

ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ARABIC LANGUAGE ERRORS IN ACADEMIC ASSIGNMENTS: AN APPLIED LINGUISTICS REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and analyze phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic errors in the writing of students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program. Language errors in Arabic academic writing by students are a significant challenge in advanced Arabic language learning. The method used is qualitative analysis with a descriptive approach, based on the corpus of student writing data in the writing skills course. The results of the study showed that syntactic errors were the most dominant (37.5%), followed by morphological (29.2%), phonological (16.7%), and semantic (16.7%). The main causal factors include mother tongue interference, the use of literal machine translators, low understanding of Arabic grammar rules, and minimal contextual practice. The conclusion of this study emphasizes the need for an integrative and communicative learning approach, with an emphasis on authentic text-based exercises, contrastive analysis strategies, and the use of interactive learning media to improve students' linguistic accuracy in writing Arabic academic texts.

Keywords: applied linguistics, academic Arabic, error analysis

INTRODUCTION

Arabic is one of the foreign languages taught in various higher education institutions in Indonesia, especially in the Arabic Language Education (PBA) study program. Mastery of Arabic does not only include speaking skills, but also good and correct writing skills according to grammatical rules. The goal of teaching Arabic in such institutions is not only to develop basic communicative competences, but also to build academic and professional language proficiency that includes four main language skills: listening (*istima'*), speaking (*kalam*), reading (*qira'ah*), and writing (*kitabah*). Among all that, writing is considered the most complex and demanding skill, since it not only requires a strong understanding of grammar (*nahwu*) and morphology (*sharf*), but also the ability to apply this knowledge in producing structured, coherent, and meaningful texts (Suratman, 2019). However, in practice, students often have difficulty in constructing sentences that are in accordance with the complex Arabic language structure, especially in academic tasks such as writing papers and theses (Fitriani, 2020).

Language errors made by students can be categorized into several linguistic aspects, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. For example, research by Umroh (2021: 45) found that students of the Arabic Language Education Department at the Islamic University of Darul 'Ulum Lamongan made mistakes in all four aspects when writing in Arabic. Likewise, Haniah (2020: 60) in her research on the theses of students of the Arabic Language and Literature Department at the Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar identified errors in writing hamzah, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics (Umroh, 2018). Each of these aspects represents a fundamental dimension in

the structure of language which, if not mastered capably, will cause deviations in the use of language, especially in academic contexts. Phonology deals with sound systems in Arabic, including the pronunciation of certain letters that are not found in Indonesian. Morphology includes internal word structures, such as plural forms, gender usage, and changes in verb forms. Syntax includes sentence structure, word order, and the relationships between sentence elements, while semantics deals with the meaning of words or phrases in a context (Kusumawati, 2021).

First, phonological errors often occur in the pronunciation and writing of certain letters that have similar sounds, such as the letters "ض" and "ظ". Second, morphological errors appear in the use of word forms that do not comply with the rules of tashrif or changes in verb forms. Third, syntactic errors are seen in sentence structures that do not comply with the structure of the Arabic language, such as errors in the use of *mudhaf-mudhafilaih* or *na'at-man'ut*. Fourth, semantic errors occur when students use words that are not appropriate in meaning in a particular context, which can change the meaning of the entire sentence (Walfajri, 2018). This language error analysis is important to understand the patterns of errors that often occur and to find the right solutions in teaching Arabic (Hani, 2018). Thus, this study aims to answer the questions: (1) What are the types of Arabic language errors made by students in academic assignments? (2) What factors cause these errors to occur?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with an error analysis method to identify and describe Arabic language errors made by students in academic assignments. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth the types of errors that appear and the factors that cause them in the context of Arabic language learning (Syamsiyah, 2022). The data source in this study is the final assignment (thesis) of students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program (PBA) at the State Islamic University (UIN) Raden Fatah Palembang for the 2021/2022 academic year. Data selection was carried out by purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) the thesis is written in Arabic, (2) is available in digital or printed form, and (3) has been approved by the supervisor and examiner (Ritonga, 2024).

Data collection was carried out through documentation, namely by collecting and reviewing student theses that met the criteria. The data obtained were then analyzed using error analysis techniques which included: (1) error identification, (2) error classification based on linguistic aspects (phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics), (3) error explanation, and (4) error evaluation to determine the frequency and severity of the error (Nukman, 2021). Data analysis was conducted by describing the types of errors found in students' theses, identifying dominant error patterns, and exploring possible causes of these errors. This analysis aims to provide a deeper understanding of the difficulties faced by students in writing in Arabic and to provide input for improvements in Arabic language learning at the college level (Najah, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First, the analysis of 15 theses written in Arabic found a total of 120 linguistic errors. These errors were categorized into four linguistic aspects: phonology, morphology, syntax,

and semantics. The distribution of errors is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Language Errors in Student Theses

No.	Aspek Linguistik	Jumlah Kesalahan	Persentase (%)
1	Fonologi	20	16.7
2	Morfologi	35	29.2
3	Sintaksis	45	37.5
4	Semantik	20	16.7
Total		120	100

Second, the discussion of the findings is as follows:

1. **Phonological Errors.** Phonological errors, which account for 16.7% of total errors, mainly involve mispronunciation and spelling of Arabic letters, especially letters that do not exist in Indonesian, such as *ث* (*tsa*), *ح* (*ha*), and *خ* (*kho*). These errors often arise due to the influence of students' mother tongue and lack of understanding of Arabic phonemes (Musthofa, 2024). This error is usually seen in the form of placing Arabic letters that have a special *makhraj* (place where the letters come out) with letters that are more familiar to Indonesian speakers. For example, the letter "ث" is replaced by "s", or the letter "خ" with "k" or "h", because students are not used to practicing the articulation of certain organs. In addition, a lack of understanding of tajweed and the science of sharf can also aggravate phonological errors. This shows the need for a teaching approach that emphasizes intensive phonetic exercises as well as the use of audio-visual media to help learners recognize and distinguish Arabic sounds accurately (Hasanah, 2023). Furthermore, these phonological errors not only affect pronunciation but also affect the accuracy of students' writing and spelling. When students are unable to distinguish between similar-sounding phonemes such as "ز" and "ر", or "ص" and "س", they may misrepresent these sounds in written form, distorting the intended meaning. These misrepresentations can have a significant impact on the clarity and accuracy of academic writing (Abdullah, 2021). Another critical issue is the lack of reinforcement in early Arabic language education, where students are not adequately trained in sound recognition through repeated listening and articulation exercises. Many learning environments focus on memorizing grammar and vocabulary, neglecting the basic aspects of sound. As a result, students carry these phonological errors into higher levels of learning, making them more difficult to correct (Zainal, 2020). To address this, educators should integrate targeted phonetic modules into Arabic language instruction, especially in the early stages of learning. Using tools such as digital pronunciation models, tongue placement charts, and interactive phoneme games can increase students' awareness and control of Arabic sounds. Collaborating with native speakers or utilizing media materials that present authentic pronunciation can also provide valuable exposure to correct phonological patterns (Hidayat, 2022). Another critical issue is the lack of reinforcement in early Arabic language education, where students are not adequately trained in sound recognition through repeated listening and articulation exercises. Many learning environments focus on memorizing grammar and vocabulary, neglecting the basic aspects of sound. As a result, students carry these

phonological errors into higher levels of learning, making them more difficult to correct (Zainal, 2020). To address this, educators should integrate targeted phonetic modules into Arabic language instruction, especially in the early stages of learning. Using tools such as digital pronunciation models, tongue placement charts, and interactive phoneme games can increase students' awareness and control of Arabic sounds. Collaborating with native speakers or utilizing media materials that present authentic pronunciation can also provide valuable exposure to correct phonological patterns (Hidayat, 2022).

2. **Morphological Errors.** Morphological errors accounted for 29.2% of the total errors. Common problems included incorrect use of gender (e.g., using masculine forms for feminine nouns), errors in plurals, and misuse of verb forms. These errors indicate the need for a deeper understanding of Arabic morphology among students (Alkohlani, 2020). Errors in the morphological aspect often come from a lack of mastery of the pattern of *tashrif* (change in the form of words), both for nouns and verbs. For example, students might write *muhandisun* as the singular form of "engineer" even though the form is plural, or use the verb form *yaktubna* for male subjects. This mistake shows that *sharf* learning is still theoretical and has not been taught contextually in writing activities. Text-based learning strategies that combine morphological theory with writing practice are needed so that students can understand the application of rules functionally (Fahmi, 2021). In addition, students' tendency to apply Indonesian morphological patterns directly to Arabic also contributes to these errors. In Indonesian, nouns and verbs do not change according to gender or number, which is in stark contrast to the highly inflected morphology of Arabic. As a result, students often fail to inflect Arabic words correctly, especially in formal or academic texts where morphological accuracy is crucial for clarity and meaning (Ramadhani, 2021). Another problem that often arises is the use of inappropriate dual and plural forms, which is a unique feature of Arabic morphology. For example, learners may incorrectly form the dual of *kitab* by adding *-un* instead of the correct suffix *-ani*. Similarly, inappropriate plurals such as *tiang* for *kitab* are often mistaken for regular masculine plurals such as *kitabuna*. These patterns are usually underemphasized in early instruction, leading to confusion at a later stage (Sari, 2020). To address these challenges, Arabic language instruction should emphasize the practical use of morphology through exercises, sentence construction tasks, and exposure to authentic texts. Regular morphological analysis of reading passages, as well as structured composition activities, can help reinforce pattern recognition and correct application. Integration of morphology-based digital tools and games can also increase students' engagement and retention with inflectional patterns (Putri, 2022).
3. **Syntax Error.** Syntactic errors are the most common errors, accounting for 37.5% of total errors. Students often misapply sentence structures, such as subject-verb mismatch and inappropriate use of prepositions. These errors indicate difficulties in understanding Arabic syntactic rules, which may be caused by interference from Indonesian sentence structures (Rajan, 2024). In this context, syntactic errors often include inconsistencies between the number and type of subject and verbs (*muthabaqat*), the use of inappropriate particles or *harf jars*, as well as pretending to compose sentences coherently and logically according to the structure of Arabic

sentences. For example, students can write "*al-bintu yaktubu*" (girls write), whereas the verb form *yaktubu* is supposed to be for a single male subject. This shows that the influence of sentence structure in Indonesian is very strong, especially because the structure in Indonesian is more flexible and less dependent on changes in word form. Therefore, strengthening the understanding of nahwu and the practice of compiling Arabic sentences gradually needs to be improved in the curriculum (Iskandar, 2022). One significant factor that causes syntactic errors is students' limited understanding of correct Arabic sentence patterns through listening and reading. Many students rely heavily on word-for-word translation methods, resulting in rigid and grammatically incorrect sentence constructions. Furthermore, the lack of practice in constructing the structures of the *ismiyyah* number and *fi'liyyah* number with proper correspondence between *fa'il* and *fi'il* exacerbates this problem, especially in formal academic writing (Mutia, 2020). In addition, many learners still do not understand the rules of placement in Arabic sentences, such as the order of subjects, verbs, objects, and adverbial phrases. This often results in sentence structure that is unnatural or even meaningless. For example, placing the object before the verb in the structure of the *fi'liyyah* number without the rule of *taqdim wa ta'khir* can cause confusion. This problem is further exacerbated by the lack of writing models that emphasize correct syntactic structure (Haryanto, 2021). To reduce these errors, Arabic language teaching should be supported by structured and progressive sentence-building exercises. Teachers should introduce syntax through contextual examples, using authentic texts and guided writing activities. The inclusion of parsing (*i'rab*) and syntactic analysis exercises in classroom activities can also sharpen students' awareness of sentence structure and encourage grammatical accuracy in their writing (Sulaiman, 2020).

4. Semantic Errors. Semantic errors, which account for 16.7% of total errors, involve the use of inappropriate words that result in ambiguous or inappropriate meanings. These errors are often caused by direct translation from Indonesian to Arabic without considering the context, so there is a need to improve vocabulary and comprehension skills (Azwir, 2023). Semantic errors often occur when students translate Indonesian phrases or idioms into Arabic literally without paying attention to cultural and contextual differences in meaning. For example, the phrase "face search" might be translated as "*yabḥathu 'an al-wajh*", which literally means "to look for faces", when the idiomatic meaning in Indonesian is irrelevant in Arabic. In addition, the use of vocabulary that is not in accordance with the academic field is also often found, which can encourage the meaning of writing. Therefore, it is important for students to enrich their vocabulary (*mufradat*) and learn word collocation and meaning connotations through authentic readings in modern Arabic (Agustina, 2020). Another source of semantic errors is students' over-reliance on digital dictionaries or machine translators, which often provide word-level meanings without considering the pragmatic use of words in context. As a result, students may choose words that are semantically correct but contextually awkward or inappropriate. For example, translating "raise a topic" directly into Arabic as "*yarfa'u al-mawḍū'*" rather than the more idiomatic "*yataṭruḥu mawḍū'an*" illustrates a lack of semantic nuance and collocation awareness (Zemni, 2024). Furthermore, limited exposure to authentic Arabic discourse both spoken and written also contributes to semantic inaccuracies. Many students are unfamiliar with

stylistic variation, polysemy, or metaphorical use of words, which are essential to conveying precise meaning in Arabic. These limitations are especially problematic in academic writing, which requires clarity, accuracy, and formality. Without adequate input and practice in using Arabic for academic purposes, students tend to revert to direct translation from their native language (Amin, 2019). To address semantic challenges, Arabic language teaching should emphasize lexical competence through vocabulary development that includes meaning, usage, and collocation. In addition, teachers can incorporate contrastive analysis between Arabic and Indonesian expressions and idioms, and use semantic mapping strategies to help students build word associations correctly. This approach will help students develop a deeper sense of meaning and avoid literal and misleading translations in their writing (Altun, 2021). These findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions in Arabic language teaching, focusing on identified areas of difficulty. Incorporating more hands-on exercises, such as writing workshops and peer review, can help students understand correct language usage. Additionally, integrating technology, such as language learning apps and online resources, can provide students with more opportunities to practice and receive immediate feedback. By addressing these issues, educators can improve the quality of Arabic language education, leading to improved academic writing skills among students.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that linguistic errors in Arabic academic writing by students reflect fundamental challenges in mastering language aspects comprehensively. Syntactic errors occupy the highest proportion, indicating a weak understanding of Arabic sentence structure, followed by morphological errors that reflect limitations in mastering word form changes (tashrif). Phonological and semantic errors, although quantitatively fewer, still have a significant impact on the clarity of meaning and accuracy of writing.

The main causes of these errors include mother tongue interference, reliance on literal translation, lack of phoneme articulation practice, and limited exposure to original Arabic texts and discourses. This study emphasizes the need for an integrative and contextual learning approach, with an emphasis on language practice in real situations, the use of interactive media, and systematic training in academic writing skills.

Thus, improving the quality of Arabic language learning must be directed not only at theoretical aspects, but also at strengthening communicative and reflective skills that support academic language accuracy and fluency. This study recommends the integration of explicit grammar instruction and intensive writing exercises into the curriculum to address recurring errors. Furthermore, academic writing workshops specifically designed for Arabic should be conducted periodically to improve students' writing proficiency. Future research is recommended to explore intervention-based studies or compare error patterns across academic levels or institutions for broader generalization.

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