

**ANALYZING STUDENTS' ERRORS IN WRITING COMPOSITION. A
THESIS. TEACHERS TRAINING AND EDUCATION FACULTY.
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF SAINT THOMAS.**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to find out the errors made by the eleventh grade students of SMA Swasta Santu Petrus Sidikalang in writing composition in the academic year of 2020/2021. Errors were analyzed based on linguistic category taxonomy. Linguistic category taxonomy consists of morphology and syntax. The population of this research is 262 students and 56 is randomly taken as a sample. Based on the result of the data analysis, there are 169 errors made by the students on their writing compositions. Morphological errors is 85 (50,29%) and syntactical errors is 84 (49,69%). Morphological errors that students made in morphology of linguistic category are definite article incorrect 14 (8,29%), possessive case incorrect 17 (10,05%), third person singular verb incorrect 25 (14,79%), simple past tense incorrect 28 (16,57%) and comparative adjective/adverb incorrect 1 (0,59%). In syntax there are noun phrase 40 (23,67%), verb phrase 28 (16,57%), verb-and-verb construction 5 (2,95%), word order 9 (5,32) and some transformation 2 (1,18%). In conclusion the dominant errors made by the students is in morphology error.

Keywords: Errors, Writing Composition

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the language skills that students must have in order to be qualified in learning English. It is important for students to master English in writing in order to be able to communicate and socialize with the world's community, and to know that writing can help them to think back what they have written.

Unlike speaking, writing needs a long time and process to be mastered. In speaking, the focus is what you are talking is understandable despite some grammatical mistakes. In writing, however, the language used must be grammatical, clear and well organised. Both writing and speaking are forms of communication, one in written form and the other in oral form. Error is natural and normal thing in learning. Dulay et. al (1982:138) states, "People cannot learn language without first systematically committing errors". This is the proof that they are still learning a language. Therefore, it is not surprising if there are a lot of errors found in the students' writing due to their incomplete knowledge of the grammatical rules. It is important to know kinds of error made by the students in their compositions so that teacher can act what to do to minimize such errors.

The writer hopes that this research will have some benefits in studying English especially in writing skill, and this research is also expected to be helpful for the researcher, the teachers, the students and other researchers.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Writing

Writing takes an important role in learning English. Level (2001:3) states, “Writing is one of the most powerful communication tools you will use today and for the rest of your life. You will use it to share your thoughts and ideas with others and even to communicate with yourself.” It means that by writing, someone’s thoughts and ideas can be shared as long as someone writes them based on the requirements needed such as clear sentences, simple words, correct use of writing devices, etc. It should be remembered that writing is a means of communication in a long distance. That is why it requires clear language which does not contain ambiguity.

The important thing in writing is that students need to be involved in the process of learning to affect their skill improvement. However, to reach that skill, students also need to be creative in writing. Gaffield-Vile (in Harmer 2003:259) states, “Creative writing is a journey of self-discovery, which promotes effective writing.” It means that while students are writing compositions, they are tapping into their favorite things. This provides powerful motivation to find the right words to express. The students can produce a creative writing, by considering the ideas, organizations of the composition, word choice, sentence fluency etc. There are several forms of writing; that which tells a story is called narration, that which describes is called description, that which explains is called exposition, and that which argues is called argumentation (Wishon and Burks, 1980:377-378).

The Process of Writing

Just as reading is one of the skills in learning a language, writing is too. It is expected to provide the product of writing through process and time needed. In the process of writing, the students have to think the proper words to be written, arrange them by organizing sentences into a paragraph, and joining paragraph to another paragraphs both semantically and grammatically. By that process, the students and teacher can provide the product of writing.

Harmer (2003:257) states,

In the teaching of writing, we can focus on the product of that writing or on the writing process itself. When concentrating on the product we are only interested in the aim of a task and in the product. Those who advocate a process approach to writing, however, pay attention to the various stages that any piece of writing goes through.

Any product including writing product, needs a process which takes time. It is important to spend much time with students for writing process, with this process it will be easier for the teacher to know the students’ background knowledge and provide them with what they have not got.

According to Level (2001:15) there are five stages of writing process:

- (1) Prewriting is freely exploring topics. Choosing a topic, and beginning to gather and organize details before you write.
- (2) Drafting is getting your ideas down on paper roughly the format you intend.
- (3) Revising is correcting any major errors and improving the writing’s form and content.
- (4) Editing and Proofreading is polishing the writing and fixing errors in grammar, spelling and mechanics.

(5) Publishing, Presenting and sharing your writing.

Those stages of writing explain that writing is more complex than any other skills because it will take a long time to be mastered. In order to make a good writing, the writer should pass some processes. They are prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading, and publishing and presenting.

Writing Composition

Level (2001:39) states, “A composition is a group of paragraphs that all work together to develop a single focus.” It means that a composition is composed of paragraphs with shared focus, and presented in a systematic way. Within composition, each paragraph has a definite function. Whatever organizational strategy it is, it will have a beginning, a middle and end. In writing composition, these parts are called the introduction, the body and the conclusion.

Wishon and Burks (1980:370) state,

A paragraph may serve the purpose of introducing, developing and summarizing. The introductory paragraph states the subject of the whole composition. The introduction should limit the subject and tell what aspects of it will be treated. The developing paragraphs are the body, or main part, of the composition. A composition may consist of as many developing paragraphs as there are the main topic to discuss. The summarizing paragraph usually restates in different words the main points that have been made in developing paragraphs. The summarizing paragraph does not usually introduce new ideas. It should give the feeling that the composition is completed and that a conclusion has been reached.

When someone plans a composition, it is important to identify the main points of the topic sentence that will be used in the paragraphs. Read each one, and make sure it is relevant to the main idea of the composition. It is natural when someone deletes sentences which are not in accordance with the main idea. All of the sentences and paragraphs must be clearly connected to the main idea. There are several types of writing; that which tells a story is called narration, that which describes is called description, that which explains is called exposition, and that which argues is called argumentation (Wishon and Burks, 1980:377-378).

Error Analysis

Errors are the flawed side of learner in speech or writing (Dulay et.al, 1982:138). When students use a foreign language creatively, they produce a lot of errors. These errors occur naturally in spontaneous communication whenever students are unable to transmit or receive messages in a foreign language to the same extent and degree that they get in their native language. Errors also happen when there is something absent in their native language. For example, labio-dental voiced [v] is absent in their native, so they tend to pronounce [feri] instead of [veri] for the word “very”. It is a sign that students are learning a foreign language because errors cannot be avoided when learning. We use error to refer to any deviation from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics or causes of the deviation might be.

Stevens (in Richards 1975:4) states that errors should not be viewed as problem to be overcome, but rather as normal and inevitable features indicating the strategies that learners use. Learner himself is a generator of the grammar of his

sentences in the new language. This makes a growing terminology for a field of research dealing with the learner's attempts to internalize the grammar of the language he is learning: The terminology includes: error analysis, idiosyncratic dialects, interlanguage, approximative systems, transitional competence.

According to James (1998:1), error analysis is the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language. It means that by error analysis, we can consider the errors made by the students in writing English, especially in writing their English compositions. However, error is an observable phenomenon in learning that has to be accounted. Error analysis has yielded insights to the second language acquisition process that have stimulated major changes in teaching practices (Dulay et.al, 1982:138). It means that error analysis is an important thing to be applied in teaching language. Errors may also help better understand the process of learning language.

The Causes of Error

According to Harmer (2003:99-100) there are two causes for the errors which most if not all students make at various stages:

- 1) First language interference: Students who learn English as a second language already have a deep knowledge of at least one other language, and where first language and English come into contact with each other. This often causes confusions which provoke errors in a learner's use of English.
- 2) Developmental errors: Errors in early word use mean that there are mistakes that students commonly commit when first learning language. This accounts for mistakes like **She is more nicer than him* where the acquisition of *more* for comparatives is over-generalised. Errors of this kind are part of a natural acquisition process.

2.4.2 The Sources of Error

According to Brown (2007:263-266) there are four types sources of error, they are:

- 1) Interlingual Transfer
Interlingual transfer is a significant error for all learners. In this early stage, before the system of the second language is familiar, the native language is the only previous linguistic system upon which the learner can draw. While it is not always clear that an error is the result of transfer from the native language, many such errors are detectable in learner's speech.
e.g. This book different with my book.
This is clearly interlingual transfer because the native language does not know the verb be and it is hardly used in sentences. The phrase "different with" is precisely a transfer from Indonesian "berbeda dengan" but the preposition "from" goes with adjective "different" not "with".
- 2) Intralingual Transfer
One of the major contributions of learners language research has been its recognition of sources of error that extend beyond interlingual errors in learning a second language. It is now clear that **intralingual transfer** (within the target language itself) is a major factor in second language acquisition. This kind of error belongs to learning process not that interference of the first language.

e.g. He buyed a book last week.

This kind of error is a matter of tenses of that language. The verb buyed should change into bought because of the use of tenses, that is simple past tense.

3) Context of Learning

“Context” refers, for example, to the classroom with its teacher and its materials in the case of school learning or the social situation in the case of untutored second language learning. In classroom context, students make faulty hypotheses about the language which can be led by the teacher or the textbook. Students often make errors because the teacher may provide incorrect information or because students get misleading explanation and definition from the teacher. For the example, when the teacher explains the material, there is something she forgets about. Then, she explains it but incorrectly. For the next explanation finally the teacher remembers that material and explains it again. Finally, it will be simply confusing when the students recall it.

4) Communication Strategies

Communication strategies is strategic options relating to output, how one productively expresses meaning, and how one effectively delivers messages to others. Students clearly use production strategies in order to extend their message delivery, but this technique can be the source of their errors. By trying to identify sources of error it will be easier to take the next step to understand the learner’s cognitive and affective processes relate to the linguistic system and to formulate an integrated process of second language acquisition.

2.4.3 The Classification of Errors

Dulay et al. (1982: 146-192) have reviewed the literature in order to present the most useful and commonly used bases for the descriptive classification of errors. They are: 1) Linguistic category, 2) Surface strategy, 3) Comparative analysis, and 4) Communicative effect. The four classifications of error are elaborated as follows:

The Classification of Error Based on Linguistic Category Taxonomy

They state these linguistic category taxonomies classify errors according to either or both the language component or the particular linguistic constituent the error affects. Language components include phonology (pronunciation), syntax and morphology (grammar), semantics and lexicon (meaning and vocabulary) and discourse (style). While constituents include the elements that comprise each language component. Many researchers use the linguistic category taxonomy as a reporting tool which organizes the errors they have collected. In case of writing analysis, the focus is on morphology and syntax.

The classification of Error Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

Surface strategy taxonomy highlights the ways surface structures are altered: Students may *omit* necessary items or *add* unnecessary ones; they may *misform* items or *misorder* them. Analyzing errors from this category perspective holds much promise for researchers concerned with identifying cognitive process that underlie the students’ reconstruction of the new language. In this category, errors can be classified in to four types: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

The Classification of Error Based on Comparative Taxonomy

The classification of errors based on this comparative taxonomy is based on comparison between the structure of second language errors and certain other types of constructions. Second language errors have most frequently been compared to errors made by students learning the target language as their first language and to equivalent phrases or sentences in the learner's mother tongue.

The Classification of Error Based on Communicative Effect Taxonomy

Certain types of errors make a critical differences as to whether or not the listener or reader comprehends the speaker's intended message. While the surface strategy and comparative taxonomies focus on aspects of the errors themselves, the communicative effect classification deals with errors from the perspective of their effect on the listener or reader. It focuses on distinguishing between errors that seem to cause miscommunication and those that don't. This category consists of two types, they are: global errors and local errors.

In this research, the writer choose the Linguistic Category Taxonomy which is divided into morphology and syntax.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The writer conducted this research by using qualitative descriptive method to find out the errors made by the eleventh grade students of SMA Swasta Santu Petrus Sidikalang in writing composition. Robert and Knopp, 2006:274 state, "Descriptive qualitative method is a method to social science research that emphasizes collecting descriptive data in natural condition, uses inductive thinking, and emphasizes understanding the subjects' point of view." Burns (1999:22) states, "The aim of qualitative approach is to offer description, interpretation, and classification of naturalistic social contexts". It means that this qualitative descriptive method is appropriate for this research because this research uses data analysis and basically conducted in a descriptive way that is to find out what kinds of error made by the students in their compositions.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of this research is all of the eleventh grade students of SMA Swasta Santu Petrus Sidikalang in the academic year of 2020/2021. There are 7 classes in the eleventh grade students at the school. The total population is 262 students. The writer took 21% of the population as a sample for this case. The writer randomly took 8 students in each class as a sample which amounts to 56 students. In deciding the 8 students form each class the writer took odd and even number of students' attendant list in each class.

3.3 The instrument of Collecting the Data

The instrument of collecting data for this research is the composition. Students freely to choose one of these four topics: *My Favorite Movie Star*, *My Favorite Teacher*, *My Hobby* and *My Frightening Day*. The students need to make

their own writing compositions based on the writer’s instruction that the errors on their writing compositions can be analyzed by the writer.

3.4 The Technique of Analyzing the Data

Students’ errors in writing compositions is analyzed by using Miles’ and Huberman’s model (1994:10-11). The figure is able to see below:

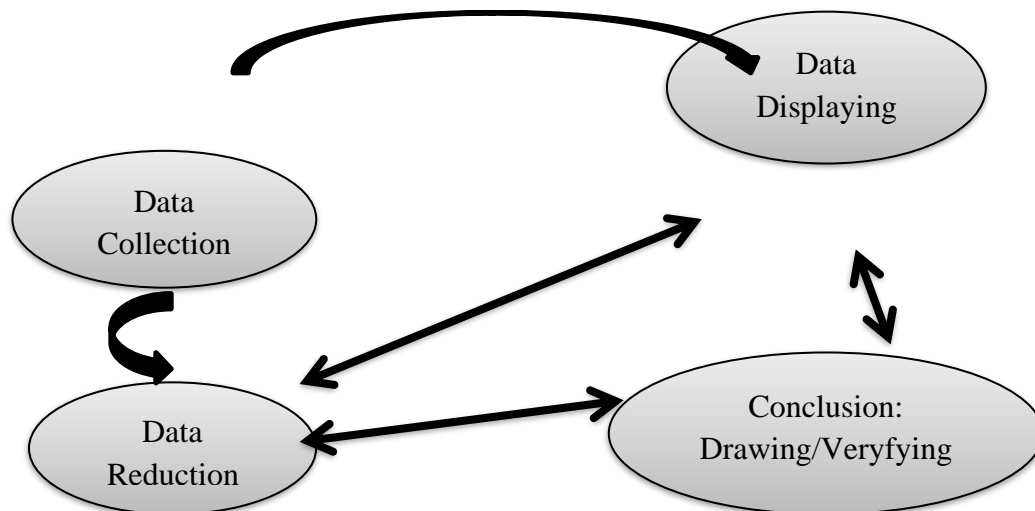


Figure 1. Miles’ and Huberman’s Data Analysis Model

1. Data Collection

The writer collected the data by asking the students of the eleventh grade students of SMA Swasta Santu Petrus Sidikalang to write their English composition based on the topics given by the writer.

2. Data Reduction

Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcription. The writer did not reduce any data source because the data has relation to the composition using the topics above.

3. Data display

The next step is data display. A display is organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and the action (Miles and Huberman 1994:11). It means that after reducing, the data will be displayed. In this study, the writer analyzed the errors made by the students and displayed the data related to the errors of students’ English compositions. The errors made by the is classified based on Linguistic Category Taxonomy. The data is displayed by following table:

Table 1. The Students’ Errors Based on Morphology

No	Name	Types of Errors						Total
		Art	Poss	TPSV	SPT	PP	Comp. Adj/adv	

1								
2								
3								
Total								
Percentage								

Where: Art : Article
 Poss : Possessive
 TPSV : Third Person Singular Verb
 SPT : Simple Past Tense
 PP : Past Participle
 Comp. Adj/adv : Comparative adjective/adverb

Table 2. The Students' Errors Based on Syntax

No	Name	Types of Errors					Total
		NP	VP	V-and-V Const.	WO	Transf.	
1							
2							
3							
Total							
Percentage							

Where: NP : Noun Phrase
 VP : Verb Phrase
 V-and-V Const : Verb-and-verb construction
 WO : Word Order
 Transf : Some transformation

After collecting the data from the students' compositions, display the data based on Linguistic Category Taxonomy, to obtain the percentage of identifying students errors in their writing composition the writer will apply the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where: P = Percentage of error
 F = Frequency of error made
 N = Number of students' error

4. Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The conclusions drawing and verification of this qualitative research will be the answer of this problem of the study.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

V. Data Analysis

In this chapter the writer would like to present the result of the students' errors on their writing compositions. This research was conducted on with 56 participants of 262 students as a sample. The writer gave 50 minutes for the students to write their

writing compositions. Below is the analysis of the students' errors on their writing composition:

Table 3. The Students' Errors Based on Morphology

Morphology	Category	Number	Percentage
	Article	14	16,48%
	Possessive	17	20%
	Thid Person Singular Verb	25	29,41%
	Simple Past Tense	28	32,94%
	Past Participle	0	0,00%
	Comparative djective/Adverb	1	1,17%
Total		85	100%

Table 4. The Students' Errors Based on Syntax

Syntax	Category	Number	Percentage
	Noun Phrase	40	47,61%
	Verb Phrase	28	33,33%
	Verb-and-Verb Construction	5	5,96%
	Word Order	9	10,71%
	Some Transformation	2	2,39%
Total		84	100%

Table 5. The Types of Students Errors Based on Linguistic Category Taxonomy

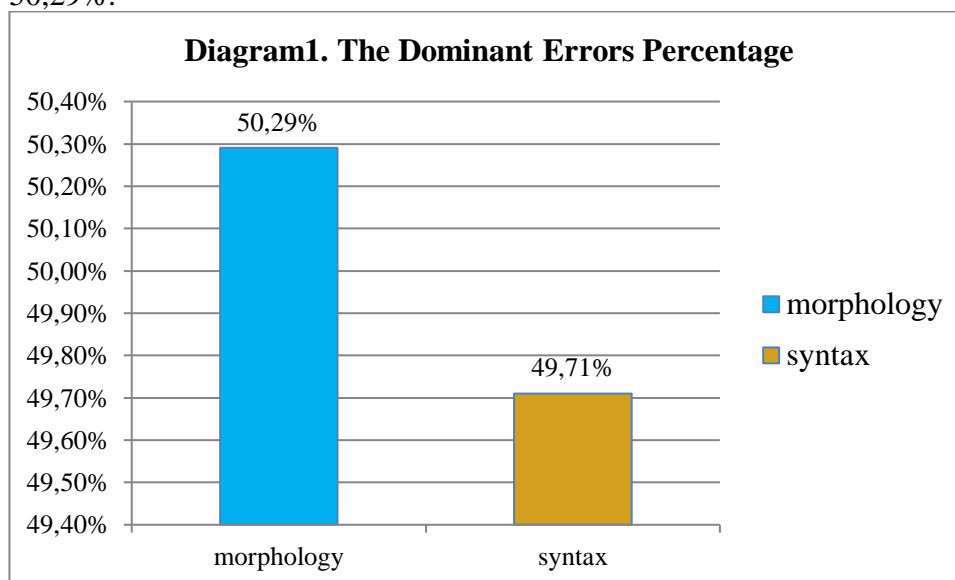
Morphology	Category	Number	Percentage
	Articles Incorrect	14	8,29%
	Possessive Case Incorrect	17	10,05%
	Third Person Singular Verb Incorrect	25	14,79%
	Simple Past Tense Incorrect	28	16,57%
	Past Participle Incorrect	0	0,00%
	Comparative Incorrect	1	0,59%
	Total		85
Syntax	Noun Phrase	40	23,67%
	Verb Phrase	28	16,57%
	Verb-and-Verb Construction	5	2,95%
	Word Order	9	5,32%
	Some Transformation	2	1,18%
Total		84	49,71%
All Total		169	100%

The table 5 above shows that morphology has some categories, article incorrect with 5,61%, possessive case incorrect with 10,11%, third person singular verb incorrect with 16,86%, simple past tense incorrect with 20,78%, comparative incorrect with 0,56% and past participle forms are not found. There are also categories in syntax, noun phrase with 21,34%, verb phrase with 15,17%, verb-

and-verb construction with 2,80%, word order with 5,06% and some transformation with 1,69.

The Dominant Errors on Students' Writing Compositions

Based on the table 4.1.3 above, the writer concluded that the dominant errors on the students' writing compositions is morphology with the number 85 or 50,29%.



Discussion

Based on the data analysis, it was found that the eleventh grade students of SMA Swasta Santu Petrus Sidikalang made 169 errors altogether with 85 errors in morphology and 84 errors in syntax. Morphology consists of article incorrect with 13 items or 8,29%, possessive case incorrect with 17 items or 10,05%, third person singular verb incorrect with 25 items or 14,79%, simple past tense incorrect with 28 items or 16,57% , and comparative incorrect with 1 item or 0,59%. Syntax consists of noun phrase with 40 items or 23,67%, verb phrase with 28 items or 16,57%, verb-and-verb construction with 5 items or 2,95%, word order with 9 items or 5,32% and some transformation with 2 items or 1,18% . It can be seen that the writer found that the students still makes errors on their writing compositions.

CONCLUSIONS

After conducting the research, analyzing the data and presenting the result of the research, the writer also presented the suggestion and the conclusion of this research as follows:

1. There are 85 total errors on the students' writing composition based on Morphological errors is 85 (50,29%) and syntactical errors is 84 (49,71%). The types of errors that students made on their writing composition are article incorrect with 13 items or 8,29%, possessive case incorrect with 17 items or 10,05%, third person singular verb incorrect with 25 items or 14,79%, simple past tense incorrect with 28 items or 16,57% , and comparative incorrect with 1 item or 0,59%.
2. There are 84 total errors on the students' writing composition based on syntax consists of noun phrase with 40 items or 23,67%, verb phrase with 28 items or

- 16,57%, verb-and-verb construction with 5 items or 2,95%, word order with 9 items or 5,32% and some transformation with 2 items or 1,18% .
3. The dominant errors in linguistic category taxonomy is morphological error with 85 errors item (50,29%).

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