

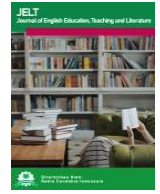


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Education Article

Morphological Errors in Students' Academic Writing: A Linguistic Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze morphological errors in students' academic writing from a linguistic perspective. It focuses on identifying the types of errors and examining the factors that contribute to their occurrence. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The data were collected from students' academic writing assignments in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context using documentation techniques. The participants were selected purposively based on their involvement in academic writing activities.

The findings reveal that students frequently make morphological errors in several categories, including affixation, pluralization, verb inflection, and word formation. Among these, errors in affixation and verb inflection are the most dominant. The study also finds that these errors are influenced by factors such as first language interference, limited vocabulary knowledge, and insufficient understanding of morphological rules.

The study concludes that morphological errors significantly affect the quality and clarity of students' academic writing. Therefore, it is important to enhance students' morphological awareness through explicit instruction and continuous practice. This study is expected to contribute to the improvement of English language teaching, particularly in developing students' writing skills and linguistic competence.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental tool for academic communication, particularly in written form where clarity and accuracy are essential. In academic writing, students are expected to express ideas logically, coherently, and in accordance with standard linguistic rules. However, achieving this level of proficiency can be challenging, especially for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), who must navigate complex linguistic systems that differ from their native language.

One of the key aspects of linguistic competence in writing is morphology, which deals with the structure and formation of words. Morphology plays a significant role in determining

how words are formed, modified, and used within sentences. A strong understanding of morphological rules enables students to produce grammatically correct and meaningful sentences, which is crucial in academic writing.

Despite its importance, many EFL students struggle with morphological accuracy in their writing. These difficulties often result in morphological errors, such as incorrect use of affixes, plural forms, verb inflections, and word formation. Such errors can affect the clarity and quality of students' writing, making their ideas harder to understand and reducing the overall effectiveness of their communication.

Morphological errors are often influenced by several factors, including limited vocabulary knowledge, lack of understanding of grammatical rules, and interference from the students' first language. In many cases, students apply patterns from their native language to English, leading to incorrect word forms. Additionally, insufficient exposure to authentic English usage can further contribute to these errors.

In academic contexts, the presence of morphological errors can have significant implications. Academic writing requires a high level of accuracy and formality, and errors in word formation may lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Therefore, identifying and analyzing these errors is essential for improving students' writing skills and enhancing their linguistic competence.

From a linguistic perspective, analyzing morphological errors provides valuable insights into how learners acquire and use language. It allows researchers and educators to understand common patterns of errors and the underlying causes behind them. This understanding can then be used to develop more effective teaching strategies and learning materials.

Previous studies have shown that morphological errors are common among EFL learners, particularly in academic writing tasks. However, the types and frequency of errors may vary depending on learners' proficiency levels, educational backgrounds, and learning environments. This highlights the need for context-specific research to better understand students' difficulties.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze morphological errors in students' academic writing from a linguistic perspective. It focuses on identifying the types of errors and examining the factors that contribute to their occurrence. By doing so, this study seeks to provide insights that can help improve teaching practices and support students in developing more accurate and effective academic writing skills.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to analyze morphological errors in students' academic writing. The qualitative approach is chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of linguistic phenomena, particularly the types and patterns of errors found in students' written texts. The descriptive design is used to systematically identify, classify, and interpret morphological errors without manipulating any variables.

The study is conducted in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, involving students who are required to produce academic writing as part of their coursework. The participants are selected using purposive sampling, focusing on students who have experience in writing academic texts in English. Their written works serve as the primary data of this study.

The data are collected from students' academic writing assignments, such as essays, reports, or other formal written tasks. These documents are chosen because they reflect

students' actual use of language in academic contexts. The collected texts are then compiled and prepared for analysis.

The technique of data collection used in this study is documentation. The researcher gathers and reviews students' written texts without direct interaction during the writing process. This method ensures that the data represent authentic language use.

The data are analyzed using error analysis procedures. The steps include identifying morphological errors, classifying them into categories (such as errors in affixation, pluralization, verb inflection, and word formation), and interpreting the possible causes of these errors. The analysis follows a systematic process to ensure clarity and consistency.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher applies triangulation by comparing findings across multiple student texts. In addition, peer checking or expert validation may be used to minimize subjectivity in identifying and classifying errors. These strategies are intended to enhance the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

RESULTS

The results of this study indicate that students still experience considerable difficulties in using correct morphological forms in their academic writing. Based on the analysis of students' texts, several types of morphological errors were identified, including errors in affixation, pluralization, verb inflection, and word formation. These errors appeared with varying frequency, but affixation and verb inflection errors were the most dominant.

Errors in affixation were commonly found in the misuse or omission of prefixes and suffixes. For example, students often used incorrect forms such as "*developingment*" instead of "*development*" or failed to apply appropriate suffixes when forming nouns and adjectives. This suggests that students have limited understanding of how affixes function in English word formation.

Pluralization errors were also frequently observed, particularly in the incorrect use of plural markers. Some students omitted the plural -s or applied it incorrectly to uncountable nouns. These errors indicate confusion about number agreement and the distinction between countable and uncountable nouns.

In terms of verb inflection, students often made errors related to tense and subject-verb agreement. For instance, forms such as "*she go to school yesterday*" or "*they goes to campus*" were found in the data. These errors demonstrate that students still struggle to apply grammatical rules consistently in writing.

Word formation errors were identified in cases where students created non-standard or incorrect word forms. These included the use of inappropriate derivational forms or direct translation from their first language. Such errors highlight the influence of the students' native language and their limited vocabulary knowledge in English.

The findings also reveal that these morphological errors are influenced by several factors. One major factor is first language interference, where students apply patterns from their native language to English. Another factor is the lack of mastery of morphological rules, particularly in the use of affixes and verb forms. Additionally, limited exposure to academic English and insufficient practice contribute to the persistence of these errors.

From a linguistic perspective, these findings support the theory of error analysis, which suggests that learners' errors are systematic and reflect their current stage of language development. The errors observed in this study are not random but indicate specific areas of difficulty that need to be addressed in teaching.

Furthermore, the results highlight the importance of integrating morphological awareness into English language teaching. Teachers need to provide explicit instruction on

word formation processes, including the use of prefixes, suffixes, and inflectional endings. By doing so, students can develop a better understanding of how words are formed and used in academic contexts.

The findings of this study are also consistent with previous research, which shows that morphological errors are common among EFL learners. However, the types and frequency of errors may vary depending on the learners' proficiency level and learning environment. This emphasizes the need for context-specific strategies in addressing students' writing difficulties.

Overall, the study demonstrates that morphological errors significantly affect the quality of students' academic writing. Therefore, improving students' morphological competence is essential for enhancing their overall writing proficiency and ensuring effective communication in academic settings.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that morphological errors remain a significant issue in students' academic writing, particularly in an EFL context. The frequent occurrence of errors in affixation, pluralization, verb inflection, and word formation indicates that students have not yet fully mastered the morphological system of English. These difficulties reflect not only limited linguistic knowledge but also challenges in applying that knowledge consistently in written communication.

From a linguistic perspective, the dominance of affixation and verb inflection errors suggests that students struggle with both derivational and inflectional morphology. Derivational errors, such as incorrect use of suffixes, indicate a lack of understanding of how word classes change, while inflectional errors point to difficulties in grammatical agreement and tense marking. This aligns with the view that morphology is a complex component of language that requires both rule-based knowledge and repeated exposure.

The findings can also be interpreted through the framework of error analysis, which views learners' errors as systematic and meaningful. The errors identified in this study are not random but reflect learners' developmental stages in acquiring English. Students tend to simplify rules, overgeneralize patterns, or transfer structures from their first language. For example, the omission of plural markers or incorrect verb forms may result from differences between English and the learners' native language system.

First language interference is one of the major factors influencing the occurrence of morphological errors. Students often rely on familiar linguistic patterns from their mother tongue when producing English sentences. This transfer can lead to incorrect word forms, especially when the morphological structures of the two languages differ significantly. As a result, students may produce forms that are grammatically acceptable in their native language but incorrect in English.

In addition, limited vocabulary knowledge contributes to errors in word formation. Students who lack sufficient lexical resources may attempt to create new words by applying incorrect morphological rules. This often results in non-standard forms that affect the clarity and accuracy of their writing. Such findings highlight the close relationship between vocabulary development and morphological competence.

The classroom context also plays an important role in shaping students' morphological accuracy. Insufficient emphasis on morphological instruction may lead students to focus more on content than on linguistic form. While communicative approaches are important, the findings suggest that explicit teaching of morphological rules is still necessary, particularly in academic writing contexts where accuracy is highly valued.

Furthermore, the results emphasize the need to develop students' morphological awareness. By understanding how words are formed and modified, students can improve both their writing accuracy and overall language proficiency. Teachers can support this by incorporating activities that focus on word formation, affix usage, and grammatical patterns in writing tasks.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that highlight the prevalence of morphological errors among EFL learners. However, this study contributes additional insight by showing how these errors manifest in academic writing and by identifying specific areas of difficulty that require attention. It reinforces the importance of context-specific analysis in understanding learners' linguistic challenges.

In conclusion, the discussion highlights that morphological errors are a natural part of language learning but require systematic attention in teaching. Addressing these errors through targeted instruction and increased exposure to correct language use can help students improve their academic writing skills and achieve greater linguistic accuracy.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined morphological errors in students' academic writing from a linguistic perspective. The findings reveal that students frequently produce errors in affixation, pluralization, verb inflection, and word formation, indicating that their mastery of English morphology is still limited. Among these, errors in affixation and verb inflection appear to be the most dominant, showing that students face difficulties in both derivational and inflectional aspects of morphology.

The study also identifies several factors contributing to these errors, including first language interference, limited vocabulary knowledge, and insufficient understanding of morphological rules. These factors demonstrate that students' errors are systematic and reflect their developmental stage in learning English as a foreign language.

Furthermore, the presence of morphological errors significantly affects the clarity and quality of students' academic writing. Therefore, improving students' morphological competence is essential to enhance their overall writing proficiency. Teachers are encouraged to provide explicit instruction on word formation and create more opportunities for students to practice using correct morphological forms in meaningful contexts.

In conclusion, morphological errors are a common but important aspect of language learning that should be addressed through appropriate teaching strategies. By strengthening students' awareness and understanding of morphology, they can develop more accurate and effective academic writing skills.

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