Error analysis of inflectional morphemes in the descriptive essay of senior English learners at Panjshir institute of higher education

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Abstract: This study aims to identify, describe, and analyze errors assigned in the area of inflectional morphemes by the 4th-year EFL students at the Panjshir Higher Education Institute Department of English Faculty of Education during the academic year 2023. To identify the areas of problems and find out what makes these areas difficult, errors are classified concerning the eight types of inflectional morphemes. The mechanism of applying this version of error analysis on the data gathered passes through different analytical levels, starting with data collection, identification of the point of difficulty, description, explanation, and ending with the evaluation of errors. The current study was conducted to find out students' errors in using inflectional morphemes that include: past tense inflection "ed1", plural inflection "s", present inflection "ing", third person singular "s", past participle "ed2", possessive inflection "'s", comparative "er" and superlative inflection "est". This study aims to find out the errors made by learners in using inflectional morphemes, and most importantly, the sort of such errors; whether they are, errors of omission, addition, misinformation, or misordering. The subjects of this study were 35 EFL students in their fourth -year at the Panjshir Higher Education Institute. The results of the analysis reveal that the total number of errors found in the students' essays is 183. The objective outcome of the analysis conducted displays several findings and conclusions; among these are, the percentage of "ed1" morpheme errors comprised 32.24% of the total types of errors, the second rank is the plural morpheme "s" errors =26.22%, the 'ing" morpheme errors= 12.56%, the third person singular "s" =8%,"ed2" errors=7%, possessive morpheme errors =6.5%, Finally the comparative "er"4 errors and the superlative "est" comprised the lowest rank of percentage; that is 2.7%. Based on the findings of this research, it is hoped that it would help other researchers to build up further discussions and research on errors with broader aspects and different subjects.

Keywords: error analysis, EFL, Inflectional Morphemes, descriptive essay

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades English has been the most spoken language all over the world. It is used to join nations across the globe in various parts of life, such as business, technology science, economy, and education. In other words, the English language has become a lingua franca and serves as a bridge to facilitate communication among people. Therefore achieving meaningful communication needs communicative competence which is the mastery of the knowledge of language and the ability to utilize it in actual (Canale, 1980). The knowledge of language or linguistic competence includes mastery of lexis, grammar, and sound system of language. Thus in every language learning program, language skill is a significant part of the learning process. Writing is one of the most important skills besides listening, reading, and speaking. However, becoming skillful in the art of writing is most difficult because students need to acquire assets of the process such as brainstorming, revising, editing, and publishing (Christine,2003) as cited in (Rahayu, 2016). The basic competency that should be attained in composition English subject is that learners are encouraged to a certain degree to have the ability to develop and produce written simple functions in descriptive, narrative, and report texts, etc. (Ninsiana & Hakim, 2018). Furthermore, there are a lot of aspects in writing, one of which is grammar within grammar morphology is concerned with the internal form of words and different processes that allow us to permanently expand the vocabulary of a language (Kortmann, 2020). The linguistic term for a more basic unit of grammatical form is morpheme. The word is derived from the Greek word morph meaning from (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2011). The form of a morph may be free or bound. Free morph is a simple word. Bound morph must always be combined with another morph within a word. The bound morphs are three types prefixes, suffixes, and stems (Hudson, 2005). The bound form of grammatical morphemes is known as inflectional morphemes. The word inflectional depends on using or changing the function of a word. There the term affix in this state is called inflectional since its task is to enlarge the grammatical function within a word.

"These are the affixes which share similar grammatical functions that do not change the class of the words constantly follow derivational affixes". In this investigation, we will describe in detail various affixes such as derivational (er) the word sing is connected to derivational affixes (er) to create singers that are semantically different in meaning. Morphology errors are the grammar errors that involve inflectional and derivational morphemes. (Rezai & Hashmatian , 2013) "Inflectional morphology errors affect inflectional affixes which are only suffixes (not prefixes) and are classified according to the part of speech each affix occurs with". They never change the category (parts of speech) of the base morpheme and are as below:

1. Noun inflectional morphemes: (a) plural marker –s [*boy- boys*] and (b) possessive marker 's [*'s book*]

2. Verb inflectional morphemes: (a) Third person present singular maker-s [*come-comes*], (b) Past tense marker-ed [*talk-talked*],

(c) Progressive marker –ing [*walk-walking*], (d) Past participle markers –en or –ed [*give-given & stop-stopped*]

3. Adjective inflectional morphemes: (a) Comparative marker –er [*shor-shorter*] and (b) superlative marker –est [*samrt-smartest*].

We have seen that morphological inflectional adds grammatical information to a word, related to the specific syntactic requirement of language (Fasold, 2006). From the mentioned data, most learners are still found using the error inflectional affixes. Among them feel challenged in terms of using and adding the affixes, i.e., on the use of {-s} for the third singular present, in addition to the use {-ies} in counting the final letter of the word *y* in which the letter before is consonant. Bearing in mind the count of inflectional is a grammatically and morphologically small important element within a sentence, then it is significant to understand and master the better use of inflectional affixes.

Inflectional affix is not a large thing in English learning but it becomes a significant thing in composition skill. However, the research did not yet concern errors in analyzing by using inflectional affixes. Therefore, the investigator will research to analyze the error in using inflectional affixes in learners' descriptive writing. Moreover, the research will be conducted on the English Education Study Program. So, the study strongly concentrated on the need to reveal the types and frequency of errors in using inflectional morphemes which are reflected in learners' poor and ineffective writing.

The Aims: The main objective of the study is:

1. Identify inflection morpheme errors in descriptive essay writing of senior EFL at Panjshir Higher Education, and show their percentages of occurrence.

2. Find out the most frequent inflectional errors the senior students make in their writing.

Research questions: This study tries to find out answers to the following questions:

1-What type of inflectional errors were made by senior learners in descriptive essays at Panjshir Higher Education Institute?

2-What are the most frequent errors in their writing?

Literature review: (Rezai & Hashmatian , 2013) investigated the spoken morphological errors made by Iranian EFL learners. The general aim of his study was to understand the problems facing Persian EFL learners. In addition, the specific aim of this study was to identify the types of errors and gender differences in committing

morphological errors. The participants of this study were both gender male and female from four levels of proficiency including primary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, and advanced. The number of participants was about 980 language learners. The instrument applied for gathering data for the study was natural observation in the class and supported by interviews. The result of the study showed that miss-selection was the most frequent type of error in morphological errors. The outcome of this study also showed that there was a gender difference in terms of grammar errors. Furthermore Juriah and Kusumawati in (2015) investigated students' Morphological errors in writing recount text at Muhammadiyah University of Metro, the main objective of this study was to reveal the types of morphological errors in writing recount text in students' writing. This study used from qualitative descriptive method to analyze the errors. The results the investigator found that omission and misformation errors were high. In order the errors were misformation in the first, the second was omission and the third was misordering. The result also showed that local errors were more than global errors in this study. Moreover (Ninsiana & Hakim, 2018) investigated Inflectional affixes errors in argumentative writing in the fifth semester, English Department of the State Islamic Institute of Metro. The main objective of this study was to explicate the errors in using inflectional. This research used a qualitative-descriptive method which focused on the use of two data sources of elementary and secondary data. The elementary data was collected from argumentative writing texts written by fifth-semester learners of the State Islamic Institute of Metro. The secondary data were gathered from other supporting materials such as textbooks and articles published in journals. The data were analyzed by the Creswell model. The result revealed that there were 9 argumentative writing outcomes, they had eight errors in using {–s}, 2 errors in using {–es}, 1 error in using {–ies}, 13 errors in using {–ed}, 3 errors in using {–ing}, and there was no error in using {–er} and {–est}. Based on the data, the first error that was frequently found in learners' writing production was the use of {–ed}, the second one was the use of {–s}, and the third one was the use of {–es}. Most of the fifth-semester students of the English Department of the State Islamic Institute of Metro had a shortage of knowledge about inflectional affixes and many students felt problems in deciding which one would be the correct affix for the word they want. It means many learners of the fifth semester of the English Department of State Islamic Institute of Metro still cannot use the inflectional affixes correctly. (Florianus & Syamsi, 2021) studied inflectional affixation errors in the academic writing of freshman students. The main purpose of this investigation was to understand which area of language the students face problems. A descriptive qualitative method was used to study types of writing errors that were related to inflectional affixation. The errors that were identified in the student's written language were described in linguistic and surface categories. The result showed that the learners still face problems

in subject-verb agreement, plurals, and past participle. Furthermore, it was also displayed that most causes of the error occurred were interlingual reasons, imperfect transfer from their first language. Another study was conducted by (Manihuruk, 2022) to investigate using inflectional morphemes students recount the text of English students third semester. The study's main purpose was to find out the types of errors in using inflectional morphemes in writing recount text of English students. The researcher applied a descriptive qualitative method of study. The population of the investigation was the third-semester students of UHKBPNP English students. The investigator took one group of three groups of the English Department which consists of 30 learners in a group. In this research, the researcher used written text as the tool of this research for collecting data. Based on the students writing recount text composition there are 106 errors. Based on the data, the researcher sorted the errors that occurred into some categories as well: Addition, Omission, Misformation, and Misordering. After the data was signified, the investigator classified the errors made by students in the writing recount text using inflectional morphemes into four types of errors, namely errors of addition, omission, misformation, and misordering.

Methodology

Research design: This study relates to descriptive study because it describes the errors made by learners descriptively. The material of this investigation is the learner inflectional errors and the source of data is the seven semester students. The data used for analysis were descriptive essay writing assignments from seven semesters of English department students at Panjshir Higher Education Institute. The student was asked to compose a descriptive essay about Afghanistan.

Data collection procedure: As mentioned earlier, there are 30 descriptive essays and 30 letters that have been written by senior students' assignment for the academic year 2023. These essays have been collected and analyzed. The participants got the opportunity to write freely about the topics, they were asked to choose a topic about Afghanistan. The essays are mostly short and consist of approximately 250-300 words. The students had no access to any books, dictionaries, or any help from the teacher when writing their essays. In analyzing the essays, the focus has been on the errors committed in the use of the 8 IMs. Therefore, no attention was paid to the participants' wrong spellings or the other types of errors in their essays.

Data analysis: (Corder, 1981) and (Ellis, 2008) models were adopted as both are designed to analyze students' errors which include six stages, viz. collection of the sample, the identification of errors, the description of errors, explanation, and finally the evaluation of the errors i.e. causes of errors with calculating the percentage of errors. The data of the selected sample has been collected and analyzed, and the errors are identified, described, explained, and finally evaluated by the researchers, i.e. many students have committed different types of errors in their essay writing such as in

spelling, grammar, structure, meaning but our main focus is to reveal the errors which are committed in using the inflectional errors without any attention to other types of errors. The following sections will explain the different types of inflectional morpheme errors which are made by the students of fourth year.

Finding and discussion: The main focus of the study was to explore, and analyze the inflectional morphemes errors in English descriptive essay writing made by the fourth year EFL students, discover the main reasons behind their common occurrence, and afford remedies to minimize committing such types of errors. To illustrate these subjects, the participants' errors have been carefully studied. After setting the categories, the researcher's choice is based on the eight types of inflectional morpheme errors which are explained by their frequency and percentage as shown in

Table (1)

The frequency and percentage of the eight inflectional morphemes errors

SN.	Inflectional Morphemes errors	Number of occurrences	Percentage
1	Past tense inflection (ed1)	59	32.24%
2	Plural inflection(s)	48	26.22%
3	Present participle inflection (ing)	23	12,56
4	Third-person singular (s)	15	8%
5	Past participle inflection(ed2)	13	7%
6	Possessive ('s)	12	6.55%
7	Comparative (er)	8	4.37%
8	Superlative (est)	5	2,7%
9	Total 2	183	

The total number of errors found in the fourth-year students' descriptive essays was (183) errors (as mentioned in the above table). These errors were tabulated according to their frequency and percentage. The frequency of every error sort was rank-ordered from the most frequent to the least as shown in Table (1). Table (1) reveals the errors which are made by the students of the selected sample in their use of the inflectional morphemes errors as a whole. It consists of four columns, the first one is the serial number of inflectional morphemes, the second one includes the eight types of inflectional morphemes, the third is the number of occurrence of errors that are found in the students' essays and the last one is the percentage of errors. The analysis of the essays revealed that the most commonly committed inflectional errors were Past tense inflection "ed1" 32.24%, Plural "s" 26.22 %, Present participle inflection "ing"12,56%, Third person singular "s" 15 %, Past participle inflection" ed2" 7%, possessive inflection errors 6,55 %, Comparative "er" 4.37 % and Superlative (est) 2,7 %. First, past tense inflection errors (henceforth, ed1), show the highest percentage of errors, that comprised 32 % of the total number of errors. They are completely the most dominant errors. Errors in (ed1) were so pervasive that all descriptive essays examined contained at least ten errors, with the majority including many more. The past tense morpheme of English is somehow challenging and its rules are relatively complex since verbs have regular and irregular past tense forms.

Table (2)

Description of (ed1) errors with their frequency and percentage

SN.	Description of Errors	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage
1	Omission	29	49%
2	Addition	21	35.60%
3	Misformation	9	15%
4	Misordering	0	%
5	Total	59	

Table (2) explains the description of "ed1" errors that are revealed in the learners' essays. The errors were explained and thoroughly studied to find out their description in terms of "omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering" which is based on surface structure taxonomy invented by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982: 150) based on the ways surface structures are cited in (Ellis, 2008) which is categorized as follows:

1. Errors of omission: when the learner has left out a word or morpheme which is needed in the context i.e. the percentage of "ed1" omission errors is 49 %.

2. Errors of addition: when the learner has added a word or a morpheme to another word in the wrong way. Concerning (ed1) inflection addition type of error occupied the highest rank of percentage which comprised 35.60% of the total number of errors.

3. Misinformation/Substitution: when the learner uses the wrong form of a morpheme or substitutes one morpheme instead of another morpheme. The misinformation errors in (ed1) are 9%.

4. Misordering: e.g. when the learner places a morpheme incorrectly in a grammatical construction. The percentage of the misordering errors of (ed1) inflection is 0%.

Table (3)

Description of plural inflection (s) errors with their number and percentage

SN.	Description of Errors	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage
1	Omission	19	39.58%
2	Addition	21	43.75%
3	Misformation	8	16.6%
4	Misordering	0	0%
5	Total	48	

Table (3) displays the description of the second most frequent sort of error which is the plural inflection "s", especially the errors of omission type which comprises the second greatest percentage of errors is 39.58%. Addition is the first most frequent sort of plural inflectional "s" of the total percentage of plural "s" errors comprising 43.75%. The errors of misinformation form 16.6% which is the third dominant type of error. The addition type comprises 27% and finally type of error are the misordering type comprises 0% of the total number of errors which shows the percentage of the four descriptions of the plural "s" errors.

The most prevalent errors were mainly related to the present participle inflection "ing" errors. It was the third dominant type that comprised 12.56 % of the total number

of errors as shown in Table (3). The omission type of errors occupies the highest rank of percentage is 39%. Another type of error is the addition ones which form 34%, followed by misinformation 26%, and finally, misordering errors 0%.

Table (4)

Description of present participle inflection (ing) errors with their frequency and percentage

SN.	Description of Errors	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage
1	Omission	9	39%
2	Addition	8	34.7%
3	Misformation	6	26%
4	Misordering	0	0%
5	Total	23	

Third-person singular "s" inflection errors came forth in ranking. They comprised 8% of the total number of errors. The omission type of errors occupies the highest rank of percentage is 70%. In other words, many students tend to omit the third-person singular "s" morpheme which leads to a lack of concord between the subject and the verb. another type of error is omission which forms 26%, followed by misinformation 2%, misordering 0%. These are shown in Table (4) which illustrates the description, frequency, and percentage of third-person singular errors.

Table (5)

Description of third-person singular inflection (s) errors with their frequency and percentage

SN.	Description of Errors	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage
1	Omission	8	53%
2	Addition	4	26.6%
3	Misformation	3	20%
4	Misordering	0	0%
5	Total	15	100%

The fifth type of error was the Past participle "ed2" inflection errors, which formed 7% of the total number of errors. The highest percentage was for the misinformation type of errors that comprised 46%, errors of addition 30%, errors of omission 23%, errors of blending 4%, and finally errors of misordering 0%. See Table (6) for the description of errors with their frequency and percentage:

Table (6)

Description of past participle inflection (ed2) errors with their frequency and percentage

SN.	Description of Errors	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage
1	Omission	3	23%
2	Addition	4	30%
3	Misformation	6	46%
4	Misordering	0	0%
5	Total	13	100%

The sixth most frequent type of error was Possessive ('s) inflection errors. This sort comprised 6.55% of the total percentage of errors. One can claim that the major

factors of these errors may be due to the omission of the possessive (s) with the apostrophe from words which refers to possession that comprised 50%. Furthermore, the percentage of the addition was 25%, misinformation types of errors were 16.66% and the final errors of misordering errors were 8.33% %. Consider Table 7 for the frequency and percentage of errors.

Table (7)

Description of possessive inflection ('s) errors with their frequency and percentage

SN.	Description of Errors	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage
1	Omission	6	50%
2	Addition	3	25%
3	Misformation	2	16.66%
4	Misordering	1	8.33%
5	Total	12	100%

The last two types of IM errors were comparative and superlative inflection errors that are mainly related to adjective form. They comprised 4.37% of the total, as shown in Tables (8) and (9) respectively:

Table (8)

Description of comparative inflection (er) errors with their frequency and percentage

SN.	Description of Errors	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage
1	Omission	mission	50%
2	Addition	3	37.5%
3	Misformation	1	12.5%
4	Misordering	0	0%
5	Total	8	100%

Table (8) explains the errors that are committed by learners in using comparative morpheme (er) with their description, frequency, and percentage. The highest percentage of errors is that of the misinformation sort since the student has wrongly used the morpheme (er) which included 50%. It is followed by omission type 37.5%, addition 12.5%. Finally, the misordering sorts of errors have the lowest percentages, namely 0% out of the total number of errors.

Table (9)

Description of superlative inflection (est) errors with their frequency and percentage

SN.	Description of Errors	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage
1	Omission	1	20%
2	Addition	3	60%
3	Misformation	1	20%
4	Misordering	0	0%
5	Total	5	100%

Table (9) summarizes the description of (est) morpheme errors with their frequencies and percentages. The additional type of errors has got the most frequent percentage 60%, followed by omission type 20%, misinformation type 20%, and finally 0% for the misordering types of errors.

CONCLUSION

The research aimed at identifying, describing, explaining, and evaluating the type of inflectional morpheme errors made by senior EFL students when writing descriptive essays in the English Department students' essays and the sources of these errors. As a result, various sorts of errors were found in their essays. These were limited to eight major types of errors, namely past tense inflection, plural inflection, present participle inflection, third person singular inflection, possessive inflection, past participle inflection, comparative inflection, and superlative inflections. According to the research findings and discussions, the researcher draws a conclusion related to the number of errors, the mastery of fourth-year students in grammar especially in using IMs was low, i.e. the types of errors in the use of eight English inflectional morphemes reveal that the past inflection error is in the first rank (59 or 32.24%), then it is followed by plural inflection error in the second rank (48 or 26.22%), in the third rank is present participle inflection error (23 or 12.56%), in the fourth rank is third person singular inflection error (15 or 8%), past participle inflection error in the fifth rank (13 or 7%), the possessive inflection errors is in the sixth rank (12 or 6.66%) and the last two inflections are comparative (er) (8 or 4.37 and superlative (est) errors number is (5) or (2.7%) respectively of the total number of errors found of the student's writing. This means that fourth-year students of the English Department face difficulties and are weak in applying and understanding English morphology at large and English inflectional morphemes in particular. The outcomes of the study show that the most frequent percentage of error types is past tense inflection error and the latest percentage of error types is comparative and superlative inflection error together. It can thus be concluded that EFL university students still have a long path to go to be able to write satisfactory descriptive essays in English. The way they organized their essays displays their weak understanding of the elementary elements of English grammar. This is on one side. On the other side, teachers should vary their teaching methods to facilitate and enable their learners to compose competently. Although EFL fourth-year students have been taught and trained to construct an effective accurate essay, the majority of them failed to do so due to insufficient experience and practice, inadequate grammatical and structural knowledge, have not acceptable linguistic experience, ignorance of English grammatical rules, insufficient of the textbook used, test anxiety, overgeneralization of grammatical rules, on focus grammar rather than form, etc. Also, there were the challenges of the native tongue interference i.e. negative transfer, and incomplete learning of essay writing rules and conventions which should not be forgotten. Just as, much attention should be paid to the adaptation and modulation of the course regarding learners' needs to surmount most of the shortcomings of the course, remedy the problems and come up with a good teaching program.

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