

STUDENTS' SURFACE STRATEGY TAXONOMY ERRORS IN NARRATING A STORY: A MORPHO-SYNTACTICAL VIEW

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Abstract: This study was set to reveal students' errors in speaking. The errors were limited to surface strategy taxonomy errors with the focus of morphological and syntactical errors. The study was carried out under a mixed-method design where both quantitative and qualitative data were both needed. 33 students of ELESP Lambung Mangkurat University participated in this study. The participants were asked to orally create a story based on sequence pictures given to them. The recordings of students' stories were then transcribed and analyzed. The results of the study suggested that 249 errors from different categories occurred in students' stories. The most prominent errors were found in Omission and Misinformation categories. The errors suggested students' lack of understanding related to English grammatical rules. However, despite the errors, students' stories were still easy to comprehend.

Keywords: errors; speaking; surface strategy taxonomy; morphology; syntax

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is an interactive process of communication intended to give and receive information, express feelings and opinions, share ideas, and communicate other purposes (Burns & Joyce, 1997; Harmer, 2007; Khan, 2019). The process of encoding and decoding the information in speaking activities depends on the context underlying the activities. This includes the participants themselves, the environment, and the purpose of speaking. Compared to other communication skills, speaking is considered as the most difficult skill to master (Atmazaki et.al, 2021; Lestari, 2021; Pollard, 2008; Pratiwi & Prihatini, 2021; Syafiq, et.al, 2021; Zhang, 2009). Difficulties in speaking, especially in EFL classrooms, are divided by Thao & Nguyet (2019) into four difficulties namely affective, social, instructional, and linguistic difficulties.

Affective difficulties deal with the fright of making mistakes, anxiety, and other psychological aspects that hinder students from speaking fluently. Social difficulties deal with socio-ethnic characteristics underlying the speaking activities. Instructional difficulties deal with the clarity of instructions given by teachers in EFL classes. The last, linguistic difficulties deal with students' linguistic knowledge of the target language. However, despite being the most difficult skill to master, proficiency in speaking remains the main goal of language learners. This statement is supported by Richards and Renandya (2012, p. 201) who stated that developing speaking proficiency is the objective of a large percentage of language learners.

In order to be a good speaker, someone has to integrate the five required components of speaking namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Of the five components, this study focused only on grammatical component of speaking. The occurrence of grammatical errors in speaking may affect the listener's comprehension of the speaking context. Furthermore, these grammatical errors are not only practiced by a new language learner, but also those who have already learned English for years. It is natural for any language learner to make errors in the process of learning the target language. Foreign language learning is a process that always involves a trial and error in order for the learners to acquire the target language.

The discussion on errors is always connected to the discussion on mistakes. The key author that has outlined the differences between the two is Corder (1974). He argued that errors cannot be self-corrected as they are the results of lack of linguistic competency, while mistakes can be self-corrected by the learners as they are just considered as a slip of the tongue due to various factors such as nervousness, health condition, and other reasons. To conclude, errors usually happen because of the lack of understanding of the target language. Meanwhile, mistakes usually happen because of the unconsciousness of the speaker in his language production. In this study, the focus is on students' errors. Errors and mistakes are noticeable from the frequency of their occurrences. Errors are more frequent as the students normally do not realize that they have made errors in their language production.

In this study, the research took place in the English Language Education Study Program of Lambung Mangkurat University where speaking subject is offered in three sequential classes. Based on the preliminary observations of the researchers, it is concluded that many students still find it difficult to avoid grammatical errors when speaking English. However, as they are still in the phase of learning, errors are normal parts of their daily practices to be proficient speakers. Along their academic journey, most of the students will be more aware of the errors in their language production. This study is conducted with the intention to learn what errors students need to anticipate and fix later for their improvement. In other words, the results of the study are expected to help students grow grammatical awareness when speaking in the class and outside the class.

METHOD

This research was a mixed-method research. Creswell & Plano Clark (2018) defined mixed-method research as research that combines multiple methods to answer research questions in which the data are collected, interpreted, and analyzed in both qualitative and

quantitative manners. In this research, all errors made by the students were quantified and later described qualitatively.

The study involved 33 students of the English Language Education Study Program, Lambung Mangkurat University. The participating students were enrolled in the second series of speaking class offered in the University. They were chosen because their ability in speaking was not in novice level, yet they were still on their way to be more fluent speakers. Therefore, the results of this study were expected to help them improve where they were still lack at for their next level of speaking class.

The technique used to obtain the data was speaking test. The test was recorded, and students' answers for the test were transcribed to be then analyzed. In the test, the participating students were asked to narrate a story based on the sequence pictures. The purpose of the test was not to grade students' speaking ability but to document their speaking to find out errors in their utterances.

The analysis was focused on students' errors in surface strategy taxonomy. There are four types of errors which belong to Surface Strategy Taxonomy: Omission, Addition, Misinformation, and Misordering (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982). To make the findings more specific, the errors were then classified into morphological and syntactical categories using Politzer and Ramirez's model (1973).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Identification of Errors

After transcribing the data, the writers found 249 errors occurred in students' stories. The errors were categorized based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy. In this taxonomy, the errors made by students were classified into Omission, Misinformation, Addition, and Misordering. Of 249 errors, 141 were Omission errors, 84 were Misinformation errors, 18 were Addition errors, and 6 were Misordering errors. All errors found in this study were pictured in the following figure:

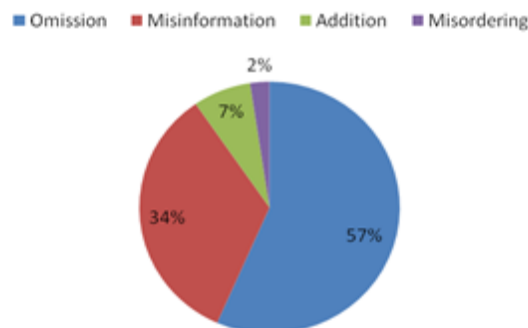


Figure 1. Percentage of Errors based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy

For a more detailed analysis, the errors in this taxonomy were divided into morphological and syntactical errors. Of 249 errors, 147 errors were morphological errors and 102 were syntactical errors.

Morphological Errors

In morphological category, the students made 147 errors. The errors were found in 1) third person singular (105 errors), 2) past tense (19 errors), 3) past participle (20 errors), 4) possessive pronouns (3 errors). Most of the errors occurred in Omission category (107 of 147 errors). The table below shows the types and numbers of morphological errors in the data:

Table 1. Types and Numbers of Morphological Errors

No	Grammatical Categories	EA	EO	Emf	Emo	Σ	%
1	Possessive Pronoun	-	-	1	2	3	2.04%
2	Third Person Singular	-	103	2	-	105	71.43%
3	Past Tense	1	4	14	-	19	12.93%
4	Past participle	-	-	20	-	20	13.61%
5	Comparative	-	-	-	-	0	0.00%
Total		1	107	37	2	147	100.00%

Note:

EA: Error of Addition
EO: Error of Omission

Emf : Error of Misinformation
EMO: Error of Misordering

The examples of students' morphological errors in different grammatical categories were given in the following table:

Table 2. Examples of Morphological Errors

Error Types	Examples of students' errors
1. Possessive	• The man clothes
2. Third Person Singular Verb	• He want to read his newspaper
3. Simple Past Tense	• And then the paper flied away
4. Past Participle	• The note is flew by the wind
5. Comparative Adjective	• (not found)

From the table above, it can be explained that in possessive category, the student made an error on possessive pronoun. The student did not use 's in stating the possessive pronoun. The correct phrase should be 'the man's clothes'. In the second grammatical category, the student made an error in applying the rule of third person singular in present tense by not adding -s in the verb 'want'. The right utterance should be 'He wants to read his newspaper'. In the simple past tense category, the student chose the wrong past form of the verb. The student overgeneralized the rule of the verb in past tense by simply adding -ed on the verb while there

are irregular verbs that do not follow this rule. The right utterance for example number 3 is 'And then the paper flew away'. The last, for past participle category, the student made an error in using past participle for passive sentence. The correct utterance should be 'The note is flown by the wind'. Despite making errors in morphological category, students' narration of the sequence pictures was still easy to follow.

Syntactical Errors

In syntactical category, the students made 102 errors. The errors were categorized into five different types as outlined in the following table:

Table 3. Types and Numbers of Syntactical Errors

No	Grammatical Categories	EA	EO	EMf	EMo	Σ	%
1	Noun Phrase						
	Indefinite Article	4	3	2	1	10	9.80%
	Determiner	3	2	2	0	7	6.86%
	Nominalization	0	0	7	0	7	6.86%
	Number	1	4	0	0	5	4.90%
	Use of Pronoun	1	4	6	0	11	10.78%
	Preposition	3	6	4	0	13	12.75%
2	Verb Phrase						
	Main Verb	5	7	10	0	22	21.57%
	Progressive Tense	0	3	0	0	3	2.94%
	Agreement of Subject and Verb	0	0	8	0	8	7.84%
3	Verb and Verb Construction	0	5	5	0	10	9.80%
4	Word Order	0	0	0	3	3	2.94%
5	Transformation	0	0	3	0	3	2.94%
Total		17	34	47	4	102	100%

Note :

EA: Error of Addition

EMf : Error of Misinformation

EO: Error of Omission

EMo: Error of Misordering

The examples of different types of students' syntactical errors found in the data were given in the following table:

Table 4. Examples of Syntactical Errors

Error Types	Examples of students' error
1. Noun Phrase	
a. Indefinite Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are <i>a</i> painters.
b. Determiner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He goes to those <i>dry cleaner</i> to clean his clothes.
c. Nominalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He tries to clean the clothes <i>by bring</i> it to the dry cleaner.
d. Number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First, at the <i>first pictures</i>.
e. Pronoun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>He</i> wants to clean <i>her</i> clothes.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>f. Preposition</p> <p>2. Verb Phrase</p> <p>a. Main Verb</p> <p>b. Progressive Tense</p> <p>c. Agreement of subject and verb</p> <p>3. Verb construction</p> <p>4. Word order</p> <p>5. Transformation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The man sits <i>at</i> wet paint. • The bench actually just <i>painted</i>. • He <i>sitting</i> on the bench. • <i>Two men was putting</i> a piece a paper. • The announcement was <i>blew</i> up by the wind. • On his clothes, there is <i>paint white</i>. • His clothes are <i>dirt</i> because of the paint. |
|---|---|
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From the examples, it can be seen that in error in type 1a (Indefinite Article), the student used the wrong article. In the utterance ‘*There are a painters*’, the article should be omitted since the object is plural (*painters*). In error type 1b (Determiner), the error of the student was the wrong use of the determiner. In English, ‘those’ should be followed by plural nouns. Because ‘dry cleaner’ is singular noun, the use of ‘those’ is incorrect. Thus, the correct sentence should be ‘*He goes to the/that dry cleaner to clean his clothes*’. For type 1c (Nominalization), the student made an error in nominalizing the verb. The rule is that after the preposition, the verb should be in a nominal form of gerund. Thus, the correct utterance should be ‘*He tries to clean his clothes by bringing it to the dry cleaner.*’ In error type 1d (Number), the student made an error by putting -s as the mark of plural noun in a singular noun. The correct utterance should be ‘*First, at the first picture*’. In error type 1e (Pronoun), the student’s error was in the consistency of gender pronoun usage. In the utterance ‘*He wants to clean her clothes*’ the subject is ‘*he*’, so the possessive pronoun should be ‘*his*’ instead of ‘*her*’. Therefore, the correct utterance should be ‘*He wants to clean his clothes*’. In error type 1f (Preposition), the student made an error in using preposition. In the sentence ‘*The man sits at wet paint*’, the correct preposition that should be used is ‘*on*’. Thus, the correct sentence should be ‘*The man sits on wet paint*’.

The next error type is in the area of verb phrase. In error type 2a (Main Verb), the student made an error in the use of verb. In the sentence ‘*The bench actually just painted*’, the verb used indicated that the sentence was an active sentence. However, the sentence should be in passive form. Thus, the correct sentence should be ‘*The bench was actually just painted.*’ In error type 2b (Progressive Tense), the student omitted auxiliary verb needed to construct progressive tense. In the utterance ‘*He sitting on the bench*’, auxiliary verb ‘*is*’ before the verb is missing. Hence, the correct sentence should be ‘*He is sitting on the bench*’. In error type 2c (Agreement of Subject and Verb), the error was in the agreement between the subject ‘*two men*’ which is plural with the verb ‘*was*’ which is for singular subject. The correct form of auxiliary verb to use is ‘*were*’. Therefore, the correct utterance should be ‘*Two men were putting a piece a paper*’.

The next type of error is verb construction. In this type of error, the student used the wrong verb construction in the sentence. In sentence ‘*The announcement was blew up by the wind*’, the verb which should be used is the past participle (blown), not the past form (blew). Thus, the sentence should be ‘*The announcement was blown up by the wind*’.

In error type 4 (Word Order), the error made by the student was incorrect order of words. This happened because the students were still influenced by the Indonesian pattern. The correct order of the utterance should be ‘*On his clothes, there is white paint*’.

The last type of error in the area of Syntax is error in transformation. In this type, the students did not transform the word into the correct form. In utterance ‘*His clothes is dirt because of the paint*’, the word ‘*dirt*’ (noun) should be transformed into adjective form which is ‘*dirty*’. Thus, the correct utterance should be ‘*His clothes are dirty because of the paint*’.

From those examples, it can be concluded that those errors occurred mainly because of the lack mastery of the rules in the target language. This most probably happened because students’ native language has different morpho-syntactical rules when compared to English. Furthermore, because the data were taken in the spoken form of English, students’ control of grammar might not be as good as when the data were taken in form of the written form. This is because of the limited timeframe and spontaneous nature of speaking. However, all errors made by the students did not significantly disturb meaning-making of their stories.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study found that there were 249 errors made by students in their speaking. These errors occurred in different morphological and syntactical categories. In relation to Surface Strategy Taxonomy, the study suggested that most prominently, the students’ errors occurred in Misordering and Misinformation. The errors made by the students were considered local errors as they did not significantly hinder the communication. However, errors made by the students still need to get proper attention as when they are not addressed, the errors can be internalized and become habitual practices of the students.

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