their first language. English language becomes even the third language used by them after Indonesian language. Since Indonesian English learners are not the native of English, they find it difficult to develop their English skills. One of the English skills is writing. In school, students are usually asked to write an essay or text using English. In this case, students commonly transfer their native language into the target language (English). Itis evidentthat many errors often occur during the process of their writing. Some aspects of English such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling, as well as punctuation still become a task for them to master. In other words, those aspects are worth their attention as a central power to be successful in writing English.

In a study of investigating students' errors, there are two terms that should be understood in order to avoid misconception. It should be clear to distinguish between the term *mistake* and *error* asthose terms are completely different in use that should be clearly identified. An error arises only when there was no intention to commit one (James, 1998 as cited in Fauziati, 2016). According to Fauziati (2016) errors are systematic, consistent deviance which is characteristic of the learner's linguistic system at a given stage of learning. On the other side, mistakes are deviations due to performance factors such as memory limitation, fatigue, and emotional strain (Fauziati, 2016). When making a mistake, the learner can correct it by himself by giving more attention toward the mistake. However, the errors made by the learners cannot be corrected by themselves without the aids of the others.

The context that has been used in this research is the context of junior high school in Sukoharjo. The subjects of the research are the students of MTs N Sukoharjo. MTs N Sukoharjo is the one and only Islamic state based junior high school in Sukoharjo sub-district. In this school, there is a special program that has been called *Program Khusus*. This program is intended to the

students who will get more intensive program rather than the regular one. The term 'special program' will be used to refer *Program Khusus*. The subjects of this research are the third-grade students of special program of MTs N Sukoharjo. The students should join an English Conversation class which is compulsory for them. Although they are the chosen ones and they are provided with an English conversation class, they still make enormous errors in writing an English essay. It will be an interesting study if we investigate the errors made by the students of special program in the one and only Islamic based junior high school in Sukoharjo sub-district.

Error Analysis is an attempt to analyse the errors learners make in relation to the target language (Corder, 1971) in (Hariri, 2012: 4856). Error analysis has made a significant contribution to the theoretical consciousness-raising of applied linguists and language practitioners (Amin, 2017). The purpose of error analysis is to find what the learners knows and what does not know and to ultimately enable the teacher to supply him not just with the information that his hypothesis is wrong, but also, importantly with the right sort of information or data for him to form a more adequate concept of rule in the target language (Corder, 1974) in (Fauziati, 2016: 105). According to Fauziati (2016: 105) the goal of error analysis to find out the psycholinguistics process or cognitive mechanism of second language learning. Vahdatinejad (2008) in (Zawahreh, 2012: 282) mentioned that error analyses are fruitful in determining what a learner needs to be taught because it provides the necessary information about what is lacking in the linguistic competence. There are many types of taxonomy in categorizing the errors. Those are surface strategy taxonomy, comparative taxonomy, communicative effect taxonomy, and morpho-syntactic taxonomy. The taxonomy that has been used in this research is morpho-syntactic taxonomy. Morpho-syntactic error taxonomy is the taxonomy based on the misapplication of morphological inflection and syntactic rules (Vosse, 1992: 111).

The studies of the errors that used morpho-syntactic taxonomy have been conducted in some countries. Two of them are the research of Hariri and the research of Vosse. Hariri's

research entitled *Taxonomy of Morpho-Syntactic Errors and Error Analysis* focused on the use of morpho-syntactic taxonomy to categorize the errors made by the students in Iran context. Moreover, he also used a theory to categorize the source of errors. The result of his study is that the Iranian students make errors majorly in the use of preposition and the source of errors majorly comes from intralingual errors. Then, the second research by Vosseentitled *Detecting and Correcting Morpho-syntactic Errors in Real Texts* focused on the categorization of errors based on the morpho-syntactic taxonomy in Dutch context. Those two researches use the morpho-syntactic taxonomy to categorize the errors made by the students. This research also uses morpho-syntactic theory to categorize the students' errors. While the research by Hariri uses Iranian context and the research by Vosse uses Dutch context, this research uses Indonesian context of the research.

Based on the reasons that have been elaborated before, the researchers conducted a research entitled "a morpho-syntactic error analysis of students' writing at the state Madrasah Tsanawiyah of Sukoharjo. This research aims to reveal the type of errors made by the students of third grade in MTs N Sukoharjo and to unveil the source of errors that have been made by them. By using the result of this research, the teacher can identify what kind of errors that have been made by his/ her students, so that, he/ she can focus on fixing the errors to make the students better in writing an English essay.

METHOD

In this study, the researchers use descriptive qualitative research to describe the type, the frequency, and the sources of errors in written production made by third grade students of State Madrasah Tsanawiyah of Sukoharjo. As stated by Kothari (2004: 37), descriptive research studies are those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or of a group. The data were gathered from written productions of descriptive text of five students of State Madrasah Tsanawiyah of Sukoharjo. All the writings have the same topic

about the description of the students' mother. After the data were gathered, they were read carefully and the erroneous parts were identified. Finally, they were categorized and analysed based on linguistic taxonomy of errors proposed by Keshavarz (2006) which includes the classifications of morpho-syntactical errors and sources of the errors.

Findings

The Table 1 shows the items in linguistic taxonomy and their description. An example of the learners' errors is presented and the erroneous sentences are distinguished by the sign of "*" from its correct form.

Table 1.

Linguistic taxonomy	Description	Evidence
Errors in the use of articles	Inappropriate use of article **'the'**	*I always pray to the god for to be **the** good boy.** **(**I always pray to the God to be **a** good boy)
Errors in the use of prepositions	Redundant use of preposition	*I always pray to the god **for** to be the good boy.** **(**I always pray to the God **to be** a good boy)
Wrong word order	wrong position of adverb "**sometimes**"	*My mom **sometimes is mad** with me because I naughty.** (My mom **is sometimes mad** with me because I am naughty)
Errors due to lack of concord	Lack of subject-verb agreement	She always **wake me up** in the morning* (She always **wakes me up** in the morning)
Wrong use of conditional sentences	Errors in the use of conditional sentences	*I so sad, if she **not** together me.** (I **will be** so sad, if she **does not** get together with me)
Wrong use of	-	-

		tenses
Wrong use of adverb	Error in the use of adverb	***Everyday morning*** *I help my mother because I love my mom everyday** (***Every morning*** I help my mother because I love my mom everyday)
Wrong use of verb group	Error in the use of verb and adverb	*She* ***hard worker*** *for me** (She ***works hard*** for me)
Errors in the use of relative clauses and relative pronouns	Omission of relative pronoun *'who'*	*I have* ***my parent is my father and mother**** (I have ***parents who are my father and mother***)

Table 2: Frequency of the Morpho-Syntactical Errors

No.	Morpho-syntactical errors	No. of errors	(%)
1.	Errors in the use of articles	2	3,9
2.	Errors in the use of prepositions	9	17,6
3.	Wrong word order	2	3,9
4.	Errors due to lack of concord	20	39,2
5.	Wrong use of conditional sentences	3	5,9
6.	Wrong use of tenses	0	0
7.	Wrong use of adverb	4	7,8
8.	Wrong use of verb group	8	15,7
9.	Errors in the use of relative clauses and relative pronouns	3	5,9
	Total of Errors	51	

Sources of errors: After classifying the errors according to morpho-syntactic taxonomy, the researchers classify the errors to their sources. Table 3 shows the classification of the sources of the

errors that contains the categories, the examples, the correction, and the number of errors for each. Figure 3 is a pie chart which also shows the sources of errors.

According to Corder (1967) the learner's errors have different significance, those are:

1) L2 acquisition should not be looked at from a purely pedagogical perspective.
2) Errors in L2 are interesting because they reflect underlying linguistics rules.
3) The study of L2 can be seen as a subfield of general linguistics or cognitive science.

According to Keshavarz (2006) there is a classification of errors based on the sources. The classification is as follows:

1) Transfer of Morphological elements
2) Transfer of Grammatical elements
3) Transfer of Lexico-semantic elements
   a) Cross-associational
   b) False-cognates
4) Transfer of Stylistic and Cultural elements
   a) Overgeneralization
   b) Ignorance of rule restriction
   c) Hyperextension
   d) Hypercorrection
   e) Faulty categorization
5) Language Learning Strategies
   a) Simplification
   b) Transfer of rules
   6) Communication strategies
   a) Prefabricate pattern
   b) Language switch
   c) Appeal to authority
   d) Avoidance strategy
   e) Topic avoidance
   f) Message abandonment

Table 3: Errors Sources

Source of Errors	Example	Correction	No

Overgeneralization	At morning, my mom **wake** me up and **ask** me to pray	At morning, my mom wakes me up and asks me to pray	22
Hypercorrection	I always pray to the god **for** to be the good boy	I always pray to the god to be a good boy	10
Faulty categorization	My mom **education** for to be good boy	My mom educates me to be a good boy	6
Simplification	I so sad, if she not together me.	I will be so sad if she does not get together with me.	9
Transfer of Rule	I don't **will** angry because mom	I will not be angry because of mom	4
Total of Errors			**51**

Table 4: Observe Frequency of Sources of Errors

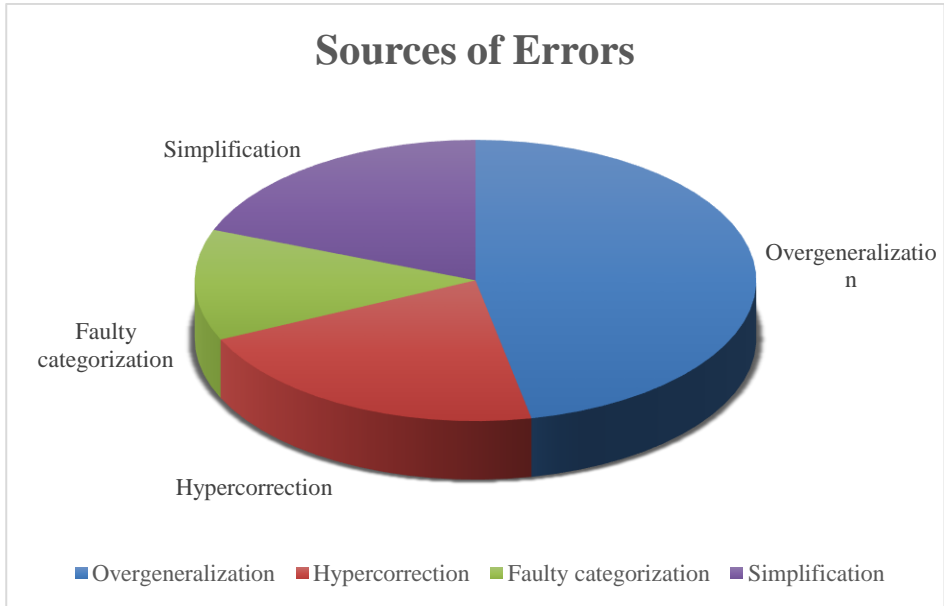| Source of Errors	No	(%)
Overgeneralization	22	43. 13
Hypercorrection	10	19. 6
Faulty categorization	6	11. 76
Simplification	9	17. 64
Transfer of Rule	4	7. 84
Total of Errors	**51**	

Fig. 1: Pie-chart of sources of errors

DISCUSSION

This part discusses about the findings of the research. Based on the data that has been analysed in the previous part, it is found that the students' errors are classified into two categories. Those are morpho-syntactical errors and sources of the errors. In the category of morpho-syntactical errors, the result reveals that there are eight types of errors committed by the students. Those are errors in the use of articles (3,9%), errors in the use of prepositions (17,6%), wrong word order (3,9%), errors due to lack of concord (39,2%), wrong use of conditional sentences (5,9%), wrong use of adverb (7,8%), Wrong use of verb group (15,7%), and errors in the use of relative clauses and relative pronouns (5,9%).

The most common error committed by the students is errors due to lack of concord (39,2%). It occurs because of some reasons. First, most of the students failed to compose a sentence with the correct subject-verb agreement. They tend to omit the letter **"s"** in the verbs that belongs to the third person singular subject like *she, my mother, and my mom*. Besides, some students also omit an auxiliary verb before an adjective in the sentence like using

*"**I angry**"* instead of *"**I am angry**"* and *"**I naughty**"* instead of *"**I am naughty**"* and before a noun such as *"**My mom hard worker**"*. Meanwhile, such an inclusion also occurs in a sentence *"we **are** love my mom too".* Moreover, some students also failed to use correct auxiliary verb in *"I don't **will** angry"* and to change a verb into a noun/ gerund in *"..to study **cook.."*** and *"...because **study cook** very important..".* However, in the use of tense, there is no student commit an error in using simple present tense. It means that the students are fully aware of and understand the tense that must be used in writing descriptive text.

The frequent type of error in the second position committed by the students is errors in the use of prepositions (17,6%). It occurs due to some reasons; 1) the use of *'**for'*** instead of *'**of'*** in *"sometimes I think **for** make happy tomy mom"*, 2) the use of *'**for'*** instead of *'**to'*** in *"I always try **for** make happy to my mom by work something I can"* and in *"My mother always remain **for** study and pray"*, 3) inappropriate addition in *"I always try for make happy **to** my mom by work something I can"* and *"I always pray to the god **for** to be the good boy"*, 4) omission of prepositions *'**of'*** after the word *'**because'*** in *"I don't will angry because mom"* and *'**with'*** after the word *'**together'*** and in *"I so sad, if she not together me".* 5) the use of *'**at'*** *instead of "**in the"*** in *"**at morning**, my mom wake me up and ask me to pray"*, 6) the use of *'**to'*** instead of *'**for'*** in *"My mother hard worker **to** me"* and *"I can't cook, but she is wake me up to study cook besides study lesson because study cook very important **to** the future to be her, mother".*

Another frequent type of error found in the students' written products is wrong use of verb group (15,7%). It happens due to some reasons; 1) the use of noun after subject in the sentences *"She **hard worker** for me", "My mom **education** for to be good boy", "I always **entertainment** when my mom cry",* and *"My mother **hard worker** to me".* Those nouns must be changed to be verbs **works, educates, entertain, and works**.2) the use of adverb after subject in the sentences *"She usually **lovely** me and my brothers and my sisters, so we are love my mom too"* and *"I so sad, if she not **together** me".* Those adverbs need to be changed to be verbs **loves** and **does not get together.** 3) Wrong spelling in *"My mother always **remain** for study and pray".* It should be **reminds.** 4) the use of *'**to'*** after modal *'**will'*** in *"I **will to try** my mom happy".* A modal must be followed by

verb I. Thus, the sentence should be "I will **try to make** my mom happy*".*

The next type of error committed by the students is wrong use of adverb (7,8%). The reasons for this type of error are: 1) redundant use of adverb in "**Everyday morning** *I help my mother because I love my mom everyday".* The correct one should be "**Every morning** I help my mother because I love my mom everyday". Other redundancies are also found in "*She is a first girl are* **very** *the best"* and "*She* **sometimes** *buy food every morning for my lunch."* The former cannot use adverb **'very'** since **'the best'** means "in the highest degree". The latter does not need to use adverb **'sometimes'** since it does not make any sense when it is used with the adverb **'every morning'.** 2) the use of adjective '**easy'** instead of adverb **'easily'** in the sentence "*She is not* **easy** *angry and a lovely girl".*

Then, there are two types of errors with the same number of errors. Those are wrong use of conditional sentences (5,9%) and errors in the use of relative clauses and relative pronouns (5,9%). The wrong use of conditional sentences is caused by omission of modal **'will'** that can be found in the sentences "*I so sad, if she* **not** *together me", "If I do mistake, she* **is usually advice** *to wake me up to be good person", and "If I give up, she always give me support."* Thus, the correct sentences should be "I **will be** so sad, if she **does not** get together with me", "If I do mistake, she **will usually advise me** to be a good person", and "If I give up, she **will** always give me support." In addition, the errors in the use of relative clauses and relative pronouns are found in the sentences "*I have* **my parent is my father and mother"** and **"***She is a first girl* **are** *very the best".* Thus, the correct sentences should be "I have **parents who are my father and mother"** and "She is the first girl **who is** the best".

The most rare types of errors committed by the students are errors in the use of articles (3,9%) and wrong word order (3,9%). The errors in the use of article occur due to inappropriate use of article **'the'** and **'a'** in the sentences *"I always pray to the god for to be* **the** *good boy"* and "*She is* **a** *first girl are very the best".* Since the former is not used to refer to a specific person, it must use an article **'a'** and an article **'the'** is appropriate for the latter because the word *'first'* refers to ordinal number that should be preceded by an article

'the'. Besides, there are errors of wrong word order which are caused by wrong position of adverb "**sometimes**" *in "My mom* **sometimes is mad** *with me because I naughty"* and preposition **"to"** in "*I will* **to try** *my mom happy"*. Thus, they should be "my mom **is** **sometimes mad** with me because I am naughty" and "I will **try to** make my mom happy".

Another category of errors committed by the students can be viewed from the sources of the errors. There are five types of errors committed by the students. Those are overgeneralization (43,13%), hypercorrection (19,6%), faulty categorization (11,76%), simplification (17,64%), and transfer of rule (7,84%). The most common error committed by the students is overgeneralization error (43,13%).

The students tend to overgeneralize the rules of subject and verb agreement. They do not consider that the use of verb is also influenced by its subject. The examples of this error are in *my mom* **wake** *me up and* **ask** *me to pray, she always* **give** *advice for me, …she* **prepare** *all*, and so forth. The students do not take into consideration the suffix -s or -es that should be used in those sentences. Besides, they also overgeneralize the use of preposition *for*, it can be seen in *Sometimes I think* **for** *make happy to my mom, I always try* **for** *make happy to my mom by work something I can, My mother always remain* **for** *study and,* and so forth. The function of that preposition is overlapping to the preposition *to*. Based on the sources of errors, the students should be taught more to not to overgeneralize the rules of subject-verb agreement, preposition usage, and articles usage, since they make those errors for the most.

The students also did the hypercorrections. They tend to add some unnecessary predicates in one sentence such as in *I don't* **will** *angry* because mom and *I can't cook, but she* **is wake** *me up to study…*. Besides, the students also tend to add double adverb of time such as in **Everyday morning** *I help my mother because I love my* mom **every day.** In term of faulty categorization, the students tend to replace the gerund with the verb for, such as in *I always try for* **make** *happy…* and *…my mom by* **work** *something…*. Besides, they also tended to replace the verb from with its noun form, such as in *my* mom **education** *for to be good boy* and *I always* **entertainment** *when my*

mom.... Moreover, the students also tended to replace the verb with its adverb form.

In term of simplification, the students tended to omit some words in the sentences. They tend to omit the relative pronoun such as in *she is a first girl (**who**) are very the best*. Besides, they also tended to omit the to be such as in *I (am) so sad, sometimes I (am) angry,* and *my mom (is) hard worker*. Moreover, they also tended to omit the verb after the modal such as in *I will to try my mom happy*. Then, in term of transferring of the rule, the students tended to use Indonesian language rule in the English such as in *I will **to try** my mom happy*. However, the percentage of transferring Indonesian language into English is quite few.

In comparison with another study, these results do not correspond to that of Hariri's (2012) study as those errors (errors due to lack of concord) were not dominantly carried out by his research subjects. Although the subjects of his study and the recent study are similar in age group, his study showed that "use of prepositions" is the most frequent part of the subjects' errors. Meanwhile the minimum frequency of errors is related to errors in the use of relative clauses and relative pronouns and wrong use of verbs. This difference indicates that some factors may contribute to the aspects of each study. It is assumed that the research subjects can strongly influence the results of the two studies since the subjects in both studies come from different background of language (Indonesian and Persian).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion we can conclude that the students need to learn more of how to use concord. Besides, they also need to stop to overgeneralize the rules in English. The overgeneralizations made by students are the overgeneralization in the rules of subject-verb agreement, the use of preposition, and the use of article. Those two kinds of errors are the most errors that are made by the students. Besides, there are also some errors that they made outside of those two. According to the morpho-syntactic taxonomy, there are errors in the use of articles (3,9%), errors in the use of prepositions (17,6%), wrong word order (3,9%), errors due to lack of concord (39,2%), wrong use of

conditional sentences (5,9%), wrong use of adverb (7,8%), wrong use of verb group (15,7%), and errors in the use of relative clauses and relative pronouns (5,9%). Besides, according to the sources of the errors, there are errors based on overgeneralization (43,13%), hypercorrection (19,6%), faulty categorization (11,76%), simplification (17,64%), and transfer of rule (7,84%). In sum, the students and also their teacher should pay attention more to learn the way how the use of concord correctly and not to overgeneralize the rules of the subject-verb agreement, the use of preposition for, and the use of article.

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