# Spelling Errors on Written Production of Beginner Students:

## French for foreign language context in Indonesia

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*Abstract*—**Many studies have shown that there is phenomenon of spelling errors committed by beginner foreign language learners. This study aims to investigate the spelling errors in written production of beginner students in French as a foreign language. The data of this study is the writing sample of description text from 20 students in one university in Indonesia. This study uses qualitative methods, particularly on the spelling errors frameworks by Catach. The results of the study show that the most common of error were lexical orthographic (punctuation, suffix, use of uppercase letters). The study also shows that the most common types of errors were grammatical morphogram (45,8%). While the rarest error is lexical morphogram (0.7%). The finding could inform the way in which spellings contribute to the improvement of writing skills.**

*Keywords—beginner students; error; foreign language; French; spelling errors; writing*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Writing may often be considered as a complex activity. In order to produce a good text, some writing strategies must be carefully arranged, such as words selection, formulation of ideas, development of ideas, and many more [1]. Having good writing skills is a major challenge at the cognitive level, because it simultaneously tests language memory, and thinking skills [2]. However, in the context of foreign languages learning, many studies have shown that writing is relatively difficult to be acquired [3-6]. One of the factors of this difficulty is the difference in the system of mother tongue language (L1) or others languages (L2/L3) that has been mastered before.

Learners' difficulties in writing can be seen from the mistakes or errors committed. Brown stated that mistakes refer to performance errors such as slipping; in this case the failure to use a known system correctly [7]. In addition, errors are seen from a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflects the competence of the learner. One of the errors in written production is spelling errors. Spelling is a linguistic skill; it is the visual representation of language and relies on knowledge of the phonological, morphological, and orthographic structures [8,9]. Many previous research on spelling has been focused on students' spelling abilities [10-15].

In French learning context, phonetic errors are the most common mistakes occurs in *non-francophone* (non-native speakers of French) speakers [16]. Phonetic errors can also be experienced by beginner's language learners because they usually experience confusion in word writing, so they will combine vowels with the pronunciation of the word [17]. Furthermore, the beginner French learners tend to have difficulties in using adjectives, prepositions, plural nouns, and past verb conjugations [18]. The difficulty with the use of punctuation in French is because the punctuation does not appear verbally [19]. These difficulties are included in the category of grammatical spelling. In addition, beginner learners also often have difficulty in writing syllables (syllable) [20].

Having concerned with those issues, this study investigates the spelling errors of French language as foreign language learners that focusing on orthographic errors. Orthography is a way of writing sounds or words from a language, according to the system of writing the language itself, on the other hand it also deals with other language subsystems such as morphology, syntax and vocabulary [21]. According to Catach, errors in French orthographies can be categorized into six types of errors [21], as follows:

- *Extragraphique*: error that occurs in a lack or excess of phonemes, as well as unclear consonants and vowels;

- *Phonogrammique*: error in accent;

- *Morphogrammique*: errors in obscurity, gender, plural forms, verb forms, suffix forms, prefix forms, etc.;

- *Logogrammique*: error in distinguishing certain homonyms;

- *Idéogrammique*: misuse of uppercase letters, punctuation marks, quotes, and hyphens;

- *Non fonctionnel*: errors in the etymology of letters, double consonants, and *accent circonflèxe*.

In order to get a more comprehensive picture of French learning as a foreign language, especially on the spelling errors in writing, this study is conducted to Indonesian learners who in fact are *non-francophone* speakers. Thus, this present study tries to find out the types of spelling errors and its occurrence frequency on the writing production. The findings of this study

are expected to provide positive input on French language learning, especially writing, since the learners' errors are very important to provide information about "how far a learner has progressed in acquiring a language and showing how much more the learner needs to learn" [22] and to predict and solve problems of errors are encountered in the process of language learning [23].

## II. METHOD

### A. Participant

This study aims to determine the types of errors and how often errors arise from writing production of French for foreign language learners at the beginner-elementary level or level A1 + according to CEFR (Common European Framework of References for Languages). Taken as the sample, 20 students of French study program in one university in Indonesia have been participated in the study. The participants were selected by purposive sampling technique: in this case those who have already French Proficiency A1 of CEFR.

### B. Data Collection

To collect the data, the participants were asked to write a well-organized text, in this case a descriptive text of 150 to 250 words. The optional topics proposed were *ma ville* (my town), *mon pays* (my country), *les activités préférées* (my favorite activities), and *mes vacances* (my vacations).

The procedures of the study were collecting the data, identifying the errors, and classifying the errors into errors types. After that, the frequency of occurrence of errors were calculated.

### C. Data Analysis

The data of errors are classified and analysed by spelling errors framework by Catach which categorized the errors into six types, such as *extragraphique, phonogrammique, morphogrammique (grammaticaux et lexicaux), logogrammique, idéogrammique,* and *non fonctionnel* [21,24].

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collection, it is found that there are 171 sentences from the total texts. Among the 171 sentences, there were 95 errors with 134 spelling errors (78.36%). The types of errors and the frequency of occurrence of spelling errors is presented in the following table:

TABLE I. TYPES AND OCCURENCES OF ERRORS

| No | Types of Errors | Number of Occurrences | Occurrence Percentage (%) | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *Extragraphique* | 19 | 11,11 | 3 |
| 2 | *Phonogrammique* | 29 | 19,96 | 2 |
| 3 | *Morphogrammique:*<br> *- Lexicaux*<br> *- grammaticaux* | 1<br>61 | 0,58<br>35,67 | 7<br>1 |
| 4 | *Logogrammique:*<br> *- Lexicaux*<br> *- grammaticaux* | 5<br>- | 2,92<br>- | 6<br>- |
| 5 | *Idéogrammique* | 10 | 5,85 | 4 |
| 6 | *Non Fonctionnel* | 9 | 5,26 | 5 |
| **Total** | | **134** | **78,36** | |

Shown on the table above, writing errors that often occur are errors in *morphogrammiques grammaticaux* that appear as much as 35.67%. The least common error is the error of *morphogrammiques lexicaux* that appears as much as 0.58%, or it can be said that only one error occurred in this category. In the next section, we will describe in more detail some examples of spelling errors analysis based on Catach's theory [21].

### A. "Extragraphique" Error

The following are some examples of *extragraphique* errors found in the students' text:

(28) *Elle se situe ou Java Oest*

The data above is categorized into *extragraphique* error, this is caused by the lack of *e* phoneme in the word *Oest* which should be written as *Java Ouest*. The lack of phonemes causes the word to have no meaning in the grammatical rules of French.

Another error lies in the vagueness of vowel letters causing the word to have no meaning in French is as follows:

(38) *En collage, j'entre le club de chant*

The word *collage* above should be written as *collège*. Errors that occur are caused by the use of the letter *a* which should instead use *è*. This error is an error in the domain of lexical orthography where errors cause the word to have no meaning in French. *Collège* is a noun masculin which has a college meaning.

Extragraphique errors are then found in using consonant errors, as in the following sentence:

(80) *Je dors tout a l'heule*

Based on the sentence, an error occurred in the writing of the word *l'heule*, which should instead be written *l'heure*. Errors that occur in the lexical orthography category are included in *extragraphique* errors because there is an error using the *l* consonant that instead should use *r*. Errors that occur cause the word to have no meaning. The above sentence has, in fact, other errors but it is not included in the *extragrapnique* error.

Furthermore, researchers found *extragraphique* errors that often occur in the word *beaucoup* as in the following sentence:

(19) *J'aime beacoup ma ville*

The above sentence includes *extragraphique* category errors, where the word written lacks the phoneme which causes the loss of the meaning of the word. The word *Beacoup* should be written *beaucoup*.

### B. "Phonogrammique" Error

The following are some examples of *phonogrammique* errors found in the students' text:

(4) *Il y a des Fleurs et trés fraish*

The sentence belongs to the category of errors in greeting marks or accents. In the word *trés* there is an *e* with *accent aigu* " *é* " sign that should be written using *e* with *accent grave* " *è* ", so that the correct writing is *très*. This *phonogrammique* error does not change the value of the word sound. These errors fall into the category of lexical orthography. In addition to the example above, *phonogrammique* errors are also found in the following sentence:

(31) *Beacoup les gens allons a l'universite, a l'ecole ou l'office pour travailler*

In the word *l'universite* there is an error that causes changes in sound form, the right word should be written using *e* with *accent aigu* "*é*" so that it is written into *l'université*. This error is included in the form of lexical orthography because it relates to the writing of the word.

### C. "Morphogrammique" Lexicaux Error

The following are some examples of *morphogrammique lexicaux* errors found in the students' text:

(79) *la nourriture traditionnel est les ananas*

In the word *traditionnel* there is an error in the word ending which should be added to the suffix *–elle* as a complement that signifies feminine which refers to the noun "*la nourriture*". This is because the word *traditionnel* is a qualitative adjective that must explain the number. So it should be written *traditionnelle*. This error belongs to the type of grammatical spelling.

### D. "Morphogrammique Grammaticaux" Error

The following are some examples of *morphogrammique grammaticaux* errors found in the students' text:

(1) *un mois dernière, je suis allé à jogja*

The sentence above belongs to the category of *morphogrammique grammaticaux*, because there is an error in the use of the verb past participle *allé*. In that word, there was an error in the verb because the lack of accord that should be added an *-e* so that it becomes an *allée*, since the subject refers to a writer who is feminine. This error belongs to the type of grammatical spelling. The following sentences are another example of *morphogrammique grammaticaux* error:

(62) *Nous sommes allé*

This sentence belongs to the category of *morphogrammique grammaticaux* error. This is because the word *allé* should be added an accord *–e* and *–s* as a sign of a feminine and plural subject, since the subject *nous* refers to a writer who is a mother and sister which are female gender. So, the right word should be written as *allées*. The error found lies in the vagueness of the form of the verb, because it is not in accordance with the subject.

The researchers found another example of the type of other *morphogramique grammaticaux* writing errors, which can be seen in the following example:

(2) *J'ai pris les photo*

The sentence is a category of *morphogrammique grammaticaux* errors, because in the word *les photo* there is a lack of accord *-s* as a plural marker. Thus, the correct form of writing is *les photos*. This is because the determiner on the word is intended for the plural form. This error is an error in the category of grammatical spelling.

### E. "Logogrammique Lexicaux" Error

The following are some examples of *logogrammique lexicaux* errors found in the students' text:

(50) *J'habite a Garut*

The sentence above is categorized into the type of *logogrammique lexicaux* where there is no accent on the letter *a*, the right word should be written as *à* since the letter is a preposition to explain the place, in this case the city of Garut. The above errors are lexical spelling categories. The same error also appears in the sentence:

(31) *Beacoup les gens allons a l'universite, a l'ecole ou l'office pour travaille*

### F. "Idéogrammique" Error

The following are some examples of *idéogrammique* errors found in the students' text:

(1) *Le mois dernier, je suis allé à Jogja*

The sentence above is included into the category of *idéogrammique* error due to the misuse of uppercase letters (majuscule) in the word *un* that should be written using capital letters for being used at the beginning of the sentence. Thus, writing the right word is *Un*. This error is included in lexical spelling. Errors in using other uppercase letters also appear in the sentence:

(64) *J'ai passé mes vacances à Dubai avec ma* <u>*Famille*</u>

The above error is a lexical spelling form, where errors occur in the use of capital letters (majuscule) because the word is not at the beginning of the sentence, instead it is the part of the sentence. Therefore, it should use lowercase letters. The right writing becomes *famille*.

## G. "Non Fonctionnel" Error

The following are some examples of *non fonctionnel* errors found in the students' text:

(4) *Il y a des Fleurs et trés fraish*

The sentence above is categorized as *non fonctionnel* error. The word *fraish* is an error in the etymology of letters and *accent*, where the word should be written *fraîche*. Since the form of *fraish* writing is not included in the French vocabulary, this error occurs because of the similarity between the pronunciations of the word so that it can be categorized into *non fonctionnel* errors. This error is also included in lexical spelling.

(77) *J'adore banne dessinées*

In the sentence, the phrase *banne dessinées* is an error in the use of the etymology of letters because it uses multiple consonants. The writing of the correct word is supposed to be *bandes dessinées*. This error belongs to the type of lexical orthography.

## IV. CONCLUSION

From the data analysis, it can be concluded that the most common form of error is lexical orthographic errors that focus on knowledge of word forms such as punctuation, suffix, capitalization and so on. In addition, the most frequent error was a *morphogrammiques grammaticaux* error (45.8%), while the lowest frequent error was a *morphogrammique lexicaux* error (0.7%).

The current study has some implications for the coherent teaching and learning of French language spelling. Spelling is closely intertwined with pronunciation, vocabulary, listening, reading, and writing. We found that learners of French for Foreign Language (FLE) had difficulty in establishing a link between the articulation and spelling of words.

This present study has certain limitations. First, the data collection was taken only through written texts. Therefore, the study does not undertake an analysis of the types of errors through any other forms of data collection.

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