

AN ERROR ANALYSIS OF ARABIC WRITING BY ISLAMIC VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: This research examined different types of writing errors performed by Islamic Vocational High School students undertaking the Arabic course. The current study also discussed the plausible causes of errors committed by the students. A mixed-method approach was used to investigate and analyze a corpus of students' writing. The data were collected through documentation and obtained from the essays of tenth and eleventh-grade students with 40 respondents. The study employed error analysis steps by Corder as a framework to deal with deviated grammatical rules, including collecting, identifying, classifying, quantifying data, and analyzing sources of errors. The results showed that the most dominant error was spelling, with 35.44%, followed by 28.16% errors in phrases, 22.81% in sentence structures, and 13.59% in agreement. Several possible causes of such errors include overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized.

Keywords: Arabic as foreign language, error analysis, Islamic Vocational High School

INTRODUCTION

Arabic is a foreign language for Indonesian students, and most students need help learning it. This might be because Arabic contains complex grammatical rules as it applies twelve personal pronouns and different variations of the form of a verb, both in perfect and imperfect tenses (Chacra, 2007). In contrast, Bahasa does not take inflection, meaning that verb forms remain the same when meeting with the subject in a different person, number, and gender. For example, to say *she sits* and *they sit*, Bahasa will take the following forms, *dia duduk* and *mereka duduk*. Here the verb *duduk* remains in its base form regardless of the subject in a different person, number, and gender.

In contrast, Arabic applies more complex forms as follows, *she sits* هي تجلس *she sits* هم يجلسون *they sit*. Compared to the verb *duduk* that always stays in its base form, the verbs تجلس and يجلسون comprise different prefixes and endings referring to the person, number, and gender. Those facts could be the answer to why Indonesian students of Arabic face various difficulties when learning Arabic. Furthermore, to master Arabic, there are four basic skills that the students must learn, comprising listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These are the main aspects of language learning that should be taught to the students. While learning the Arabic language, students often make errors in expressing Arabic, especially in writing. Errors in written Arabic expressions are common in the learning process because Arabic, as mentioned earlier, is a language that uses different letters and code structures compared to Bahasa Indonesia.

Several previous studies proved that writing, apart from other skills, caused major errors in Indonesian learners of Arabic. The first previous study is from Fadhlan et al. (2021), entitled *Linguistic Error in Writing Arabic on Students of Pondok Pesantren Al-Muhsinin*

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Kerinci. The results showed that such errors circumnavigated grammatical errors, choosing incorrect Arabic vocabulary, and cultural errors in writing Arabic related to Arabic grammar. Another previous study is from Ikhwan & Fadly (2019) analyzing errors in Arabic writing by the participant of the Amsilati Program at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung, Banyuwangi. The study found that the students committed errors in several areas comprising *hamzah qatha'*, letter reduction, letter addition, and letter replacement. The third previous study is from Mukroji et al. (2022) examining *Language Errors in the Thesis Title of Arabic Education Students*. The results revealed that *idafiyah*, *na'at man'ut* and *hal*, and semantic issues were among those errors.

The present study aimed to investigate Arabic written production errors of vocational high school students in Sukoharjo. The school was chosen because it accommodates Arabic in the daily language, and almost all subjects are taught in Arabic. The primary focus of learning in this school is memorizing the Qur'an and making Arabic the main language in the classroom or daily conversation. Research participants outside Islamic schools are the gap left by the previous researchers. Thus, the current study analyzed errors committed by vocational high school students in composing Arabic essays. Errors were examined within the perspective of error analysis by Corder (1974), containing four main stages: identifying, classifying, quantifying, and analyzing sources of errors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a common view, errors and mistakes are often loosely to mean deviated grammatical rules in spoken or written production. It seems arguable since examining what is categorized as errors or mistakes takes work. In other words, it requires in-depth analysis. In simpler terms, mistakes occur when people perform slips of the tongue, and most likely, they can correct it directly. On the other hand, errors happen when people continuously make the same mistakes. As the incorrect use of linguistic items is often repeated, Corder (1967) refers to this phenomenon as systematic errors.

Particular scholars define errors in slightly different ways, but most of them share similar fundamental ideas. Norrish (1983) affirms that errors as deviated grammatical rules repeated consistently by someone. Similarly, Brown (2000) asserts that errors occur when adult speakers commit noticeable deviations in grammar, and thus related to the learner's competence rather than the performance. Ellis (2008) and James (1998) explains that such errors are unnoticeable for L2 (second language) learners as they are unable to recognize whether they are correct or incorrect. Even though the learners acknowledge that they commit errors, they seemingly cannot provide correct forms. Hence, errors are likely to occur constantly.

Interlanguage Errors VS Intralingual and Developmental Errors

Interlanguage errors refer to learning distractions because of a negative transfer of the native language, commonly called L1 interference. The problems lie in the linguistic feature differences between the first and target languages, leading L2 learners to generalize previous knowledge of the native language in learning the target language and incorrectly apply them. Accordingly, Lado (1971) asserts if the linguistic feature differences between the first and the target languages are greater, the learning difficulties are expected to be higher. This might be supported by the study from Adila (2019) examining writing errors amongst Indonesian learners of Arabic. As grammatical rules in Bahasa Indonesia are mainly different from the Arabic ones, his findings show that interference of the mother tongue still became a major problem among other sources of errors.

Intralingual and developmental errors can also hinder the students' language learning that causes errors. From the perspective of interlanguage errors, it is the negative transfer of L1 language which is responsible for the occurrence of such errors. In contrast, intralingual

and developmental errors could occur regardless of students' first language backgrounds. Richards (1974) claims that the latter represents L2 learners' competence and reflects how the second language is acquired. Based on these notions, sources of L2 learners' errors stem from the complexities of target languages, learning strategies, teaching techniques, and L2 learners' comprehension. Under the views of intralingual and developmental errors, errors happen due to the following causes.

1. **Overgeneralization.**
Overgeneralization happens when L2 learners commit errors by producing deviant grammatical rules based on their experiences of other rules in the target language. More specifically, they apply one rule in one context and extend its application to other areas that are not applicable.
2. **Ignorance of Rule Restrictions.**
Ignorance of rule restrictions refers to L2 learners' inability to recognize certain limitations of language structures and thus overlook several restrictions in the target language.
3. **Incomplete Application of Rules**
Incomplete application of rules occurs when L2 learners are incapable of applying the complete target language rules. Often, this condition happens when the task requires more complex structures, but the learners only produce the basic ones.
4. **False concepts hypothesized**
The concept is attributed to L2 learners' inability to comprehend the target language distinctions fully. This condition is likely to occur due to poor gradation of teaching items.

Error Analysis

Error Analysis (EA) was first coined by Stephen Pit Corder and his scholar fellows in 1967 (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982). The idea emerged to criticize the initial theory well-known by contrastive analysis and offer a more comprehensive explanation of errors in language learning. Contrastive analysis views errors as a manifestation of the specific grammatical rules between the learners' first and target languages. Thus, based on this theory, errors should be identified and analyzed by comparing L1 and L2. In contrast, error analysis tried to complete the former view by proposing more rational arguments to comprehend learning strategies and neglecting the idea that errors are only caused by L1 interference.

From an error analysis perspective, Corder showed how systematic errors can be interpreted as evidence of the learning process. Thus, the research on acquiring a second language was theoretically connected with the work on receiving the first language. He stated that this theory would be useful for teachers, students, and linguists. While contrastive analysis has failed to deliver on its promise to explain the nature of the language learning process and enable error-free learning, it has played a useful role in promoting the kind of language descriptions used by language teachers and learners (Corder, 1981).

Error analysis emphasizes that a range of errors committed by L2 learners is likely to be similar despite their L1. The theory highlights that errors appear because of intralingual interference instead of interlingual transfer (James, 1998). That is to say, errors occur due to the complexities of structures in the target language and are not predominantly related to the first language features. Within this perspective, Sercombe (2000) explains that error analysis is significant in at least three ways:

1. It may provide data on the student's competence level.
2. Error analysis is substantial to recognize and thus describe the learners' difficulties.
3. The language teacher may benefit from error analysis to better comprehend how L2 learners learn the target language.

RESEARCH METHOD

The current study employed mixed methods combining quantitative and qualitative approaches in collecting and analyzing research data. Using error analysis as the approach, the present study discussed how such errors occur in students' Arabic writings at Islamic Vocational High School in Sukoharjo. Data were collected through documentation and obtained from the essays of eleventh and twelfth-grade students with 40 respondents. The subjects of this study amounted to 40 students studying in year two and three of high school in Sukoharjo. Essay tests were used to obtain the primary data where the students were assigned to compose 1-2 pages on a topic about their experiences learning Arabic. Regarding error analysis, there are six primary steps to deal with deviant grammatical rules, such as collecting data, identifying, classifying, quantifying, and analyzing sources of errors (Gass et al., 2013) as follows:

1. **Collecting Data**
The researcher collected data from students' essays in a guided writing class. The participants were asked to write an essay with a theme about school and learning Arabic. The participants had to write their stories on a piece of paper. The participants' writings were submitted to the researcher and analyzed.
2. **Identifying Errors**
The researcher collected students' essays to find the grammatical errors participants wrote, such as sentence structures, phrases, agreement, and spelling. Errors in writing are common in the learning process because the Arabic language is a language that uses a different alphabet and code structure compared to the Indonesian language.
3. **Classifying Errors**
Errors in the students' tasks were classified into structures, phrases, agreement, and spelling.
4. **Quantifying errors**
After the phase of classification, errors were quantified and shown in the percentage.
5. **Analyzing Errors**
At this stage, the researcher attempted to explain errors comprehensively while providing the correct answers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study analyzed several linguistic items in Arabic essays of tenth and eleventh grade students. There were 40 students in total, and the items analyzed are sentence structures, phrases, agreement, and spelling. Data were collected and classified as follows.

Table 1. Writing Errors

Error types	Number of Errors	Percentage
Sentence Structures	47	22.81%
Phrases	58	28.16%
Agreement	28	13.59%
Spelling	73	35.44%
Total	206	100%

Error of Sentence Structures

Within the theory of traditional Arabic, sentences are divided into two types, namely *jumlah fi'liyah* and *'ismiyyah*, or well-known as nominal and verbal sentences. Generally speaking, *jumlah fi'liyah* is a sentence whose initial word is a verb. In other words, the Arabic verbal sentence starts with a verb and is followed by the subject or doer. The object, prepositional phrases, and adverbial structures might also follow this type of sentence. For example, in the following sentence قَرَأَ الطَّلَابُ الْكِتَابَ *The students read the book*, the sentence begins with the verb قَرَأَ and is followed by the subject الطَّلَابُ. In contrast, *jumlah 'ismiyyah* is a sentence that starts with a noun, comprising *mubtada'* (the subject or topic) and *ḥabar* (the predicate). The latter is also called an equational sentence (Ryding, 2005). For instance, الطَّرِيقُ طَوِيلٌ *The road [is] long*. Here the subject الطريق is a noun with a definite article, and the predicate طويل is an adjective marked for indefiniteness. Within the structure domain, L2 learners committed several errors, as presented in the table below.

Table 2. Errors of Sentence Structures

Error types	Number of Errors	Percentage
<i>Jumlah 'Ismiyyah</i>	18	38,30%
<i>Jumlah Fi'liyah</i>	29	61,70%
Total	47	100%

The table above demonstrates that the error in *jumlah fi'liyah* (61.70%) is greater than in the formation of *jumlah 'ismiyyah* (38.30%). Interestingly, students were frequently carried away with the organization of sentences in Bahasa Indonesia, which are commonly structured in the order of Subject + Verb + Object, as seen by the numerous phrases arranged in their writings.

Error of Phrases (*idāfa, jārr wa majrūr, na 't wa man 'ūt*)

Idāfa construction is categorized in two ways, namely simple *idāfa* and compound *idāfa* constructions (Adila, 2019). The simple *idāfa* comprises one head noun + one modifier such as كِتَابُ طَالِبٍ *the student's book*. Here كِتَابُ acts as the head noun, and طَالِبٍ acts as the modifier. Furthermore, compound *idāfa* begins with a primary head noun + phrase (acting as a primary modifier) such as كِتَابُ طَالِبِ الْمَدْرَسَةِ الْعَالِيَةِ *the high school student's book*.

Ryding (2005) refers to *ḥurūf al jar* as the true Arabic prepositions, known as words that exist as prepositions. In Modern Standard Arabic, there are ten forms of *ḥurūf al jar*, namely *bi-, li-, ka-, fī-, min-, 'an-, 'ilā-, 'alā-, ḥattā-, and munḍu*. When *ḥarf al jar* is followed by *ism*, this combination of preposition and noun is called *jārr wa majrūr*. For example, مِنْ الْكِتَابِ *from the book*, مِنَ الْبَيْتِ *from the house*, فِي الْبَحْرِ *in the sea*.

Last but not least, *na 't* is linguistically an adjective, while according to the term, the meaning of *na 'at*, as mentioned in the book of *Jurumiyah*, is as follows:

النَّعْتُ هُوَ تَابِعٌ لِلْمُنْعُوتِ فِي رَفْعِهِ، وَنَصْبِهِ، وَخَفْضِهِ، وَتَعْرِيفِهِ، وَتَنْكِيرِهِ.

Na 't follows the case endings (nominative, accusative, or genitive) and definiteness (definite or indefinite) of man 'ūt

Below is the example of how basic *na 't wa man 'ūt* are constructed.

الجديد	المدرس	كتاب
نعت	مضاف إليه ومنعوت	مضاف

Here, الجديد *new* is as an adjective as well as *na 't* that describes المدرس *the teacher* which acts as *muḍaf 'ilaih* and *man 'ūt*. Since the case of *man 'ūt* المدرس is genitive with the definite article ال, the form of *na 't* الجديد follows *man 'ūt* in using ال and genitive case.

Under the scope of error phrases, L2 learners committed 58 errors classified into two error types as follows:

Table 3. Errors of Phrases

Error types	Number of Errors	Percentage
<i>iḍāfa</i>	31	53%
<i>na 't wa man 'ūt</i>	27	47%
Total	58	100%

Based on the data above, *iḍāfa* is responsible for the most committed errors with 53%, followed by errors of *na 't wa man 'ūt* with 47%. The following is an example of *iḍāfa* errors made by L2 learners:

المكتبة الجامعة في *at the university library*

From the error example, the student put the article ال incorrectly to the head noun مكتبة. Based on the rule in the Modern Standard Arabic, the head noun in *iḍāfa* should be free from the article ال. Hence, the correct form should be في مكتبة الجامعة.

On the other hand, in terms of *na 't wa man 'ūt*, here is the error example extracted from the student's work:

المدرسة الطالب ماهر يذهب إلى المدرسة *The student is smart goes to the school*

Here, L2 learners wrote *na 't* ماهر without article ال. As “*na 't* always follows its *man 'ūt* in the case endings and definiteness, the correct sentence should be: الطالب الماهر يذهب إلى المدرسة *the smart student goes to the school*.”

Error of Verb Agreement (Gender and Number)

Agreement or concord is the feature compatibility of words in a phrase or a clause. For example, a masculine singular noun takes a masculine singular adjective. A feminine singular verb should follow a feminine singular subject, and so forth (Ryding, 2005). To narrow the scope, the current study focused on the Arabic verb and its compatibility in gender and number when meeting the subject.

Modern Standard Arabic acknowledges two types of gender, namely masculine and feminine. Thus, the verb (in the order SV or VS) must show agreement with its subject in either masculine or feminine, as shown below:

Masculine Subject
(SV order)

Feminine Subject
(VS order)

حَسَنَ يَقْرَأُ الجريدة
Hasan reads the newspaper

أَعْبَثَ زَيْنَبُ مع أختها
Zainab played with her sister

Moreover, the verb should also agree with the subject in number. Arabic has three number categories: singular, dual, and plural. Singular, dual, and plural forms apply in SV order, while VS order only takes the singular one. Here are the examples:

Number in SV order	Number in VS order
المُدْرَسُونَ يَجْتَمِعُونَ في الفصل The teachers gather in the classroom	فَهَمَّتْ الطالِبَاتُ شَرْحَ الأستاذ The students understood the teacher's explanation

In SV order, as the subject المدرسون is in the plural form, the verb shows agreement in number, written as يجتمعون and not يجتمع. In contrast, although the subject الطالبات is written in the plural form, the verb only indicates agreement with the subject in gender and not in person, as noted by فهمتُ and not فهمنَ.

In the domain of verb agreement, the students committed 28 errors in which the gender accounts for more errors compared to the number, as displayed below:

Table 4. Errors of Agreement

Error types	Number of Errors	Percentage
Gender	16	57,14%
Number	12	42,86%
Total	28	100%

Error of Spelling

Spelling becomes the most deviated form committed by the students in this present study (35,44%). The students misspelled the Arabic words in certain ways, including the misuse of *hamzah qatha'*, letter reduction, letter addition, and letter replacement. The following table is the example of errors committed by the Arabic learners.

Table 5. Errors of Misspelling

Types of Misspelling	The incorrect form	The correct form	The meaning
<i>hamzah qatha'</i>	اشياء متنوعة	أشياء متنوعة	Various things
letter reduction	ذهبتُ إلى الفصل صباحا مبكرا	ذهبتُ إلى الفصل صباحا مبكرا	She went to the class early in the morning
letter addition	وصليتُ في المسجد خمس صلوات	وصليتُ في المسجد خمس صلوات	I prayed five times in the mosque
letter replacement	وخرجتُ من المكتبت سعيدة	وخرجتُ من المكتبة سعيدة	I left the library happily

Causes of Errors

As the errors were collected, identified, classified, and quantified in the previous chapter, this section explained the possible causes of writing errors committed by vocational high school students. The discussion started with examining the reasons for errors in sentence structures, phrases, agreement, and spelling. The followings are the most common sources of errors.

1. Overgeneralization

When L2 learners make mistakes by developing incorrect grammatical rules based on their knowledge of other rules in the target language, this is known as overgeneralization. The students clearly extend the application of rules in one context to other contexts where they are not applicable. For example:

سفر إبراهيم إلى لندن *Ibrahim traveled to London.*

"ال" cannot be appropriately put to the word لندن as a notable name and thus does not allow the article.

2. Ignorance of rule restrictions

Ignorance of rule restrictions occur when L2 learners are incapable to identify language structure limitations. As such, they tend to ignore rule limitations in the target language. For example:

أنتم تتعلمون كي تتجحون في الامتحان *You are studying to pass the examination.*

Here the student did not give the limitation to the word تتجحون preceded by كي. Rather, the student should write as what follows تتججوا.

3. Incomplete application of rules

This happens when L2 learners are unable to use complete rules of the target language. Frequently, this situation occurs when the students are asked to make more complex structures, but instead they can only produce the basic ones. For example:

يحب الطلاب السباحة والجري ويلعب كرة القدم *the students like to swim, run, and play football.*

The example shows that the student fails to apply a parallel sentence by using word ويلعب كرة القدم. Thus, the correct sentence must be يحب الطلاب السباحة والجري ولعب كرة القدم.

4. False concepts hypothesized

This concept is linked to the inability of L2 learners to fully understand the differences in the target language. This situation is likely due to poor grading of teaching items. For example:

لعبوا الطلاب *the students play.*

In this case, some learners might think that verbs in Arabic should agree with their subjects in number and gender. However, the verb should appear in the base form when producing the Verb + Subject in the Arabic verbal sentence. Hence the correct sentence is لعب الطلاب.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of errors produced by the students learning Arabic gives insights into how students' language ability reflects critical difficulties in academic writing, including their writing obstacles and progress achieved in mastering Arabic skills. The study provided teachers feedback on how such errors might impair teaching and learning processes. Several errors were discovered in the students' writings, including errors in sentence structure (22.81%), phrases (28.16%), agreement (13.59%), and spelling (35.44%). Based on the findings, spelling is the major error committed by the students, while agreement errors became the least dominant data. Several factors are likely to cause errors, including overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete applications of rules, and false concepts hypothesized. By knowing the types of errors and their causes, the teachers can pay more attention to the most apparent errors and thus set teaching strategies that fit the

students. The researchers acknowledged that the study was limited to students with high beginner to low intermediate levels. Further research could be expanded to analyze more advanced students with larger respondents to obtain more diverse, comprehensive data.

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