



## **AN ANALYSIS OF INFLECTIONAL MORPHOLOGY USED IN STUDENTS' WRITING**

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**Abstract:** The study aims to analyse inflectional morphology used in students' writing. It is qualitative study. There were 73 students the fourth semester of English department of STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung who were taken purposively as the sample. It is found that, from 554 sentences, there are 17.15% (or 95 words) errors made by the students in the forms of nouns, 19.13% (or 106 words) errors in the forms of pronouns and determiners, 96.2% (or 533 words) errors in the forms of verbs, and 2.53% (or 14 words) errors in the forms of adjectives. Based on the results, it is known that the EFL learners mostly made errors in using verbs in the term of inflectional morphology.

**Keywords:** Inflectional Morphology, Students' Errors, Students' Writing

### **INTRODUCTION**

Inflectional morphology is the study of the process (such as affixation and vowel change) that distinguish the forms of words in certain grammatical categories. McCarthy (2002) said that the smaller parts of words, generally called morphemes. The area of grammar concerned with the structure of words and with relationships

between words involving the morphemes that compose them is technically called morphology. In the term of inflectional morphology, he mentions some aspects, such as regular and irregular inflections in the forms of nouns, forms of pronouns and determiner, forms of verbs, and forms of adjectives.

The understanding of inflectional morphology is important for students to be able to use correct affixation and to form correct pattern in making sentences. Nevertheless, students often make errors. This is supported by Santoso (2017) who did a study about a morphological errors made by the learners. After analyzing the data, the findings pointed out that the errors of derivational morphology is 10.3% and the inflectional morphology released in 89.7%.

Meanwhile, Daulay, e.al. (2016) said the beginner students sometimes found some mistakes or errors in writing a text which use inflectional morphemes. In their study, they conducted to find out the students' errors in using inflectional morphemes that include nouns: singular and plural form especially in regular plural and include verb especially in regular verb to form a simple present tense in third person singular. They found that error of omission is the highest and most dominant from four types of errors. And error caused by intralingual transfer has the higher percentage 54.05% (20 causes) than error caused by interlingual transfer 45.95% (17

causes). It means that the cause of intralingual transfer was dominantly occurred in the students' texts. It is different from their study, in this study, the term of error is the error made by students in their sentences related to the inflectional morphology regardless the term of error related to error analysis.

Therefore, in this study, the writer would like to focus on inflectional morphology because the percentage of errors made by the learners in inflectional morphology is higher than derivational morphology. In addition, the writer would like to look deeper in what aspects of inflectional morphology the learners make big errors.

There are some aspects that will be analyzed, they are the regular and irregular inflection in the forms of nouns, forms of pronouns and determiners, forms of verbs, and forms of adjectives. The aspects mentioned are taken from the morphology book of McCarthy (2002).

## METHODS

This is a qualitative study. There were 73 students the fourth semester of English department of STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung who were taken purposively as the sample. The students were asked to write passages based on the topics given. The data will be classified according to regular and irregular inflection in the forms of nouns, forms of pronouns and determiners, forms of verbs, and forms of adjectives. The writer analyzed the errors of the words that have been classified based on the terms and make the percentages of each aspects.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data, it is found that, from 554 sentences, there are 17.15% (or 95 words) errors made by the students in the forms of nouns, 19.13% (or 106 words) errors in the forms of pronouns and determiners, 96.2% (or 533 words) errors in the forms of verbs, and 2.53% (or 14 words) errors in the forms of adjectives. Based on the results, it is known that the EFL learners mostly made errors in using verbs in the term

of inflectional morphology. Here, each aspect will be described as follows.

### *Forms of Nouns*

According to McCarthy (2002), most countable nouns in English have two word forms: a singular and a plural. Inflectionally, for any noun lexeme X, there are just two grammatical words, "singular of X" and "plural of X", contrasting in number. Meanwhile, he also mentions that besides, the forms of nouns have the regular and irregular inflection (for examples, in term of regular inflection, the lexeme CAT has a singular form *cat* and a plural form *cats*, which is said that it is a regular suffix that consisting of a root and suffix 's or 'es, and in the term of irregular inflection, the lexeme TOOTH has a singular form *tooth* and a plural form *teeth*), some nouns in English have the irregular suffixes expressing plurality include *i*, *-ae* and *a* (as in *cacti*, *formulae*, *phenomena*).

On one hand, he also said that there also some nouns in English which are unchanged in the plural (sometimes called "zero-plural" or "zero suffix") as in lexemes SHEEP and DEER, on the other hand, there are also

uncountable nouns, for example as in the lexemes, *rice, sugar, salt, etc.* In addition, there are a few nouns such as SCISSORS and PANTS which exist only in an 's plural form, and which appear only in plural syntactic contexts. That is why, for these lexemes, there is a conventional circumlocution or periphrastic form: *a pair of pants* and *a pair of scissors* (as in *that pair of scissors belongs in the top drawer*).

In this study, the writer described some errors in the forms of noun, such as

[1] *monkey very help me have a money.*

[2] *there was many interesting place.*

[3] *I saw a clothes.*

[4] *the women have many childrens.*

[5] *I usually eating food like chicken and meet.*

[6] *the biggest\_\_ in the world.*

Based on the data above, it can be seen that in [1] actually, the sentence is totally ungrammatical. But, if we focus on the form of noun, it is clear that the student wrote "a money". It is incorrect because money is uncountable noun and it is not appropriate to use an article "a" before the word "money". Meanwhile, in [2] and [3] it can be seen

that it is related to singular and plural regular form. In [2], it is incorrect to write "place" because there is a determiner "many" that means there are more than one places. In [3], it is incorrect as well because the sentence use article "a" but the noun used is in plural form, "clothes". In [4], it is also about plural form but it is in irregular form. The word "children" is already plural form, thus, it is not necessary to put the suffix "s". In [5], the student maybe wants to write "chicken and meat" but he/she uses the wrong word, "meet", that sounds similar with "meat". The word "meet" is a verb, then it can not be placed as an object in a sentence. In [6], the sentence is missing a noun. Actually, if we use an adjective, there must be a noun because the function of an adjective here is to modify a noun.

#### *Forms of pronouns and determiners*

Usually determiners always come before a noun, but pronouns are more independent than this. They function in much the same way as nouns, and they can be replaced by nouns in a sentence. On the other hand, when the words are determiners, they

cannot be replaced by nouns. The personal pronouns (I, you, he, etc.) cannot be determiners. This is also true of the possessive pronouns (mine, yours, his/hers, ours, and theirs). The definite and the indefinite articles can never be pronouns. They are always determiners.

As mentioned by McCarthy (2002), it is encountered the distinction between 'this' and 'these', as in 'this pianist' and 'these pianists'. These are the singular and plural forms of the determiner lexeme THIS. Other determiners include THE, A(N) and SOME, but only one other determiner exhibits a singular-plural contrast: THAT, with singular and plural forms 'that' and 'those'. The determiners THIS and THAT demonstrate that number contrasts can have a grammatical effect inside noun phrase as well as between subject noun phrases and their accompanying verbs.

In this study, the writer described some errors in the forms of noun, such as

[7] *rabbit have a long ear.*

[8] *rabbit animal is **fastest** in run.*

[9] *\_\_\_ favorite food is calibri food.*

[10] *me don't like vegetables since children.*

[11] *animal could eat a rice.*

Based on the data above, it can be seen that in [7] it is related to singular and plural noun. It is known that rabbit has two ears. It is not appropriate if we write "a long ear". This will be appropriate if it is written "long ears" without the article "a". In [8], it is about the superlative degree where the determiner "the" must be written before the adjective. Then, the sentence will be correct if it is written "...the fastest animal".

#### *Forms of verbs*

In terms of forms of verbs, the inflectional morphemes are based on the function of the tenses used in the sentences. Here are the data found in the students' writing.

[12] *usually I often late to breakfast.*

[13] *I like eat meatballs.*

[14] *women chooses to work because they want to help the fincial in their family.*

[15] *I am go to Yogya and Bandung.*

[16] *my faavorite drink are....*

In [12] the sentence needs 'verb to be'. It is known that, in English, a sentence must consist of subject and predicate. It is different from Indonesian which sometimes the sentence does not need a predicate. In [12] probably the student still used Indonesian style in making English sentence, then, the error comes.

In [13] the use of tense is correct that is present tense but the word "eat" is incorrect to write like that. It should be "eating" or "to eat" because it is impossible in a simple sentence uses two verbs. Then, gerund or verb to is used.

The use of tenses must also consider the use of subject in a sentence. It is known that verb + -s/-es must be put after the singular subject. Meanwhile, in [14], the word "women" is a plural noun so that it does not need verb + -s/-es. It only needs the bare verb.

The "verb to be" is used when the sentence does not have a verb. When the sentence already have a verb, it does not need "verb to be" anymore. Then [15] is incorrect because it has both the "verb to be" and the verb 1 as well.

In writing, the misspelled is very noticeable as in [16]. The use of "verb to be" is incorrect as well because it is included in the singular form. Then, the correct "verb to be" is "is" in the sentence.

#### *Forms of adjectives*

According to McCarthy (2002), many English adjectives exhibit three form, in the term of comparison. Meanwhile, here, it is found that the misused of suffix and the placement of the adjective itself. Here are the data found in the students' writing.

[17] I am so boring

[18] I give place very nice and clean

[19] I can shopping fruit and vegetable fresh.

In [17] the adjective "boring" is not suitable for the subject "I". It should be "bored" to describe the feeling of the subject. It must be written in past participle form not in "-ing" form because it is to tell that the object makes the subject feels something. For example as in the sentence (I am bored because the movie is boring). Then, it can be said that [17] is incorrect.

It known that adjective is to describe a noun. It comes before the noun. In [18] it is incorrect to write "place very nice" but it should be "very nice place" because the adjective "nice" is to describe the noun "place". It is the same as in [19] where the student wrote "vegetable fresh". It should be "fresh vegetable" because the adjective "fresh" describes the noun "vegetable". Actually the error in [19] is very fatal because not only about the use of adjective but also the use of verb in the term of gerund. It is known that the use of gerund must be followed by the "verb 1" not the "verb ing".

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGESITION**

Based on the discussion and the results of the data analysis in this research it can be concluded that from 554 sentences, there are 17.15% (or 95 words) errors made by the students in the forms of nouns, 19.13% (or 106 words) errors in the forms of pronouns and determiners, 96.2% (or 533 words) errors in the forms of verbs, and 2.53% (or 14 words) errorrs in the forms of adjectives. Based on the results, it is known that the EFL learners mostly made errors in using

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### *Suggestion for English Teacher*

Based on the results of the research, there are several suggestions suggested for the English teachers. Since there are some errors made by students in their writing related to inflectional morphemes, the teacher may train the students to use inflectional morphemes, for examples, the use of morpheme 's to add at the end of the first verb that used third person singular subject and the differences of regular and irregular forms of verb and noun. In addition, the teacher give review for the students' productive skills, such as writing and speaking, then they will be familiar with the use of inflectional morphemes.

### *Suggestion for Further Research*

Besides the suggestions for English teachers, there are also several points necessary for further study to concern.

In relation to research design, further research may employ qualitative od quanttative designs to know the process of teaching and

learning activities where the teacher drills the students to use inflectional morphology. In addition, it can be used to find out the weaknesses of the teaching techniques used in delivering the teaching materials..

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