Students’ Morphological Errors in Using Word Formation in Writing an Essay

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Abstract. This research was aimed to find out students’ morphological errors in using word formation in writing an essay. Word formation that was found in the students’ writing are derivation and inflection. The type of this research was descriptive qualitative research. The source of data was the English Department students of Universitas Putra Indonesia Yayasan Perguruan Tinggi Komputer (UPI YPTK) Padang who were in the fourth semester that consist of 23 students. The data were gotten through writing test. The finding of this research showed that the students made morphological errors in using derivation and inflection in writing the essay. Errors in derivation were 10 data, while errors in inflection were 83 data. Based on those findings, the students still made errors in using word formation in their writing.

Keywords: morphology, errors, word formation, derivation, inflection

1. Introduction

In learning English language, English foreign language (EFL) students do not only learn about the four basic skills like speaking, listening, writing, and reading, but they also learn the sub-skills of them like pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and so on. This is because all of them are related each other. However, in learning language, the students must also learn about linguistics and its branches to know the context of language, the origin of words and how they are formed. One of the linguistic studies is morphology.

In morphology, the students learn about the forms of words and words varieties. According to Lieber (2004:8), morphology is the study of word formation, including the ways new words were created in the languages of the world. The variation of forming of words depends on how they are used in sentences. That is why morphology has relationship with the four basic English skills especially in writing, because in writing the students are required to be able to make words and its forms, and arrange them into the sentences.

Word formation in the study of morphology has many processes, two of them are inflection and derivation. They are always used in writing since they are considered as the parts of grammar. However, many students still make errors in using them. Hence, in this research, the writer is going to find out and analyze the morphological errors that the students make in using the word formation while writing an essay.

2. Literature Review

A. The Concept of Morphology

Etymologically, the word morphology is derived from the word “morph” which means “form”, and the word “logy” which means “science”. So, morphology is simply defined as the science of form.
While, in the context of linguistics, morphology is one of linguistic branches that studies morphemes and form of words.

In addition, changes of word formation and meanings which arise, also the changes of word classes that caused by the word formation change, also become the object of morphology study. In other words, structurally the object of morphology study is that morpheme is at the lowest level and words are at the highest level. That is why morphology is said as the study of word structure and the effect of word formation changes towards the meaning and word classes (Ramlan, 2001: 2).

Lieber (2004) defines the morphology as the study of word formation, including the ways new words are created in the language of the world, the way form of words are varied depending on how they are used in sentences, and also morphology is the study of how words are put together. While Keraf (2006: 51) stated that morphology is a part of grammar that discusses the form of words.

Based on the definition above, it can be summed up that morphology is one of linguistic branches that studies and analyzes the basics of language or parts of grammar and also their functions in grammatical and semantic changes.

B. The Concept of Derivation and Inflection

The basic concept of derivational processes is to enable the language user to make new lexeme (Brinton, 2000:51). It means that from one base word can be developed into some words so that the form of the word, the word class, and the meaning of the word are changed. This is also supported by Yule (2006:61) that said that derivation creates new words from a simple word with different grammatical category. For example, the word “beauty” can be developed by adding suffixes –fy, -ful, -ful+ly so that the new words are “beautify”, “beautiful”, and “beautifully”. Hence, those words have their own word class with different meaning.

Whereas, inflectional processes are not used to create new words, but it indicates aspect of grammatical function of word (Yule, 2006: 62). It means that inflection does not make any changes of the word class and its meaning after added by any morpheme. In other words, it is used to show if a word is singular or plural, if it is regular or irregular verbs in the past tense, and it is a comparative or possessive form. For example, if the word “study” is added by suffixes –ies, -ed, and –ing for “studies”, “studied”, and “studying”, the word class and the meaning will not change because it just indicates the grammatical function of the word.

3. Methodology

This research used descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research is an activity that takes place simultaneously with data analysis activities (Moleong, 2010: 6). So the method of solving the problem by describing the object of the study is through analysis. According to Bagdan and Taylor (through Moleong, 2010: 6) qualitative research is the research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from people or observed behavior.

The data of this research were gotten from writing test done by English Department students of Universitas Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang who were in the fourth semester.

The aspects that were described in this research were the students’ morphological errors in using word formation, especially in the use of derivation and inflection while writing the essay.

In collecting the data, the writer used writing test as the instrument of the research. The test is given after the writer had some meetings with the students to teach them about morphology so that they can understand the scope of morphology study. In doing the test, the students were asked to choose one of some topics which had been provided, then they developed it into an essay.

After collecting the data, the writer did some steps in analyzing the data. The first step is the writer identified the morphological errors found in the students writing, then correcting them. After that, the writer classified the errors based on the types of word formation that the students used in their writing.

4. Result and Discussion
After analyzing the data, the writer got the findings of this research. From the students writing, it was found the morphological errors in the use of word formation. The details of data can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. The students’ morphological errors in using word formation

| No | Types of Word Formation | Sub-indicators | Total of Errors |
|----|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1  | Derivation              | Errors in adjective derivation | 5               |
| 1  | Derivation              | Errors in adverb derivation | 1               |
| 1  | Derivation              | Errors in noun derivation | 4               |
|    | Total of Derivation Errors |                       | 10 data         |
| 2  | Inflection              | Errors in noun inflection | 32              |
| 2  | Inflection              | Errors in verb inflection | 47              |
| 2  | Inflection              | Errors in adjective inflection | 4             |
|    | Total of Inflection Errors |                                    | 83              |

The data were got from the students’ essay.

From the table above, it can be seen that the students made errors in using derivation and inflection. The total of derivation errors are 10 data, in which 5 errors in adjective derivation, 1 error in adverb derivation, and 4 errors in noun derivation.

Whereas, there are 83 errors that the students made in using inflection, in which 32 errors in noun inflection, 47 errors in verb inflection, and 4 errors in adjective inflection. Dealing with those findings, the most errors that the students made in their writing is in the use of inflection. The following is the analysis of those errors.

C. Errors in Using Derivation

Here are some examples of errors in using derivation which are found in the students’ writing.

- Errors in adjective derivation

Data 1:
Bad road is the problem that makes the driver is not safety during the trip.

The italic words show that the student made error in using adjective derivation. The word “safety” does not match to show adjective since it is considered as a noun. The word “safety” is derived from the word “safe (an adjective)” + suffix (-ty) that makes it become a noun. So, to use correct adjective for the sentence above, the word “not safety” must be changed to the word “unsafe (adjective)”. The detail of the word is prefix (un-) + adjective (safe) = unsafe. The prefix (un-) is used to show negative thing. So, the correct sentence is:

Bad road is the problem that makes the driver unsafe during the trip.

Data 2:
Smoking is danger for our health.

The italic word shows that the student still made error in using adjective derivation. The word “danger” is not an adjective, but it is a noun. So, the word “danger” must be added by suffix (-ous) to make it becomes an adjective. The detail of the word is danger + suffix (-ous) = dangerous. So, the correct sentence is:

Smoking is dangerous for our health.
• Errors in adverb derivation
Data 1:
We can easy get information by using internet access.

The italic word shows that the student made error in using adverb derivation. The word “easy” is an adjective, so it is not appropriate used as an adverb of manner. To make it become an adverb, the word “easy” must be added by suffix (-ly). The detail of the word is easy + suffix (-ly) = easily. So, the correct sentence is:
We can easily get information by using internet access.

• Errors in noun derivation
Data 1:
Self confident is very important to support our perform.

The sentence above has two errors in the use of noun derivation. The first error lies on the word “confident”. Actually “confident” is not appropriate used as a noun because it is an adjective, in which it is derived from the base word “confide” + suffix (-ent) = confident. So, to make it become a noun, the word “confide” must be added by suffix (-ence). The detail of the word is confide + suffix (-ence) = confidence.

Then, the second error lies on the word “perform”. The word “perform” is not appropriate used as a noun since it is considered as a verb. To make it become a noun, the word perform must be added by suffix (-ance). The detail of the word is perform + suffix (-ance) = performance. So, the correct sentence is:
Self confidence is very important to support our performance.

Data 2:
Some people cannot tell her or his confidential to any people.

The italic word on the sentence above shows that the student still made error in using noun derivation. The word “confidential” is not appropriate used as a noun, because it is an adjective. To make it become a noun, the word confidential must be added by suffix (-ity), in which the detail of the word is confidential + suffix (-ity) = confidentiality. So, the correct sentence is:
Some people cannot tell her or his confidentiality to any people.

Data 3:
One time, when you are alone and need entertain, you will try to find something that makes you happy.

The italic word show that there is an error in the use of noun derivation done by the student. The word “entertain” is not appropriate used as a noun since it is considered as a verb. To make it become a noun, the word “entertain” must be added by suffix (-ment), in which the detail of the word is entertain + suffix (-ment) = entertainment. So, the correct sentence is:
One time, when you are alone and need entertainment, you will try to find something that makes you happy.

Data 4:
We should need concentrate to drive carefully.
The italic word shows that the student still made errors in using verb derivation. In the sentence above, the student intended to use noun after the verb “need”, but it in fact he made error in using it. Actually, the word “concentrate” is a verb, so it is not appropriate used as an adjective. To make it becomes a noun, suffix (-ion) is required. The detail of the word is concentrate + suffix (-ion) = concentration. So, the correct sentence is:
We should need concentration to drive carefully.

D. Errors in Using Inflection

Here are some examples of errors in using inflection which are found in the students’ writing.

- Errors in noun inflection

Data 1:
It is because it gives many effect for the driver and the people in the road.

The italic words show that the student made error in using noun inflection. Grammatically, the word “many” should be followed by plural noun by adding suffix (-s) on the word “effect”, in which the detail of the word is effect + suffix (-s) = effects. So, the correct sentence is:
It is because it gives many effects for the driver and the people in the road.

Data 2:
Part time job can give a new experiences for their life.

The italic words show that the student still made error in using noun inflection. Grammatically, article “a” which is used in the sentence above should be followed by singular noun. So, suffix (-s) in the word “experiences” must be omitted so that it can be singular. Hence, the word “experiences” must be changed to the word “experience”. So, the correct sentence is:
Part time job can give a new experience for their life.

Data 3:
By using internet, we can get a lot of informations.

The italic word above shows that there is an error in the use of noun inflection. The word “information” is included to uncountable singular noun, so it is not appropriate if added by suffix (-s) to make it becomes plural. Hence, the suffix (-s) must be omitted. So, the word “informations” must be changed to the word “information”. The correct sentence should be:
By using internet, we can get a lot of information.

- Errors in Verb Inflection

Data 1:
It probably help the students to prepare their career.

The italic word show that the student made error in using verb inflection. Since the word “it” known as the third singular person, and the sentence above is in the form of Simple Present Tense, the verb “help” must be added by suffix (-s), in which the detail of the word is help + suffix (-s) = helps. So, the correct sentence is:
It probably helps the students to prepare their career.

Data 2:
Many kinds of books using English.
The italic word show that there is an error on the student’s writing in using verb inflection. This is because the subject-verb agreement in the sentence above is violated by the student. Since the subject is plural, and the sentence is in the form of Simple Present Tense, so the verb which is used must be in the Verb 1. Hence, the word “using” must be changed to the word “use” by omitting suffix (-ing). The correct sentence must be:

Many kinds of books use English.

Data 3:
So, English become the important subject that have big impact for college students

In the sentence above, there are two errors in the use of verb inflection done by the student. The first error lies on the word “become”. Because the word “English” is the third singular subject, and the sentence is in the form of Simple Present Tense, so the verb that is used must be in Verb 1 + suffix (-s).

Hence, the word “become” must be changed to “becomes”, in which the detail of the word is become + suffix (-s) = becomes.

Then, the second error lies on the word “have”. The word “have” is not appropriate if paired with the subject “English” since it is the third singular subject. So, the word “have” must be changed to the word “has”. The correct sentence should be:

So, English becomes the important subject that has big impact for college students.

- Errors in Adjective Inflection
Data 1:
The live cost in Yogya is cheap than in Jakarta.

The italic word shows that there is an error in the use of adjective inflection, especially in using comparative degree. Actually, in using comparative degree, the adjective that has one syllable must be added by suffix (-er). Hence, the word “cheap” must be changed to the word “cheaper”, in which the detail of the word is cheap + suffix (-er) = cheaper. So, the correct sentence is:

The live cost in Yogya is cheaper than in Jakarta.

Data 2:
This step is easy than the previous step.

The italic word shows that the student still made error in using comparative degree. Grammatically, the adjective that has one syllable must be added by suffix (-er). Hence, the word “easy” must be changed to the word “easier”, in which the detail of the word is easy + suffix (-er) = easier. So, the correct sentence is:

This step is easier than the previous step.

5. Conclusion
Based on the results of the research above, it can be concluded that many students still made morphological errors in their writing, especially in the use of word formation. The word formation that is often found in the students’ writing are derivation and inflection. From the findings above, the errors in derivation and inflection are divided into sub-indicators. First, in the use of derivation, there are 10 errors found in the students’ writing, in which the details of the errors are 5 errors in adjective derivation, 1 error in adverb derivation, and 4 errors in noun derivation. Second, in the use of inflection, there are 83 errors found in the students’ writing, in which the details of the errors are 32 errors in noun inflection, 47 errors in verb inflection, and 4 errors in adjective inflection. Based on this fact, the students need to be more careful in using these two word formation because they are related to the use of grammar, then the
lecturer should pay more attention to the weaknesses of the students in using correct word formation in learning morphology.

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