

ERROR ANALYSIS IN DESCRIPTIVE WRITING MADE BY THE FIRST-SEMESTER STUDENTS AT ESA UNGGUL UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Writing is one of the productive skills that must be possessed by a student, including writing descriptive text. Through descriptive text, students can convey what they feel or experience. This study aims to reveal the mistakes made by students in the practice of writing English, especially the errors in which aspects of the language and how often they occur. The researcher conducted an analysis of errors in the English writings of Psychology Study Program students who took English courses. This analysis uses the Surface Strategy Taxonomy to classify student errors in grammatical structure. This study uses a descriptive research method with a qualitative approach. The subject of this study was the writing of semester I students who were respondents and took English 1 for the 2022/2023 academic year, a total of 32 people. The results of this study indicate that students' errors in producing English writing are divided into several categories of errors, namely misformation, omission, addition, and misordering. The most frequent mistakes were formation errors in sentences, which made up as many as 87, or about 31%, of the total number of students' writing errors. Omission errors occurred 80 times, or 28%, followed by addition errors 58 times, or 21%, and the last was misordering errors 55 times, or 20%.

Keywords: Error analysis, Surface Structure Taxonomy, English writing skills

Abstrak

Menulis merupakan salah satu keterampilan produktif yang harus dimiliki oleh seorang siswa, termasuk menulis teks deskriptif. Melalui teks deskriptif, siswa dapat menyampaikan apa yang dirasakan atau dialaminya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap kesalahan-kesalahan yang dilakukan siswa dalam praktik menulis bahasa Inggris, khususnya kesalahan-kesalahan pada aspek kebahasaan mana dan seberapa sering kesalahan tersebut terjadi. Peneliti melakukan analisis kesalahan pada tulisan bahasa Inggris mahasiswa Program Studi Psikologi yang mengambil mata kuliah bahasa Inggris. Analisis ini menggunakan Surface Strategy Taxonomy untuk mengklasifikasikan kesalahan siswa dalam struktur gramatikal. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Subyek penelitian ini adalah tulisan mahasiswa semester I yang menjadi responden dan mengambil Bahasa Inggris 1 tahun ajaran 2022/2023 yang berjumlah 32 orang. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kesalahan siswa dalam memproduksi tulisan bahasa Inggris terbagi menjadi beberapa kategori kesalahan, yaitu misformation, omission, addition, dan misordering. Kesalahan yang paling sering terjadi adalah kesalahan pembentukan kalimat, yaitu sebanyak 87 atau sekitar 31% dari total kesalahan menulis siswa. Kesalahan omission terjadi sebanyak 80 kali atau 28%, disusul kesalahan penambahan sebanyak 58 kali atau 21%, dan yang terakhir adalah kesalahan misordering sebanyak 55 kali atau 20%.

Kata kunci: Analisis kesalahan, Surface Structure Taxonomy, keterampilan menulis Bahasa Inggris

Introduction

Practical writing skills are pivotal for successful communication and academic achievement. The ability to convey ideas, emotions, and experiences through written language is

essential in both educational and professional contexts. However, the process of acquiring proficient writing skills involves challenges, particularly for language learners. This research delves into the domain of writing proficiency among

fourth-semester students at Universitas Esa Unggul, focusing specifically on descriptive writing.

Descriptive writing is an art that involves skillfully portraying scenes, characters, and emotions using words. It transports readers into the world created by the writer, invoking sensory experiences and imagery. As students engage with descriptive writing, they encounter linguistic intricacies and potential errors that can impact the coherence and effectiveness of their compositions.

Students make faults (errors) in their writing due to a lack of understanding of grammatical English and interference from the usage of their home tongue. The phrase errors and mistakes are well-known in English. Errors are blunders that happen often because someone does not completely comprehend the language system, whereas mistakes happen sometimes due to forgetfulness or mispronunciation, and language learners can typically remedy the mistakes themselves. According to Dulay in Brown (1994), error is an observable variation from a native speaker's grammar, which indicates that language learners make mistakes (errors) because they have an insufficient grasp of English rules.

Errors can also occur as a result of interference from the acquired first language. According to Sattayatham and Honsa (2008), causes of mistakes in language learning might emerge owing to system interference from the learner's native language and general features of language learning patterns. This blunder arises owing to a lack of comprehension of the language's rules, particularly the rules of a language that is highly different from their native tongue. However, mistakes in language acquisition are unavoidable. Every language student will make mistakes and learn the correct sentence structure as a result of those blunders.

Writing practice is an essential component of language learning. Teachers may help students improve their abilities to utilize the correct tenses, use acceptable vocabulary, write the correct spelling, and convey their thoughts clearly and accurately. Student writing outcomes can also be used to assess how well the students grasp the subject they have learned. Teachers might be more inclusive in delivering comments to the students by examining the errors in their writing. This is due to the fact that students are fundamentally diverse, particularly in their experience of learning English, and so the errors that develop in their writing practice might also vary. There are students who make only a few mistakes or do not make any mistakes at all, and there are students who make numerous errors in their writing.

Despite the emphasis on writing skills in higher education, some first-semester students at Universitas Esa Unggul continue to grapple with errors in their descriptive writing. Understanding these errors and their origin is essential, as they reflect gaps in students' linguistic knowledge and could impede effective communication. This study attempts to highlight the mistakes made by students in the practice of writing English, specifically which components of the language they make and how frequently they make them. The researchers examined faults in the English writings of Psychology students enrolled in the English 1 course. The Surface Strategy Taxonomy is used in this investigation to classify student grammatical structural faults. Surface Strategy Taxonomy describes how a structure may be altered by adding or removing components of a phrase, as well as faults in the arrangement of structures to form sentences (Dulay, 1982: 150). This taxonomy is divided into four subcategories: omission, addition, misinformation, and mis-ordering mistakes. Omission is the loss of a word or part of a sentence that should be there, addition is the addition of a word or part of a sentence that shouldn't exist so that the sentence becomes grammatically incorrect, misinformation is the use of wrong forms, words, morphemes, and structures, misordering is an error in placing morphemes or a group of morphemes in a sentence.

In addition to analyzing and classifying Psychology students' grammatical errors, the researcher investigated the causes of these errors using a Comparative Taxonomy, where the causes of these errors could come from interlanguage, interlingual, learning context, and communication strategies. Qaddomi (2013) also has classified them into two major types: interlingual and intralingual errors. The interlanguage category refers to errors that occur due to the language learner's interpretation, whereas the interlingual category refers to errors that occur due to a student's incorrect understanding of the structure or rules of English, which generally occurs due to the significant differences between English and Indonesian. Context of learning is a mistake that occurs as a result of the learning context that pupils encounter. Communication methods are mistakes that occur as a result of students' communication strategies, particularly while presenting ideas.

The findings of this research will hold value for not only students but also for educators and curriculum developers. By identifying areas of difficulty in descriptive writing, pedagogical approaches can be targeted more efficiently to address students' specific weaknesses, leading to improved learning outcomes.

Method

A descriptive research method with a qualitative approach is used in this study. The goal of this study is to analyze mistakes in student papers using Surface Strategy Taxonomy and Comparative Analysis to determine the sources and causes of these errors. This study was carried out at Esa Unggul University's Kebon Jeruk Campus's Faculty of Psychology. This study was conducted throughout the teaching and learning activities of the 2022/2023 academic year to identify grammatical faults in the English writing of semester 1 students in the English Education Study Program, as well as the origins of these errors. The subject of this study was the writing of 32 students of semester-first students who became respondents and took English 1 for the 2022/2023 academic year.

The researcher is the tool utilized in this study. According to Bogdan and Bikien (1982:27), "the main instrument in qualitative research is the researcher himself." Researchers conduct everything from data collection to proper data analysis and interpretation. Student writing and a checklist for spotting grammatical faults based on the Surface Structure Taxonomy idea are employed as supporting tools to indicate the presence, absence, and frequency of each error item. The data required for this study are grammatical errors committed by pupils when writing in English. Researchers gathered student essays to be documented and thoroughly read. The gathered work was descriptive writing with four distinct subjects in which students wrote about their unforgettable moments in their lives.

Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) presented a five-stage error analysis procedure: 1) Gathering examples of student language, 2) Identifying mistakes, 3) Describing errors, 4) Explaining errors, and 5) Evaluating errors. The results of this investigation will be analyzed in phases. First, the researcher gathers the respondents' writings and analyses them using Dulay's theory. The mistakes are then classified into Surface Strategy Taxonomy subcategories by choosing, recognizing, and tabulating grammatical faults in the respondent's writing at the word, phrase, and sentence levels.

Result and Discussion

The error analysis based on the Surface Structure Taxonomy reveals that the student's work contains 280 erroneous sentence phrases. The most errors were in the category of misformation ($n = 87$), followed by errors in the categories of omission ($n = 80$) and addition ($n = 58$), and the fewest were in the area of misordering ($n = 55$), as shown in the bar chart in Figure 1. Figure 2 (Pie chart) states the percentage of errors in the existing categories. From

Figure 2 it can be seen that the percentage of misformation is 31%, misordering is 20%, omission is 28%, and addition is 21%.

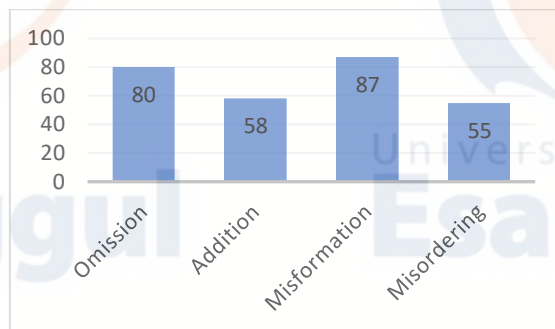


Figure 1. Bar chart of Error Categories

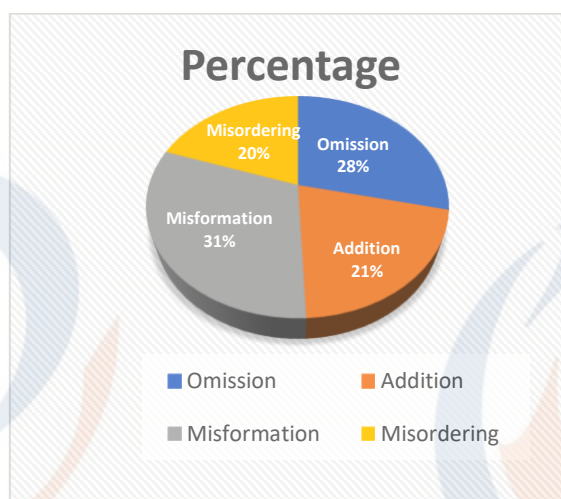


Figure 2. Pie chart percentage of Error Categories

The most common formation mistakes occur when providing information about the quantity of a noun. From the 87 structuring errors, there were around 32 errors in the placement of this quantity adverb. For example, students did not write the plural form of a noun with more than one adverb, *from their origin through fun*, and *I finished some test on May* that should have been in the form of *their origins through fun* and *I finished some tests in May*. The second type of formation error is the formation error for pronouns with 24 errors, followed by the formation error for verbs with 23 errors. While student errors in the use of "to be" occurred as many as 8 errors.

The second most common mistake type is omission, in which students leave out up to 80 phrases or verbs that should be included in order for the sentence to be grammatically accurate. The omission of the ending *s/es* for singular verbs and plural nouns (34 errors), the omission of *to be* in a sentence that should use *to be* (12 errors), the omission of the auxiliary verb (10 errors), the omission of the article *a/an* for singular nouns (9

errors), and the omission of prepositions (15 errors) are all noteworthy.

The next error category is addition. The inclusion of sentence (addition) parts renders the phrase grammatically wrong. Several kinds of addition were discovered, including the addition of the ending *s/es*, which should not have occurred as many as 24 mistakes, the addition of the ending *-ing* after the capital, which should not have been as many as 4 errors, and the addition of *to be*, which should not have occurred as many as 30 errors. The interlingual component, meaning the impact of their native language, and the intralingual element, namely students' poor knowledge of English and the learning setting, are the sources of this inaccuracy. The most common source of mistakes is intralingual variables, followed by interlingual factors and learning environment factors. The last and smallest category of errors detected is misordering, which is a sorting error typified by the erroneous placement of a morpheme or set of morphemes, both in word order and word writing (misspelling). There are 55 incorrect phrases or sentences in the preparation.

Based on the data collected, it was discovered that the most common English mistakes made by students in their writing were faults in the use of verbs, the use of *to be*, the use of quantity adverbs in nouns, and personal pronouns. The sentence *In the sentence "My father always does everything for their children,"* the students apply normal noun rules with the insertion of *s/es* into the irregular nouns, especially *"child-children."* The blunder was a formation error since the writer forgot to form the noun *"child"* into *"children"*. Another example of a mistake is the statement *"I feel so happy because I have a friend who has the same vision as me,"* which explains that the writer has a friend who shares his vision. The error in this phrase is in the verb (*have*), which should have been written in the singular form (*has*) according to the subject. This sentence has an error in the form of the verb. Similar to the sentence *"My father has a side job as a driver,"* the subject of my father requires a singular verb, namely *has*, not *have*. The subject of a sentence must match the verb, and when the subject is singular, it takes the verb form, which is also singular.

The sentence *"I have two brother and three sister, and I am the youngest sister"* has a formation error from the use of quantity, where it is known that the number of brothers and sisters is more than one, so the correct form is the plural form of brothers and sisters. While the error is in the sentence *"and my parents, who do not care whether his daughter has understood or not,"* namely the wrong formation for pronouns where parents need plural pronouns, namely *their*. The correct pronoun in the plural form of parents or parents is they (*their*), not him (*his*). In

addition to formation errors, errors that appear in student writing are also errors because they omit one part or element in a sentence so that the sentences they produce are grammatically incorrect. Furthermore, the sentence *My father tired loses "to be-was,"* making it a grammatically wrong sentence. The correct form of the sentence is *"my father was tired"* because every sentence must have a subject and a predicate. The sentence *It was the time for announcement* loses the article (*the*) in front of the noun announcement. The correct sentence is *"It was the time for the announcement"*. Furthermore, in the sentence *"Right in front of my own home, my cat hit by a motorcycle"* from the context, the author intends to tell the incident that happened to his cat by using the passive voice; unfortunately, the sentence does not use *"to be-was"* after *"my cat"*, so the sentence becomes grammatically incorrect. The sentence *"I still hope that he came to my dream"* uses the third-person singular *"he"*, which requires a verb ending in *s/es* to indicate a singular verb. The sentence above is grammatically wrong because it removes the ending *s/es* in the correct verb form, namely, *I still hope that he comes to my dream.*

In addition to omissions, the addition of an unnecessary element in a sentence will also make the sentence grammatically incorrect. For example, adding *to be* in front of the verb *know* in the sentence *"my parents also choose purple dislike purple colour when buying something because they know the colour"* doesn't require the addition of *to be*, or it shouldn't be in that sentence at all. In the sentence *"I will hiding my tears in front of them"*, students add the ending *-ing* to the verb after the modal. Whereas grammatically, modal (*will*) is followed by the first form of the verb (infinitive verb). So the correct sentence is *"I will hide my tears in front of them."* The word *hiding* must be changed to *hide*. The same thing happened in the sentence, *"Finally, we would celebrate my birthday in Bali,"* where the students added the ending *-ing* (*celebrating*) in front of the modal, so the improvement was needed by removing the ending to become the first form of the verb (*celebrate*).

The sentence *"I will try to understand the character of each lecturers"* uses the plural *lecturers* noun while the noun has a singular quantifier, namely *each*, which requires the noun that follows it to also be in a singular form. So the correct form should be *"each lecturer"* not *"each lecturers"*. The sentence *"Every song, every movie, and every place we are have been"* is grammatically incorrect because it experiences the addition of *are* in front of the verb *have* where the verb already has *to be-been*. The next error is misordering which is an error in sorting that is marked by incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes, both word order and word

writing (misspelling). The sentence "*I have five classes close friends*" has the wrong arrangement of the noun phrase "*classes close*" friend, the word "*close*" is an adjective that describes a noun where the noun in question is a *classmate*. This noun phrase will be correct if the arrangement is corrected to "*five close classmates*". In addition, the sentence "*I like food is a food spicy*" has a structuring error from the noun phrase which is the object of the sentence. The correct sentence should be in the form "*I like spicy food*" or "*I like foods which are spicy.*"

In general, errors arise because English is not the students' first language; their first language is Indonesian or their various regional languages. It is natural for a language learner to make errors when using the language, particularly when writing. "*We must recognize that we cannot learn a language without making systematic errors at all*" (Tarigan 2011:126). Their knowledge of the structure of English words is also still inadequate, so it is possible for errors to occur in their pronunciation and writing. The majority of students who participated in this study were able to speak more than one language, namely Indonesian, Sundanese, and Javanese. On campus, they speak Indonesian, and at home or daily, they speak Sundanese, Javanese, Batak language, or slang. These students rarely use English unless they are in a situation where they are attending an English lecture. According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), the main sources that cause errors in someone's use of English are interlingual, intralingual, and learning context errors. Based on the data analyzed, the researcher found sources of errors that made students make mistakes

Interlanguage errors are affected by interference from the first language where students tend to use Indonesian sentence structures in English. For example, in Indonesian, sentences do not use the auxiliary word (to be). This rule often bothers students to remove the auxiliary word when producing writing or sentences in English, so students generally produce the sentence "*My father tired*" which is in Indonesian. means my father is tired. In Indonesian, the function of the auxiliary word (to be) does not appear even though grammatically the correct sentence should have "*to be-was*" become "*My father was tired*". The sentence above shows the student's language transferring the rules of the Indonesian language into English. Sattayatham and Honsa (2008) revealed that sources of errors in learning a language can occur due to system intervention from the learner's native language and the general characteristics of language learning patterns. This error occurs due to a lack of understanding of the rules of the language, especially the rules of a language that is very different from their mother tongue.

It will be the same as the sentence "*I feel so happy because I have a friend who have the same vision as me*". This sentence consists of two clauses, namely, I feel very happy because I have a friend who has the same vision as me. The use of the present perfect sentence structure to describe a friend is inappropriate because it uses the auxiliary word "**have**," which actually has to use the auxiliary word "**has**" because the friend in question is only one person. In Indonesian language rules, there is no difference in the form of auxiliary words or verbs, even if the subject is classified as one or plural. Whereas in English, students must remember how the auxiliary words and verbs experience additions or changes due to the number of subjects they have. Therefore, the source of this student's error came from the use of Indonesian language rules, which do not have rules where the verb or auxiliary word must match the number of subjects in the sentence. Therefore, the correct sentence should be in the form "*I feel so happy because I have a friend who has the same vision as me*".

The next source of error is intralingual, which occurs when students generalize the rules of the English language. So the concept of intralingual is the opposite of interlanguage, where the generalized rules are the rules of the target language. This is because students do not really understand the use of English rules, so they end up enforcing certain English rules in the sentences they make. For example, in the sentence "*Finally, we would celebrate my birthday in Bali*", students did not correctly understand the use of the *-ing* verb, which should not be in front of the modal (*would, may, can*), followed by the first form of the verb. It's the same with the sentence, "*I attended one of my classes are is on Kebon Jeruk Campus*". Students don't really understand how to form a compound sentence where there are two sentences connected by a connecting word (*connector*), for example, "*I attended one of my classes that is on Kebon Jeruk Campus*". Finally, the sentence they produce is a sentence that has two verbs due to the addition of "*to be are*" without any connecting words connecting the sentences

Conclusion

Based on the existing findings and discussion, the researchers conclude that:

1. Student mistakes in producing English writing is divided into several categories of errors, namely formation errors (misformation), omission errors, errors additions, and misordering. The most frequent mistakes were formation errors in sentences, which were 87 or around 31% of the total number of students' writing errors.

Omission errors occurred 80 times or 28%, followed by addition errors 58 times or 21% and the last was misordering errors 55 times or 20%.

2. The interlingual component, meaning the impact of their native language, and the intralingual element, namely students' poor knowledge of English and the learning setting, are the sources of this inaccuracy. The most common source of mistakes is intralingual variables, followed by interlingual factors and learning environment factors.

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