

An Analysis of Students' Grammatical Errors in Writing Descriptive Text

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*Germana Oreng Ritan^a 

¹Institut Keguruan dan Teknologi Larantuka, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: germanaritan@ikt1.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify the types of grammatical errors made by tenth-grade students at SMAN 1 Lewolema in writing descriptive texts and to analyse the causes of these errors. The sample consisted of 18 eleventh-grade students. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing observations, interviews, and document analysis. The findings revealed that students frequently made errors in sentence patterns, tenses, pronouns, prepositions, and punctuation. The most common errors were omission and addition, often attributed to the influence of students' first language (L1) and their limited English vocabulary. The study underscores the need for targeted grammar instruction and vocabulary development to enhance students' descriptive writing skills.

Keywords: *Grammatical Errors, Descriptive Text, Writing Skills, Second Language Acquisition, Error Analysis*

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most important language skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it serves as an effective way to communicate and express thoughts, feelings, and opinions to others. According to (Anjayani & Hum, 2016), writing is the activity of recording language on paper or other media to convey ideas and messages in a structured form. Furthermore, writing is essential in everyday life. In various contexts – such as school, the workplace, and the community – writing skills are required, and each context places overlapping but distinct demands on writers. Proficient writers can adapt their writing flexibly to the context in which it occurs (Anh et al., 2022).

In addition, Huy, (2015) emphasizes that writing is a key to success in higher education, as it develops abilities in vocabulary and grammar. Writing also supports students in improving their reading comprehension, since the processes of composing and reading are closely interconnected. Thus, writing not only strengthens linguistic competence but also enhances overall academic achievement in EFL learning. Writing should be appropriate and related to the title. The writer needs to know the parts of writing such as conjunctions, grammar, vocabulary, and types of writing from general to specific. Furthermore, the students should focus on language components such as grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. Without mastering the language components, the writer did not finish the writing. Writing is an intricate and complex task; it is the most difficult of all the language abilities to acquire. Writing is not easy because it takes a long time to write a good English.

In the writing process, the students frequently make an errors and mistakes in grammatical. Mourtaga (Abushihab, 2014) stated that errors and mistakes are different from each other because an error cannot be self-corrected and is caused by a learner's inadequate knowledge of the target language whereas a mistake can be self-corrected. So, learners at various levels can do errors in writing including advanced level.

Descriptive text is difficult because it requires mastery of vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and the ability to observe details. Without these skills, the text becomes unclear, monotonous, and uncommunicative. Therefore, repeated practice focusing on vocabulary, grammar, and observation techniques is very important to improve descriptive writing skills. It can be seen in some aspects of writing descriptive text such as the mistake' in the using Punctuation, grammar, conjunction, and tenses. Punctuation marks are symbols that have nothing to do with sounds, words, or phrases in a language. Punctuation plays a role in showing the structure of writing, intonation, and pauses in reading. Grammatical errors refer to procedures or rules regarding word structure to form a perfect sentence. Then, Conjunctions, are a form of task words that in a sentence have the function of connecting, while tenses are used to express an event or incident in detail and based on information at a certain time in the past, present, and future Bloor (Wibowo et al., 2023).

Grammatical errors are often made by the student in writing descriptive text. Grammar means a set of structural rules that regulate the composition of clauses, phrases, and words in a language. Grammar has an important role to write a sentence so it is should coherent and understandable. There were still many students who still make mistakes in writing a text due to a lack of understanding regarding grammar and other mistakes. It means, the grammatical error still made in writing an English text.

METHOD

Sugiyono, (2020), explain there are four types of data collection techniques: observation, interviews, documentation, and triangulation (a combination of observation, interviews, and documentation). Collecting data in qualitative research requires gathering various forms of information and spending considerable time in the natural environment.

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design, focusing on specific events, activities, processes, and groups of individuals (Atashian & Al-Bahri, 2018). The research was conducted at SMAN 1 Lewolema, Lewolema District, East Flores Regency, with the aim of analysing grammatical errors made by eleventh-grade students in writing descriptive texts. The sample consisted of 18 eleventh-grade students. The research design used was qualitative descriptive, chosen to provide a detailed description and analysis of students' grammatical errors without manipulating variables. This design allows the researcher to interpret data based on natural classroom contexts and student outputs. The instruments applied in this study included: a) Observation sheets: to record students' writing activities and classroom behaviour, b) Interview guides: to collect information from teachers and students regarding difficulties in writing descriptive texts, c) Documentation: students' written works were collected and analysed to identify grammatical errors.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Types of Students' Grammatical Errors in Writing Descriptive Text

Grammatical errors refer to mistakes or inaccuracies in the use of grammar rules in writing or speaking. These errors can occur in various forms, such as incorrect verb tense, subject-verb agreement, punctuation word order, spelling, or misuse of pronouns. In this research, the researchers found several types of grammatical errors that students make in writing descriptive text. The error including omission, edition, misordering and selection.

Tabel 1. Type of Grammtical errors make by student

NO	Student	Type of Grammatical Errors			
1	Student 1	Ommision	edition	missordering	Selection
2	Student 2	3	3	1	2
3	Student 3	4	2	-	1
4	Student 4	2	3	-	2
5	Student 5	4	2	-	2
6	Student 6	5	4	-	1
7	Student 7	3	5	2	2
8	Student 8	4	4	-	2

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9	Student 9	3	5	-	1
10	Student 10	3	5	-	2
11	Student 11	4	4	2	2
12	Student 12	5	5	-	1
13	Student 13	5	4	-	2
14	Student 14	4	5	3	-
15	Student 15	3	3	-	2
16	Student 16	4	5	2	-
17	Student 17	3	4	2	4
18	Student 18	5	3	-	4
ZUM		67	66	11	24

In the research, founded that there are several types of grammar errors are made by students make writing descriptive text. There were 67 omission errors (39,8%), 66 addition errors (39,28), 24 selection errors (14,28), and 11 misordering errors (6,54). It means that, in writing descriptive texts, students make more grammatical errors in omission and addition category, which involve grammar elements such as sentence pattern., tenses, pronoun, preposition, and punctuation. Students have not correctly understood the use of sentence patterns in sentences, the accuracy of using tense forms, the accuracy of using pronouns, prepositions, and punctuation correctly in writing descriptive sentences.

The Causes of Students' Grammatical Errors in Writing Descriptive Text

Based on the results of the research, the causes of students' grammatical errors in writing descriptive texts are the influence of their mother tongue, limited vocabulary, lack of understanding of sentence structure, and difficulties in using **tenses** correctly. Students' regional language or first language (L1), which they use in daily communication, has sentence structures that differ from English. As a result, when writing in English, students often transfer sentence patterns from L1 into L2 (English). *Example:* If the native language does not have a tense system, students tend to omit or misuse tense forms in English. therefore vocabulary makes it difficult for students to choose the right words to describe objects or situations. Consequently, their writing becomes monotonous, lacks detail, and fails to express emotions or imagination effectively. *Example:* Students repeatedly use simple words such as "big" or "good," instead of more varied expressions like "enormous," "excellent," or "beautiful." Hence, Lack of Understanding of Sentence Structure Students have not yet mastered formal sentence patterns in English. This leads to sentences that are disorganized, unclear, and grammatically incorrect. Due to the influence of their mother tongue and limited vocabulary, students often make mistakes in selecting the appropriate verb tense. *Example:* They may use the present tense to narrate events that should be expressed in the past tense.

In summary, students' grammatical errors are not random but stem from deeper linguistic challenges: interference from their first language, insufficient vocabulary, weak understanding of sentence structure, and inaccurate use of tenses. Addressing these issues requires targeted grammar instruction, systematic vocabulary development, and consistent practice in English writing.

The Common type of grammatical Error made by the Student in Writing Descriptive Text

Based on the student worksheets that was analyzed, the researcher found five types of errors. The types of errors that students made most often were omissions and additions. This happens because they often communicate using their first language or mother tongue and also have limited vocabulary.

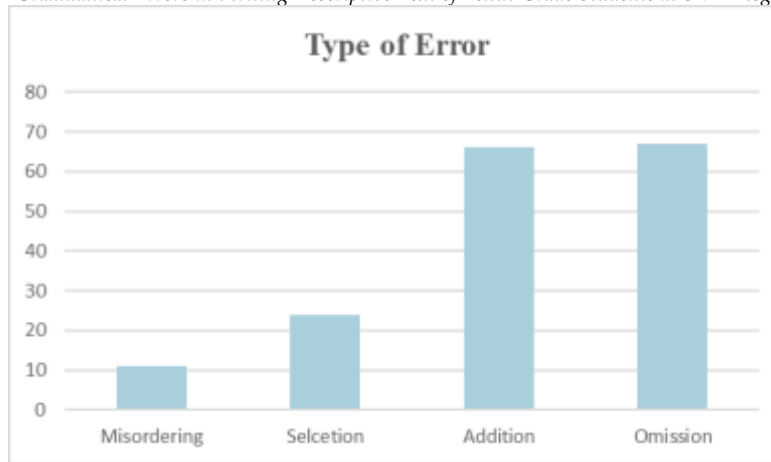


Figure 1. Type of Error

From the diagram above, the vertical axis represents the number of errors, while the horizontal axis shows the types of errors made by students. The data indicate that the highest number of errors occurred in the omission category, with a total of 67 errors (39,8%). The second highest was addition, with 66 errors, followed by selection with 24 errors (14.28%). Meanwhile, the lowest number of errors was misordering, with a total of 11 errors.

In conclusion, omission and addition are the most frequent grammatical errors made by students in writing descriptive texts. The elements most often affected are sentence patterns and tenses. Students are not precise in applying sentence patterns to describe an object and are inaccurate in using tense forms in sentences. This issue is compounded by the fact that students often rely on their local language when interacting with peers in the school environment and rarely practice speaking in English. As a result, their vocabulary is limited, making it difficult for them to construct sentences to describe objects effectively

Discussion

Types of Students' Grammatical Errors in Writing Descriptive Text

In writing descriptive texts, the first language (mother tongue) and vocabulary deficiencies become common causes of errors. The following is a description of the reasons why : 1) Students using regional language in daily conversation. This cause difficulties in using the formal language required in descriptive text; 2) Students' limited ability to understand and apply formal grammar. They may not be familiar with correct grammatical rules in the context of descriptive writing; 3) Lack of Understanding of Sentence Structure: Students have difficulty constructing clear and well-structured sentences in written language. This can result in difficulties in expressing ideas appropriately and in an organized manner; 4) Scarcity of Word Choice: Limited vocabulary can hinder a student's ability to convey information clearly and variedly. The students using common words that do not enrich the description; 5) Inability to Describe in Detail: A lack of vocabulary can hinder a student's ability to describe objects or situations in detail. They may have difficulty finding the right words to describe it accurately and ; 3) Limited Expression of Emotions and Imagination: Limited vocabulary can also limit students' ability to express emotions and imagination in descriptive texts (Nurfidoh & Kareviati, 2021). The causes of students' grammatical errors in writing descriptive texts are closely linked to both mother tongue interference and vocabulary limitations. The frequent use of regional languages in daily communication makes it difficult for students to shift into the formal structures required in English descriptive writing. In addition, their limited understanding of grammar and sentence structure leads to unclear and disorganized expression of ideas.

A lack of vocabulary further limits students' ability to vary word choice, describe objects or situations in detail, and express emotions or imagination effectively. As a result, their writing often appears monotonous, less engaging, and unable to fully convey meaning. Overall, these findings highlight that grammatical errors are not merely isolated mistakes but

stem from deeper linguistic and cognitive challenges. Addressing these issues requires targeted grammar instruction, systematic vocabulary development, and teaching strategies that support students in transitioning from native language patterns to accurate English usage

The Causes of Students' Grammatical Errors in Writing Descriptive Text

The causes of grammatical errors in writing descriptive texts vary and involve several factors. Some common causes that researchers found based on interviews include: 1) Judging from the students' writing, it can be concluded that Influence: Mother tongue which has a different sentence structure to English can influence the way students construct sentences in their writing (Wang et al., 2021). If the sentence structures in the native language and English are different, students may tend to use sentence structures typical of their native language; 2) Supported by the results of interviews with students saying that Limited comprehension in writing can have a variety of significant impacts on a person's ability to convey ideas and information clearly and effectively (Adas & Bakir, 2013). Several influences that may arise due to limited understanding in writing: a) When understanding is limited, a person may have difficulty expressing ideas and thoughts precisely and clearly. This can result in writing that is less coherent and less able to convey meaning effectively; b) Lack of Word Variation Limited vocabulary often causes crooked words in writing. This can make the writing feel monotonous and less interesting for readers (Anjayani & Hum, 2016).

The analysis of students' grammatical errors in writing descriptive texts indicates that these mistakes are primarily influenced by two major factors: mother tongue interference and limited comprehension in writing. The structural differences between the students' native language and English often lead to incorrect sentence construction, while insufficient understanding of writing conventions reduces their ability to express ideas clearly and coherently. In addition, a limited vocabulary restricts word choice, resulting in monotonous and less engaging texts.

These findings highlight that grammatical errors are not merely technical mistakes but are deeply connected to students' linguistic background and their level of proficiency in English. Therefore, improving students' writing skills requires targeted interventions in both grammar instruction and vocabulary development, alongside strategies that help them overcome the influence of their first language (Anglistika, 2020; Bryant et al., 2023; Isma et al., 2023).

The Common type of grammatical Error made by the Student in Writing Descriptive Text

The analysis of student worksheets revealed five types of grammatical errors: omission, addition, selection, misordering, and other minor variations. Among these, omission (67 errors) and addition (66 errors) were the most frequent, while misordering (11 errors) was the least common. This distribution highlights that students struggle most with either leaving out necessary elements or inserting unnecessary ones in their sentences. These errors suggest that students often fail to apply grammatical markers correctly or overuse them. Such mistakes are strongly influenced by their reliance on the mother tongue, which has different sentence structures compared to English. The most problematic elements were sentence patterns and tenses. Students were not precise in constructing descriptive sentences and often misapplied verb forms, leading to inaccurate descriptions.

The findings indicate that students' frequent use of local language in daily communication contributes to their difficulty in switching to formal English structures (Irwan et al., 2020; Wotring et al., 2021). Because they rarely practice English in their school environment, their vocabulary remains limited. This lack of lexical resources makes it challenging to construct clear, detailed, and grammatically accurate sentences.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research show that students at SMAN 1 Lewolema frequently make grammatical errors in writing descriptive texts, with omission and addition being the most dominant types, followed by selection and misordering. These errors are strongly linked to

difficulties in applying sentence patterns and tenses accurately. The causes of these errors are primarily rooted in mother tongue interference and limited vocabulary. Students' reliance on regional language in daily communication makes it challenging to shift into formal English structures, while insufficient vocabulary restricts their ability to vary word choice, describe objects in detail, and express emotions or imagination effectively. Overall, the errors identified are not random but reflect predictable patterns explained by interlanguage theory and error analysis. This highlights the need for targeted grammar instruction, systematic vocabulary development, and teaching strategies that encourage students to practice English more actively in their school environment. By addressing these areas, students can gradually move toward greater accuracy and fluency in writing descriptive texts.

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