Error Analysis of Descriptive Text Writing Among Tenth-Grade Students at SMK Darul A'mal Metro

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ABSTRACT :
Errors committed by students learning the English language can occur at any level. This study aims to identify the types of errors made by students of SMK Darul A'mal Metro in writing descriptive texts about their daily activities. The sample consists of 25 students in the tenth grade of SMK Darul A'mal Metro. To collect the data, a descriptive essay writing task was used. Once the data were collected, the errors were classified into the following categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The findings of the research indicate that errors related to omission were the most frequently made by the students. The data showed that almost 33.9% of the total errors were related to writing descriptive texts. Several factors were identified as contributing to these problems, such as lack of knowledge and competence in English grammar, limited writing practice, students' tendency to translate directly from Indonesian to English, and insufficient exposure to the English language. Some suggestions have been proposed to address these issues. These include providing clearer explanations of English grammatical rules, discussing how to identify and understand the causes of their errors, assessing students' language proficiency levels, and offering more exercises and writing practice.

Key Words: *Error Analysis, Writing, Descriptive Text*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English is still considered a foreign language. Although it is taught as a compulsory subject in formal education, it is not used as a medium of instruction in most schools, nor as a common language for communication in daily academic contexts.[1] As a result, many Indonesian students face significant challenges in mastering English as a second or foreign language. These challenges often arise from linguistic aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, structure, and spelling, with grammar being among the most difficult to master. Grammatical competence plays a crucial role in effective communication; however, students frequently struggle to construct grammatically correct sentences and use appropriate tenses.[2]

Behaviorist learning theory advocates that old habits influence the process of learning new ones.[3] In the context of second language learning, the grammar system embedded in the mind as part of the first language often interferes with the acquisition of the second language. This interference occurs as a result of what is known as proactive inhibition, in which prior learning inhibits the formation of new habits. In second language acquisition, the first and second languages may share similar meanings but express them in different ways. Therefore, errors are

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[1] Ika Kartikasari, "Analysis of Errors in Using the Present Progressive Tense Made by the Second Year Students of SMPN 10 Malang" (State University of Malang, 2011).

[2] Yosi Founisce Putri, "Students' Errors in Using Simple Present Tense in Writing Descriptive Text" (State University of Malang, 2014).

[3] Ahmad Taufik Hidayah bin Abdullah, "Error Analysis on The Use of The Simple Tense and The Simple Past Tense in Writing Essays Among TESL College Students," *International Journal of Education and Research* 1, no. 12 (2013).

likely to occur because learners tend to transfer linguistic structures from their first language into the second.[4]

Grammar is the system of rules that governs the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence. It is not merely a collection of forms, but it involves three important dimensions: morphosyntax (accuracy), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (appropriateness). Writing, in particular, is one of the most complex skills to master because it requires not only grammatical accuracy but also coherence, organization, and clarity of ideas.[5] When students write, they must produce sentences that are both semantically correct and grammatically accurate. According to Oshima and Hogue, writing is a process rather than a product. The writing process includes stages such as prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and producing the final copy.[6]

Several studies have demonstrated that error analysis is an effective method for identifying students' language difficulties. Research by Yosi Founisce Putri and Kiki Paramita Elfina revealed that error analysis serves as a useful approach to examining students' grammatical understanding when writing different types of texts such as descriptive, narrative, and recount essays.[7] Likewise, Monika Ciesielkiewicz in 2015 entitled *Error Analysis and Its Relevance to Teaching ESL Composition* found that the highest percentage of errors occurred in grammar and syntax (53%), followed by spelling (18%), punctuation (17%), and lexical choice (12%), while tense errors were the least frequent.[8] Similarly, Ahmad Taufik Hidayah bin Abdullah in his study *Error Analysis on the Use of the Simple Tense and the Simple Past Tense in Writing Essays Among TESL College Students*, found that the most frequent errors were misformation (96%), followed by omission (69%), addition (56%), and misordering (3%).[9] Furthermore, Mahmoud Omidipour from the Islamic Azad University, Abadeh Branch, concluded that errors in foreign language learning are a natural phenomenon and that the influence of the first language (L1) is inevitable. His study emphasized that error analysis helps teachers identify areas of difficulty in students' writing and improve their instructional methods.[10]

Despite these valuable contributions, a research gap remains in exploring grammatical errors made by Vocational High School Students, especially in the context of writing descriptive texts. Most previous studies have focused on general high school or university students, whereas vocational students often have different educational backgrounds, motivations, and levels of exposure in English. Therefore, it is important to investigate the types of grammatical errors committed by vocational students and to understand the sources of these errors to improve English writing instruction at this educational level.

The rationale of this study lies in its potential to provide insights into the grammatical challenges faced by vocational students and to offer practical pedagogical implications for English teachers. By understanding the types and causes of students' grammatical errors,

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[4] Taufik Hidayah bin Abdullah, "Error Analysis on The Use of The Simple Tense and The Simple Past Tense in Writing Essays Among TESL College Students."

[5] U. Widiati and B. Y. Cahyono, "The Teaching of EFL Writing in the Indonesian Context: The State of The Art," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 13, no. 3 (2006): 139–50; Jack C. Richards and Willy A. Renandya, *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[6] Kiki Paramitha Elfina, "Students' Errors in Using Simple Present Tense in Writing Descriptive Text at the XII Grade Students of SMA N I Kubung" (Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin University, 2013).

[7] Putri, "Students' Errors in Using Simple Present Tense in Writing Descriptive Text"; Paramitha Elfina, "Students' Errors in Using Simple Present Tense in Writing Descriptive Text at the XII Grade Students of SMA N I Kubung."

[8] Monika Ciesielkiewicz, "Error Analysis and Its Relevance to Teaching ESL Composition," *Macrothink Institute* 7, no. 5 (2015).

[9] Taufik Hidayah bin Abdullah, "Error Analysis on The Use of The Simple Tense and The Simple Past Tense in Writing Essays Among TESL College Students."

[10] Mahmoud Omidipour, "An Analysis of Errors in Writing Among Adult Persian Learners of English," *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World (IJLLALW)* 5, no. 3 (2014): 176–87.

teachers can design more effective teaching strategies to enhance students' writing competence and reduce common language mistakes.

Based on the discussion above, this research focuses on identifying and analyzing grammatical errors found in students' descriptive texts. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the common types of errors committed by students in writing descriptive texts?
2. What are the main sources of these errors?

Methods

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The descriptive method was chosen because the study aimed to describe and analyze the types of grammatical errors found in students' descriptive writing without manipulating any variables or providing experimental treatment. This approach is suitable for identifying and explaining linguistic phenomena that naturally occur in the classroom context. The study was conducted in a natural classroom setting to ensure that the results genuinely reflected students' writing abilities under normal learning conditions.

The participants of this research were 25 tenth-grade students of SMK Darul A'mal Metro during the 2024 academic year. These students were selected purposively because they had already been introduced to the topic of descriptive text in their English subject. All participants were taking English as a compulsory subject and had prior exposure to writing descriptive paragraphs.

The data in this study consisted of students' written products, specifically descriptive texts entitled *"My Daily Activity."* Each student was instructed to write an explanatory text consisting of at least 100 words within a 45-minute time limit. The topic was chosen because it was familiar to the students and allowed them to express daily activities using the simple present tense, which is a common grammatical area for error.

The data collection technique used was document analysis. Students' writing assignments were collected after completion and compiled as the primary data source. The researcher then analyzed each writing sample to identify and categorize grammatical errors based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen. This taxonomy consists of four major types of errors: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering[11].

The data analysis technique followed several operational steps adapted from Corder's model of error analysis[12]:

1. Identification of Errors: Each student's text was carefully examined to identify any deviations from correct grammatical structures.
2. Classification of Errors: The identified errors were grouped according to their types: omission, addition, misformation, or misordering.
3. Quantification of Errors: Each category of error was counted to determine its frequency. The percentage of each error type was calculated using the following formula:

$$X = \frac{N \times 100\%}{Nt}$$

   Where X represents the percentage of each error type, N is the number of particular types of error, and N_t is the total number of all errors identified.
4. Description and Interpretation: The researcher interpreted the findings by analyzing which error types occurred most frequently and what possible linguistic or learning factors caused them.

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[11] Heidi Dulay et al., *Language Two* (Oxford University Press, 1982).

[12] S. P. Corder, *The Significance of Learners' Errors*, Errors Analysis (Longman Group Ltd., 1967).

The results of this process provided insight into students' grammatical competence in writing descriptive texts. The operational procedure was designed to ensure that the analysis remained objective, systematic, and consistent with the actual classroom context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result

This section presents the results of the grammatical error analysis found in students' descriptive texts entitled *"My Daily Activity."* The data were obtained from 25 tenth-grade students of SMK Darul A'mal Metro. A total of 6,397 words were analyzed, and 228 grammatical errors were identified. The errors were classified based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which includes omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage of each type of error.

Table 1. Errors Committed in Writing Descriptive Text

No	Type of Error	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
1	Omission	-	77	33.8%
2	Addition	Double marking	20	8.8%
		Regularizations	26	11.7%
		Simple Addition	4	1.8%
3	Misinformation	Regularizations	70	30.7
		Archi-forms	4	1.8%
		Alternating Forms	5	2.1%
4	Misordering	-	22	9.6%
	Total		**228**	**100%**

The results show that omission errors were the most dominant, accounting for 33.8% of the total errors. The second most frequent errors were misformation errors, particularly those caused by regularization (30.7%). Addition errors constituted a moderate proportion of errors, while misordering errors occurred less frequently. The distribution of these errors is illustrated in the chart below.
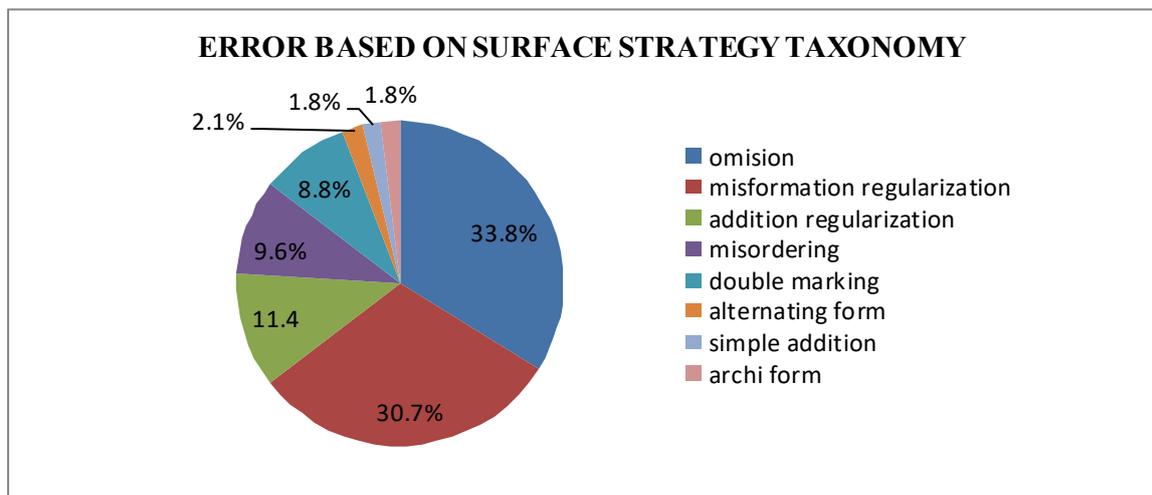

Figure 1. Errors based on surface strategy taxonomy

A summary of the errors committed by the students is shown in the following examples:
Omission
1. Before I sleep, I *dinner* then study together *my friends.*
   It should read: Before I sleep, I take dinner and then study together with my friends.
2. I read *al-Qur'an* and prepare *go to school.*
   It should read: I read al-Qur'an and prepare to go to school.
Addition Due to Double Marking
1. I *go take* a bath.
   It should read: I take a bath.
2. I *go learn* kitab.
   It should read: I learn kitab.
Addition Due to Regularization
1. Well, I *will telling* you about my daily activity.
   It should read: Well, I will tell you about my daily activity.
2. Before we *sleeping* we must pray.
   It should read: Before sleeping, we must pray.
Addition Due to Simple Addition
1. I *really likes reading* novels.
   It should read: I really like reading novels.
2. I *usually goes* to school at 07.15 a.m.
   It should read: I usually go to school at 07.15 a.m.
Misformation Due to Regularization
1. I take a rest in the *badroom.*
   It should read: I take a rest in the bedroom.
2. Next, I *preapare* to go to school.
   It should read: Next, I prepare to go to school.
Misformation Due to Archi-Forms
The notion of archi-forms refers to the use of one class form to represent or describe another class form in a different situation.
1. My English score is *satisfy.*
   It should read: My English score is satisfied.
2. I don't like *mathematic* because it is so *difficulty.*
   It should read: I don't like mathematics because it is difficult.
Misformation Due to Alternating Forms
1. In the class, I study religion, *mathematic* and *economi.*
   It should read: In the class, I study religion, mathematics, and economics
2. I don't forget to do my *PR.*
   It should read: I don't forget to do my homework.
Misordering
1. After that, I *together study* with my friends.
   It should read: After that, I study together with my friends.
2. I do *dormitory picket routine.*
   It should read: I do dormitory routine picket.

Analysis of Error Types
　　　Omission errors mainly involved the absence of essential grammatical elements such as verbs, prepositions, auxiliary verbs, and articles. For example, students often omitted infinitive markers (*to*), auxiliary verbs, or connectors, resulting in incomplete or unclear sentences.
　　　Misformation errors occurred when students used incorrect grammatical forms, including misspelled words, incorrect verb forms, or inappropriate word choices. Errors caused

by regularization were particularly frequent, indicating students' partial mastery of English grammatical rules.

Addition errors were found when students added unnecessary grammatical elements, such as double verbs or redundant tense markers. These errors reflect students' confusion about verb patterns and tense usage.

Misordering errors appeared when students arranged words incorrectly according to English sentence structure. These errors were commonly influenced by direct translation from Indonesian, which has a different word order system.

Error Density

Based on the total number of errors (228) and the total number of words (6,397), the error density indicates that students produced approximately one grammatical error in every 28 words. This finding suggests that grammatical accuracy remains a significant challenge for vocational high school students in writing descriptive texts.

Summary of Findings

In summary, the results demonstrate that:
1. Students committed a considerable number of grammatical errors in writing descriptive texts.
2. Omission and misformation errors were the most frequent error types.
3. Errors were closely related to students' limited grammatical knowledge and difficulty applying English sentence structures accurately.

These findings provide a clear empirical basis for the discussion and support the need for more focused grammar instruction and writing practice.

Evaluation of Errors

The most frequent errors committed by the students were omission errors. These findings are logical since the grammatical structures of Indonesian and English are different, which often causes confusion for students when writing. Some students constructed sentences using conjunctions but forgot to include a subject or other necessary words, resulting in missing elements within the text. The next most frequent errors were misformation errors due to regularization. In this case, the researcher assumes that these errors mainly resulted from the students' lack of competence in mastering English grammar.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that omission errors were the most dominant type of grammatical errors committed by tenth-grade students of SMK Darul A'mal Metro in writing descriptive texts. This result indicates that students frequently omitted essential grammatical elements such as verbs, prepositions, articles, and auxiliary verbs when constructing sentences in English. This phenomenon can be explained through **interlanguage theory**, which suggests that learners develop a transitional linguistic system influenced by both their first language (L1) and the target language (L2) (Corder, 1967; Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982).

The dominance of omission errors is consistent with the structural characteristics of the Indonesian language, which does not require certain grammatical markers that are obligatory in English, such as auxiliary verbs (*do, be*), inflectional endings (*-s, -ed*), or prepositions in some contexts. As a result, students tend to transfer Indonesian sentence patterns directly into English, leading to missing grammatical components. This finding supports Omidipour (2014), who argues that first language interference is inevitable in foreign language learning and often results in omission errors when learners are unfamiliar with obligatory grammatical forms in the target language.

Misformation errors, particularly those caused by regularization, were the second most frequent type of error found in this study. These errors occurred when students applied incorrect grammatical rules or used inappropriate word forms, such as incorrect verb tense forms or

misspelled lexical items. This pattern reflects students' partial understanding of English grammatical rules and their tendency to overgeneralize certain structures. According to Dulay et al. (1982), misformation errors are common among learners who have begun to acquire grammatical rules but have not yet mastered their correct application. Similar findings were reported by Abdullah (2013), who found that misformation errors were among the most frequent errors made by ESL learners when using simple present and simple past tenses in writing.

Addition errors, including double marking, regularization, and simple addition, indicate that students sometimes applied grammatical rules excessively. For example, the use of double verbs (*go take a bath*) suggests confusion regarding verb patterns and sentence structure in English. This finding aligns with Richards' (2002) view that overgeneralization occurs when learners apply learned rules in inappropriate contexts due to limited exposure and insufficient practice. Previous studies by Putri (2014) and Paramitha Elfina (2013) also identified addition errors as a common issue in students' descriptive writing, particularly in the use of tense markers and verb forms.

Misordering errors, although less frequent, reveal students' difficulty in arranging words according to English syntactic rules. These errors are strongly related to direct translation from Indonesian, where word order is more flexible compared to English. This supports the behaviorist perspective mentioned in the introduction, which emphasizes that existing language habits influence the acquisition of new linguistic patterns. Similar results were found by Ciesielkiewicz (2015), who reported that syntactic errors, including word order problems, commonly occur in ESL learners' writing due to cross-linguistic interference.

Overall, the findings of this study are consistent with previous research on error analysis in EFL writing contexts. The predominance of omission and misformation errors confirms that grammatical competence remains a major challenge for Indonesian EFL learners, particularly vocational high school students who may have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. As noted by Widiati and Cahyono (2006), writing instruction in the Indonesian EFL context often emphasizes product rather than process, which may contribute to students' lack of grammatical accuracy. Therefore, integrating explicit grammar instruction with meaningful writing practice is essential to reduce recurring errors and improve students' writing proficiency.

Causes of the Errors

In answering the second research question on the sources of errors committed by students in writing descriptive texts, the researcher identified several contributing factors based on data analysis:

1. Lack of grammatical competence and knowledge
   The results indicate that there is a lack of grammatical competence and understanding among the students. They do not seem to have mastered the grammatical aspects of English well, which results in frequent errors in their written compositions.
2. Limited writing practice
   The students rarely practice writing in class, which makes them less confident when producing written texts. Regular practice is essential to improve writing fluency and accuracy, but many students lack opportunities to apply what they have learned.
3. Direct translation from Indonesian to English
   Another factor is that students often translate sentences directly from Indonesian into English. As a result, many errors: particularly misordering errors occur because of the differences in grammatical structures between the two languages.
4. Overgeneralization
   Overgeneralization is another factor contributing to students' errors. Learners tend to create deviant structures based on their experience with other structures in the target language. For example:

"After that, I go to school at 07.30 a.m arrive 10.00 a.m."
Subsequently, the student may also produce another incorrect sentence such as:
"After that, I go to school at 07.30 a.m to 10.00 a.m."

5. Inadequate exposure to the target language
Another contributing factor is the lack of exposure to the English language. Many students do not have sufficient access to English learning environments or opportunities to practice the language, both in writing and speaking. When students have limited exposure to the target language, the likelihood of committing errors in their writing increases significantly.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the types of grammatical errors committed by tenth-grade students of SMK Darul A'mal Metro in writing descriptive texts and to examine the main sources of these errors. Based on the analysis of students' written texts using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, several important conclusions can be drawn.

In response to the first research question, the findings indicate that students committed four main types of grammatical errors: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Among these categories, omission errors were the most frequent, accounting for the highest percentage of total errors. This suggests that students often failed to include essential grammatical elements such as verbs, prepositions, articles, and auxiliary verbs in their sentences. Misformation errors, particularly those caused by regularization, were the second most dominant, followed by addition and misordering errors. These results demonstrate that students still experience considerable difficulty in applying English grammatical rules accurately when writing descriptive texts.

Regarding the second research question, the study reveals that the errors were mainly caused by several interrelated factors. These include students' limited grammatical competence, insufficient writing practice, direct translation from Indonesian into English, overgeneralization of grammatical rules, and inadequate exposure to the English language. The influence of the first language plays a significant role, as students tend to transfer Indonesian linguistic structures into English, resulting in grammatical inaccuracies.

Overall, the findings confirm that grammatical errors are a natural part of the foreign language learning process, particularly in writing. Error analysis proves to be an effective approach for identifying students' linguistic difficulties and understanding the underlying causes of their errors. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to use the results of error analysis as a basis for designing more targeted instructional strategies, such as emphasizing problematic grammatical areas, providing frequent guided writing practice, and raising students' awareness of common errors. By doing so, students' writing accuracy and overall English proficiency can be gradually improved.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS