

**MORPHOLOGICAL AND SYNTACTICAL ERRORS IN  
ENGLISH COMPOSITION BY THE STUDENTS OF  
AKADEMI SEKRETARI BUDI LUHUR 2007/2008**

**(Content Analysis)**

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**Abstract**

*Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan kesalahan morfologi dan sintaksis yang dibuat oleh mahasiswa Akademi Sekretari Budi Luhur, mencari kesalahan yang paling banyak dilakukan oleh mahasiswa, serta mencari sumber-sumber kesalahan yang dibuat oleh mahasiswa. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di ASTRI Budi Luhur Jakarta pada semester genap tahun ajaran 2007/2008. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitative sedangkan model analisis datanya adalah analisis isi. Data penelitian ini diperoleh dari 22 karangan yang dibuat oleh 22 mahasiswa ASTRI Budi Luhur Jakarta. Dalam memilih sampel, peneliti menggunakan teknik "purposive sampling". Dari penelitian ini didapatkan 62 buah kesalahan morfologi dan 272 buah kesalahan sintaksis. Dari penelitian ini diketahui bahwa sumber kesalahan yang dilakukan oleh mahasiswa adalah "Interlingual transfer" dan "Intralingual transfer".*

**Key Words:** Error Analysis, Composition, Morphology, Syntax.

**A. Background of the Research**

It has been widely agreed that English plays an important role in communication because it is used in all aspects of life. Mastering English will enable the people to communicate with other people around the world. For this reason, Indonesian Government improves the teaching of English. It can be seen from the former time that English was only taught in secondary school. At that time, English was only used for businessmen, executives, ambassadors etc. Nowadays, Indonesian government realizes that English becomes more important. Realizing this fact, Indonesian government improves the teaching of English started from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 6<sup>th</sup> grade of Elementary school. Since

2003/2004, Indonesian government realized that English must be taught to the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of Elementary school. Nowadays, English is even taught to the Kindergarten students and to the Play Group students.

Contrary to Indonesian language, English is not an easy lesson. Indonesian language and English have many differences in morphology and syntax.

English becomes more difficult when the students are asked to speak or to make a composition in English. Making composition is considered as the most challenging academic task for many students. The students often make many errors when they make compositions. As the matter of fact, errors do not always give bad impacts to the students and the teacher in teaching and learning English. Analyzing the learners' errors provide much information about the system of the language that the learners have already acquired. That information is useful to improve teaching and learning process. Error analysis can be a useful device both at the beginning and during the stages of a foreign language teaching.

## **B. Problem of the research**

The problem of this research is: what kinds of morphological and syntactical errors are made by the students in making a written composition, what are the sources of these errors and what kinds of remedial teaching is that appropriate to the problem faced by the students?

## **C. Theoretical Framework**

### **1. Morphological Errors**

Grammar has traditionally been discussed in terms of morphology and syntax. Morphology is handling word

structure, and syntax is handling structures larger than the word. James (1998: 154) states:

We can therefore define as a morphology error one which involves a failure to comply with the norm in supplying any part of any instances of these word classes: *six book\**, *aboli\*shment* are noun morphology errors, *\*bringed*, *was drink\*en* are verb morphology errors, *visit me soon\*ly* is an adverb morphology error, and a *colourfull\*er* scene, an adjective morphology error. Prepositions happen to have no morphology.

Based on James opinion, morphology error is failure to apply the right form of the word classes. Morphology errors can be found in the class of noun, adjective, verb, adverb. Furthermore, James states that there is no morphological error in the class of preposition.

Meanwhile, Shaughnessy in James (1998:154) states that morphology error includes morphological markers of plurality, genitive, third-person singular. These errors are basic but persistent. The most important are third singular "-s", plural "-s", past tense "-ed", and progressive "-ing".

Third person singular "-s" is a facet of concord and is suffixed to lexical verbs and auxiliaries. It is a big problem for Indonesian who is learning English, because there is no ending "-s" in the third person singular. In this case the students often make a generalization by applying Indonesian rules in English. Plural -s is less troublesome than third person singular "-s". it appears redundant when preceded by numerals and other quantifier. For example: *\*six book* and *\*several tree*. The rules of third person singular "-s" and plural "-s" often make

the students confuse, so the students often make many errors in this case.

Past tense “-ed” is both omitted and overused. Many students are confuse when they have to apply an ending -ed. Ending “-ed” is used in past tense such as She cooked, perfect such as she has cooked, passive such as it is cooked. There is evidence that the redundancy principle operates, so that when there is a past time adverb in the sentence, there is greater likelihood of the “-ed” being omitted. The students can make a false analogy when noticing auxiliary “have +verb stem (walk) + -ed” can be combine to give “have walked”. The students may assume that “can + walk + ed” can similarly be combined, so the result is an error.

## **2. Syntactical Error**

James (1998: 156) states that syntax errors are errors that affect texts larger than the word, namely phrase, clause, sentence and ultimate paragraphs.

### **a. Phrase Structure Errors**

There are five phrase types as there are lexical word types. These phrases are: Noun Phrases (NP), Verb Phrases (VP), Adjective Phrases (AjP), Adverb Phrases, Adverb Phrases (AvP), and Preposition Phrases (PP). In this case, there are many problems, first, the fact that these five phrase types are not discrete entities, since one finds NPs inside PPs and these inside NPs.

For example: \*Some immaturred teenagers.

It is an NPs with an error in its AjP.

The second problem is that every phrase contains an eponymous nucleus or head a noun heads an NP, a verb a

VP, an adjective an AJP, but sometimes, there is an error in the head.

For example: We have no firewood\*s

In this case, head being words, a head located error will be morphological by definition. But by definition, a head located error must render the whole phrase erroneous, so it is a syntax error.

The third is modern syntactic theory tendency to multiply the numbers of phrase types.

### **b. Clause errors**

These involve the ways in which phrases themselves well formed operate in clauses. Meanwhile phrases errors involve violations in the internal or textual relation between parts of phrases entering into the structure of clause. In will produce many problems such as in the examples:

- a. The (phrase) in question is superfluous: He shaved himself (\*the beard)
- b. It is omitted: Give \*(NP) to the dog.
- c. It is misordered: Watson sent \*(to him) the letter.
- d. It is misselection: he seems \*(crying)
- e. It is a blend or hybrid: \* You would be most likely get (the first prize).

### **c. Sentence Errors**

These involve the selection and combination of clauses into larger units. Whole clause can be blended.

For example: Gandhi who led the independence movement in India, was a politician.

Gandhi, who was a politician, led the independence movement in India.

These two sentences contain same information, but it differently packaged and differently valued in each. In the first sentence "Gandhi is being a politician" is what matters, and that "he led independence movement" is an extra. In the second sentence just weighting of information is achieved.

### **3. The Nature of Error Analysis**

The learner's error can be analyzed and they will show many problems faced by the learner. According to Brown (1994: 214), error analysis is the study of student's errors that can be observed, analyzed and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learner. The point that can be taken from Brown's opinion is error analysis will show the teacher some problem faced by the student. By observing, analyzing, and classifying the learner's errors a teacher will get a lot of information about the system that is operating within the learners. In this case Corder, (1981: 10) states:

A learner's errors than provide evidence of the system of the language that he is using (i.e has learnt) at a particular pointing the course (and it must be repeated that, he is using some system, although it is not yet the right system.

Corder's opinion is almost same as Brown's opinion. In this case, Corder shows that the learner's errors provide the evidence of the system of the language that the learner is using. If the system is not right yet, it can be known from the errors made by the students.

Richard, Plat & Weber (1985: 96) state "Error analysis is the study and analysis of the errors made by second and foreign language learner".

In line with this opinion, Erdogan

([http://efd.mersin.edu.tr/dergi/meuefd\\_2005:3](http://efd.mersin.edu.tr/dergi/meuefd_2005:3)). states:

Error Analysis, a branch of applied linguistics, emerged in sixties to demonstrate that learner errors were not only because of the learner's native language but also they reflected some universal learning strategies, as a reaction to contrastive analysis theory, which considered language transfer as the basic process of second language learning as what behaviouristic theory suggested

In addition, Ali

(<http://www.melta.org.my/ET/1996/main4.html>, 1996:1)

states that error analysis is the examination of those errors committed by students in both the spoken and written medium. From the definitions above, the writer takes a conclusion that error analysis is a process of analyzing the learner's errors by collecting data, identifying, describing and explaining errors.

#### **4. Composition**

Making composition is not an easy thing. To produce a good composition, a writer has to know the rules of making composition. There are so many things that need to be known. The students have to know how to make a good composition. There are many things that have to be known to the students before the students write a composition.

##### **a. Constructing paragraph**

Constructing paragraph is not an easy thing, the writer has to know the technique of developing an idea into a paragraph in order to produce a good paragraph. The paragraph develops one idea through a series of related sentences. The idea is introduced by the topic sentence, which sets forth the

main idea of the paragraph, the idea is developed through a series of related sentences, which support the topic sentences in a detailed logical manner with sufficient details, and it is ended with a forceful concluding sentence. The effective paragraph must be unified and coherent, and it must hold the reader's attention.

### **Thesis statement**

Thesis statement is the focal point of the paragraph, controlling and objective, (Simon and Schuster, 1989: 17). Before the writer begins to make an outline and write a paragraph, the writer must have a clear idea of what is the writer trying to prove. So, in the first stage the writer has to know his goal in writing. In order to make a clear way in writing, the writer must make a thesis statement in a simple sentence. An effective thesis must be a declarative sentence, a statement of controlling idea, and not a question. It must be in the active voice, it can not be in the passive voice, because passive voice suggests passivity. In addition, a thesis statement should be a universal statement rather than personal one.

### **The Outline**

After making the thesis statement, the writer has to be ready to the outlines. An Outline is a hierarchical way to display related items of text to graphically depict their relationships. There are three functions of outline; First, an outline helps the writer organize their thoughts before getting bogged down in word choice and sentence structure. Second, an outline shows which ideas need illustration or elaboration. And the third, an outline helps the writer decide

on an organization technique for the report, whether it be logical, chronological, or categorical in nature (*Outline*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/outline>).

### **The topic sentence**

If the thesis statement is essentially important for the writer, the topic sentence is important for the reader. It is possible if the thesis and the topic sentence to be one and the same, the thesis will generally require rewriting as a topic sentence. Richard, Platt and Weber, (1985: 187) state "Topic sentence is the sentence in a paragraph or passage which contains the main idea". The topic sentence must be vivid, stimulating and exiting in order to capture the reader's interest. The topic sentence acts as a kind of summary and offers the reader an insightful view of the writer's main ideas for the following paragraph. Topic sentence adds cohesion to a paper and helps organize ideas both within the paragraph and the whole body of work at large.

### **b. Method of development**

There are several ways in developing paragraph that can be used by the writer. Simon and Schuster (1989: 19) state that there are seven methods of developing paragraph. These methods are; instance and/or examples, causal analysis, comparison/contrast, process analysis, anecdote (narrative), definition, or a combination of these with one being the dominant one. The discussion of these methods is below:

#### **Instance and/or example**

Some topics lend themselves best to be supported by a series of instances and/or examples. In this case, instance can be actual occurrences, examples are fictitious ones. In

giving the instance and/or example, the writer cannot give it too view, and leaving the reader unconvinced. The writer is not allowed to give the too many examples too.

### **Comparison and/or contrast**

There are two ways to organize comparison/contrast paragraph. Comparison paragraph is a paragraph which discusses the similarities between two subtopics. A contrast paragraph discusses the differences between at least two things. Usually topic sentence is at the beginning of paragraph. After that, the paragraph continues by discussing one point of similarity or contrast between two things to be contrasted. Simon and Schuster (1989: 20-21) state,

There are two ways to organize your comparison/contrast paragraph: the block method and the point-by-point, for instance between Macbeth and Hamlet. In the first method, after your topic sentence, state all you have to say about Macbeth, and in the second part of the same paragraph, state everything about Hamlet. For the point-by-point method, after your topic sentence, follow each statement, follows each statement about Macbeth with a comparable statement about Hamlet.

### **Causal Analysis**

Simon and Schuster (1989: 22) state, "Causal analysis is a common form of logical argument wherein we try to establish a clear relationship between occurrences". In this sense, every cause will have an effect that will in itself become a cause of another effect, as in chain reaction. It is possible that several causes produce one result, in the other hands, it is also possible that several result are caused by one cause.

### **Process Analysis**

Process analysis paragraph describes how a process happens or how to perform a series of actions (*Process Analysis*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Process+Analysis> ). It analyzes the process into a series of steps and put the steps into sequence, and then the steps are isolated, it is also use the illustrations keys to the steps, when they are appropriated. There are two kinds of process analysis paragraphs: the how-to-it and the how-it-is-done, the writer primary concern is to explain the process the reader has no intention of undertaking. (Simon and Schuster, 1989:23).

### **Anecdote (Narrative)**

An anecdote is a short tale narrating an interesting or amusing biographical incident. It may be as brief as the setting and provocation of a bon mot. An anecdote is always based on real life, an incident involving actual persons, whether famous or not, in real places. However, over time, modification, in rause may convert a particular anecdote to a fictional piece, one that is retold too good to be true. Sometimes humorous, anecdotes are not jokes, because their primary purpose is not simply to evoke laughter, but to reveal a truth more general than the brief tale itself.

### **Definition**

Anderson states that definition paragraph is good for an expository essay paper. When writing a definition paragraph, a writer chose a subject that needs to be described, and give it's definition, for example (Anderson in [http://www.amazines.com/writing/article\\_detail.cfm](http://www.amazines.com/writing/article_detail.cfm)). In making a definition paragraph the writer has to know about

the subject to be described. It can be the characteristic, quality and quantity.

#### **D. The Purpose of the Research**

There are some expected benefits that could be acquired from this research. The practical benefits of this research are: the result of this research, hopefully, provides information about the student's writing skill, gives information to the researcher about the teaching method and shows him what parts of the syllabus need more attention and provides information and evaluation for the students, so the students will try to avoid the same errors in making an English Composition. Meanwhile, the theoretical benefit of this research is the result of this research hopefully contributes to the linguistics, especially in language teaching.

#### **E. Research Method**

The method that is used in this research is qualitative method. Gay and Airasian (2000: 201) state that qualitative research is based on the collection and analysis of non numerical data such as observation, interviews, and other none discursive sources of information data into categories, identifying patterns, and producing a descriptive narrative synthesis. Meanwhile, the technique of this research is content analysis. The purpose of content analysis is finding out the solves of an actual problem. The actual problem of this research is morphological and syntactical errors made by the student in making an English composition.

In this research, the writer describe the type of error based on the morphology and syntax rules, and classify morphological errors based on Linguistic Category Taxonomy and

Syntactical errors based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy, finds out the dominant type of error, the frequency for each category, the sources of error and proposes a remedial teaching.

## **F. Research Findings**

Based on the research conducted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of 2007/2008 in ASTRI Budi Luhur Jakarta, the researcher gets the data which is needed to be analyzed in this chapter. The data of this research are 22 written compositions made by 22 students of ASTRI Budi Luhur Jakarta, especially from YB class (2007/2008). Based on the data, the researcher analyzes the erroneous sentences based on morphology and syntax, and then the researcher finds out the frequency of errors and finds out the dominant type of error made by the students, after that the researcher finds out the source of errors and finally the researcher proposes a remedial teaching.

### **1. Morphological Errors Based on Linguistic Category Taxonomy**

In this research the researcher finds 62 morphological errors made by the students. These errors can be classified into 9 categories of morphological errors. These categories are: Adverbs, Adjectives, Indefinite Demonstrative Adjectives, Nouns, Plurals, Possessive Adjectives, Singular and To + Infinitives. The tabulation of these categories can be shown in this table:

**Table 1: Morphological Error based on Linguistic Category Taxonomy**

<b>No</b>	<b>Error Category</b>	<b>Number of Error</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
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1	<b>Adverb</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>24,2%</b>
2	<b>Adjective</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9,6%</b>
3	<b>Indefinite</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4,8%</b>
4	<b>Demonstrative</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8,0%</b>
5	<b>Noun</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11,2%</b>
6	<b>Plural</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11,2%</b>
7	<b>Possessive Adjective</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9,6%</b>
8	<b>Past Formation</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3,2%</b>
9	<b>Singular</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17,7%</b>
	<b>To + Infinitive</b>		
<b>Total Number</b>		<b>62</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on the table, it can be shown that the highest number of error made by the students is "adverb" category (15 errors). And the second is "to + infinitive" (11 errors) category. Meanwhile, the lowest number of error is in "Singular" category.

## **2. Syntactical Errors based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy**

In this research, the researcher finds 272 syntactical errors made by the students. These errors are classified based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy. In this research, the researcher finds: 44 omission errors, 31 addition errors, 189 misformation errors, 8 misordering errors. The tabulation of these categories of error is shown in this table.

**Table 2: Syntactical Error Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy**

<b>No</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	<b>Omission</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>16,1%</b>
2	<b>Addition</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>11,3%</b>
3	<b>Misformation</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>69,4%</b>
4	<b>Misordering</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2,9%</b>
<b>Total Number of Error</b>		<b>272</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on this table, the highest number of error is Misformation Error (189 errors).

### 3. Frequency of Errors

After classifying the data into categories, the researcher counts the frequency of each category of error. In computation, the researcher finds 261 morphological errors and 272 syntactical errors made by the students. In order to make the frequency of each category is clearer the researcher shows it in the table:

**Table 3: Frequency of Morphological Errors based on Linguistic Category Taxonomy**

No	Error Category	Number	Percentage	Category
1	Adverb	15	24,2%	Very Low
2	Adjective	6	9,6%	Very Low
3	Indefinite Demonstrative	3	4,8%	Very Low
4	Noun	5	8,0%	Very Low
5	Plural	7	11,2%	Very Low
6	Possessive Adjective	7	11,2%	Very Low
7	Past Formation	6	9,6%	Very Low
8	Singular	2	3,2%	Very Low
9	To + Infinitive	11	17,7%	Very Low
<b>Total</b>		<b>62</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Table 4: Frequency of Syntactical Error Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy**

No	Categories	Number	Percentage	Criteria
1	Omission	44	16,1%	Very Low
2	Addition	31	11,3%	Very Low
3	Misformation	189	69,4%	Average
4	Misordering	8	2,9%	Very Low
<b>Total Number</b>		<b>272</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Based on the frequency of error above, the researcher concludes that the dominant type of morphological error is Adverb (24,2%). And the dominant type of syntactical error is in the Misformation error (69,4%) category. It proves that the students are still lack on grammar.

#### **4. Sources of errors**

Based on the data of the research, the researcher finds two kinds of sources errors, these sources of error are: Interlingual transfer and Intralingual transfer. These sources of errors are discussed below:

##### **a. Interlingual Errors**

It is one of the major sources of error. It is caused by interlingual interference from the first language. Interlingual error found in the early stages of language learning. In the early stage before the system of second language is familiar, the first language is the only linguistic system in previous experience upon which the learner can draw.

An interlingual error is occasioned by such environment factors as pressure to performs, limited of second language environments, certain elicitation task, etc. Condition that pressures the learner to produce or communicate too soon in the second language will encourage conscious use of the first language as an aid to communication. In this research, the researcher finds many interlingual errors such as in the examples:

1. Group dancing

Instead of: dancing group

2. Area Puri Kembangan

Instead of: Puri Kembangan area

3. Role important

Instead of: important role

4. Very not good

Instead of: not very good

These errors are as the results of word for word translation from Indonesian language. The first example is made by the 3<sup>rd</sup> participant. She wants to translate "grup tari" into English. So she makes an error by making word for word translation, "group" is for "grup" and "dancing" is for "tari". It is same as the second, third, fourth and fifth examples. In the second example the participant wants to translate "daerah Puri Kembangan" so she translates these words into "area Puri Kembangan", area is for daerah, and Puri Kembangan. The third example is made by the 4<sup>th</sup> participant, she wants to translate "peran penting" so she translates it into "role important. The fourth example is made by the 4<sup>th</sup> participant. She wants to translate "sangat tidak baik", she translates it into "very not good", "very" is for "sangat", "not" is for "tidak" and good is for "bagus".

#### **b. Intralingual Errors**

In Intralingual transfer the learner is not reflect the structure of the first language. Richard states that, Intralingual error is divided into four types: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and false concept hypothesized. In this research, the researcher finds these types of Intralingual error.

## **G. Conclusion**

There are two things considered to be the important things in writing an English composition. The first is the student's vocabulary. When a student wants to express his/her ideas in a composition, he/she needs a lot of vocabulary. If he/she has a lot of vocabulary, he/she can write everything that he/she wants to write. An English teacher often finds a student who can not improve their writing because he/she does not know the vocabulary which is needed by him/her although he/she has a lot of ideas in his/her mind. The second is grammar, in this case are morphology and syntax. Grammar is also important in writing an English composition. The lack of grammar often makes the students apply incorrect rules in making sentences. Applying incorrect rules will make some errors in their sentences. Furthermore, the students often apply Indonesian grammar in making English sentences. Actually, each language has their grammar.

Considering the fact that there are a lot of errors on the written composition by the students, the teacher has to pay more attention at the area of composition where the students go wrong. Because the students still have a lot of problems on their English composition. Before asking the students to make a composition, the teacher should give some explanations about the way, how to make a good composition. Besides, the teacher has to pay more attention on the student's vocabulary and grammar. In fact, the students are still poor in vocabulary and grammar.

Vocabulary and grammar tend to be the important thing in writing a composition.

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