

# Errors in Writing

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***Abstract:** Errors in language learning may be analyzed by means of the combination of surface and linguistic strategies. The errors in this paper were collected from the end-of-term test of Writing II of group A. The data were classified as addition, omission, and substitution. No ordering errors were found. There are many, however, data of errors about Indonesian food names.*

*Keywords:* addition, omission, and substitution

## Introduction

### 1. Background of the study

In the language teaching and learning process the teacher would meet errors in students' oral and written tasks. The teacher may feel a bit or much frustrated and blame the students for these errors. The teacher may expect error-free composition.

In the second language teaching/learning process the error has always been regarded as something negative which must be avoided. On one hand, it was considered a sign of inadequacy or the teaching technique and on the other hand it was seen as a natural result that since by nature we cannot avoid making errors we should accept the reality and try with them (Maicusi et. al. 2000).

Errors are treated in error analysis that makes its departure from the target language as used by the learner. It accounts for observed facts (Schuman and Stensen, 1974:3). It considers only errors in term of the learner's formulation of the target language.

The learner is the subject to error inducing factors. A distinction, therefore, must be made between competence errors and performance errors or mistakes (Corder, 1967) or lapses (Hocket, 1948) such as false starts and slips of the tongue which are the product of extra-linguistic factors such as fatigue, limitation of memory or strong emotion. Performance errors and typically random and readily corrected by the learner when his attention is drawn to them, competence error, are on the other hand, consistent and characteristically systematic. Corder (1967: 166) asserts that

...the learner is using a definite system of language at every point in his development, although it is not ... that of the second language ... The learner's errors are evidence of this system and are themselves systematic.

Error analysis practically provides data from which inferences about the nature of learner language at a particular point can be made. It is

significant in three ways, first, for the teacher to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching materials and techniques, second for researchers to identify the strategies employed by the learner in the discovery of the target language, and third for curriculum designers to develop a remedial syllabus (Corder, 1967). Ellis (1986: 52-53) has a tone similar to the second point of the significance of error analysis in that it provides the kinds of information: first, linguistic types of errors and, second, psycholinguistic types of errors.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

In line with the background of this study, the problem is formulated as follows: What types of errors are found in the writing final test papers?

## **3. Objective of the Study**

This study is intended to explore and classify the mistakes found in the writing final test papers.

## **4. Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study will serve as remedial teaching materials. They may be presented to the students for revision.

## **5. Scope of the Study**

This study will focus on the errors of different types of errors in the writing final test papers.

## **6. Organization of the Study**

The study will consist of five chapters: introduction; review of the study; methodology; findings; and conclusion.

## **Review of Related Literature**

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### **Surface Strategy**

Error analysis may simply adopt the surface and linguistic strategies. The term “**surface strategy**” is coined by Dulay et al. (1982: 150) and also referred to as “mathematical category” (Brown, 1974: 169) to include the basic mathematical operations: addition, omission, substitution, and ordering.

Omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. Any morpheme or word in a sentence is potential candidate for omission, but some morphemes which play minor role in conveying the meaning of a sentence are much more frequently omitted than the content words.

Addition errors are the opposite of omissions. They are characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance. Different from the previous errors, which usually occur at the early stages of second language acquisition, addition errors usually occur at later stages, indicating that some basic rules have been acquired, but the refinements have not yet been made.

Substitution errors are characterized by the replacement of the desired item by another item which is not required.

Ordering errors are characterized by incorrect placement of a morpheme of group of morpheme in sentences.

## **Linguistic Category**

The linguistic category classifies errors according to what components and constituents are affected. There are four language components to be considered (Brown 1974). They are phonology, lexicon, grammar, and discourse. Constituents include the elements that comprise each language component. For example, within syntax one may ask whether the error is in the main or subordinate clause; within the clause, which constituent is affected, e.g., auxiliary. The linguistic category is used as a reporting tool which organizes the errors the errors collected. Politzer and Ramirez (1973) introduce their classification as follows:

The errors were categorized as an aid in presenting the data rather than to create a basis for extensive speculation concerning the sources for the errors. For this reason they were categorized along fairly traditional lines into errors in morphology, syntax, and vocabulary ... the three main categories were further subdivided according to different parts of speech of parts of the sentence...

## **Methodology**

### **1. Nature of the Study**

This study was a descriptive study. The purpose was to explore or collect different types of errors and describe them.

### **2. Source of Data**

The data was collected from the students' end-of-semester papers. The data were collected from the students' end-of-semester papers. There were 21 informational report papers about Indonesian foods. The students were allowed to use their dictionaries during the 100-minute exam.

### **3. Instrument**

The instrument in data collection was the researcher himself and a rater was invited to confirm the errors and their types.

### **4. Data Analysis**

The data were the errors in writing final test paper in writing. They were analyzed into different types that are available in the review.

## **Discussion**

There are a lot of Javanese food names that are neither translated nor described. The writer may have the expectation that those names are well-understood by the readers because most of the readers and the writers are residents in East Java where the foods are available. Another reason may be that the writers didn't have time to translate those names into English although the dictionaries were permitted. They may also have been lazy and satisfied with those food names. Furthermore, there

may have been no special part of translation in any previous courses about traditional food names. There are, however, food names written between brackets to show the writers' awareness that those words do not belong English. They are not readily translatable and description would have been time-consuming and difficult. As far as the readers and the writers share the same knowledge about that Javanese cuisine, there is no problem in terms of communication.

*tempe penyet* (fermented soybean cake fried and pulverized with chili sauce)

*sambel terasi* (chili sauce with pounded and fermented small fish or shrimp)

*sambel ijo* (green chili)

*petis* (condiment of fermented small fish or shrimp)

*pecel rice* (rice with salad of blanched vegetables with peanut sauce)

*nasi goreng jawa* (javanese fried rice)

*lontong balap* (rice steamed and peanut sauce and vegetables)

*kangkung* (leafy vegetables growing on water)

*gudeg food* (jackfruit cooked with coconut milk)

*bakso* (meat ball)

*asem* (sour fruit)

“*sambel*” (chili sauce)

“*lontong*” (rice steamed in banana leaf)

“*gado-gado*” (kind of salad with peanut sauce)

“*ebi*” (dried shrimp)

The above examples also show “language transfer (Selinker, 1972), sociolinguistically an example of code-switching. Had the students used their dictionaries, they would have come to the description in the brackets.

There are examples of addition of prepositions to introduce the subject of the sentences although the subject of a sentence must not be introduced by any preposition. This addition is similar with what may happen in Indonesian where the subject of a sentence is introduced by preposition “*bagi*”.

*in Indonesia has traditional food come*

*in Bandung also has*

*in Indonesia many traditional food*

*in Indonesia give*

Those utterances can be easily revised by deleting the preposition.

Omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. Smaller linguistic units which play minor role in conveying the meaning of a sentence are potential candidates. The following data may be revised in a simple way as given between brackets.

*It because of* (It is because of)

*is same* (is the same)

Indonesia becomes *rich country* (a rich country)  
*to go vacation* (to go on vacation)  
*in many place* (many places)  
*so many canteen* (so many canteens)  
*usually, it served using rice* (usually, it is served with rice)  
*many kind of* (many kinds of)  
*in several type menu* (in several menu types)  
*in several place* (at several places)  
*chili sauce that cook with* (chili sauce that is cooked with)

Addition errors are the opposite of omissions. They are characterized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance.

*many variety of foods* (a variety of foods)  
*a simple ingredients* (simple ingredients)  
*a several slices of* (several slices of)  
*favorit* (favorite)  
*wit water* (with water)

Substitution is also found here. The first is the substitution of active by passive that makes the sentence unnatural. The second has something do to with preposition. The prepositions are properly used. The words *prefer* and *different* should have been with followed by the preposition *to* and *from*. The last is the substitution of *provinces* or regions by *states*.

*is liked by many people* (many people like)  
*people prefer Indonesian fried rice than others* (people prefer Indonesian fried rice to the others)  
*different with* (different from)  
*Several states of Indonesia* (several provinces of Indonesia)  
*it serves on the big circle plate* (it is served on the big circle plate)  
*bakso is made from meat and were shaped* (meat ball is made from meat and is shaped)  
*like our culture that have* (like our culture that has)

There are also examples that show interference from Indonesian and may be revised easily.

*from float or sink of the egg* (whether the egg floats or sinks)  
*from its price, gado-gado can be reached* (that salad of vegetables and peanut sauce is not expensive)  
*it doesn't cost expensive* (it is not expensive or the price is low)

Anyone reading those utterances would feel Indonesian structure.

## Conclusion

The surface and linguistic strategies contribute to error analysis by collecting and classifying errors. These errors are not surprising but they at least inform the language teacher about kinds of errors they would meet in students' compositions. The greatest number and seem to be most

difficult to translate or describe traditional food names. An exercise in translation of culture-bound words would be very useful.

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