

# **Error Analysis in Descriptive Text of Junior High School Students in order to find out the Best Teaching Material**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated common English language errors made by eighth grade students of SMPN3 Kroya, Cilacap. The study examined errors in a corpus of 34 descriptive texts by 34 students. The errors were identified and classified into six categories. The method of the study is descriptive quantitative method through analyzing the errors. The aim of the study is to identify the common errors made by students in writing descriptive text so the teacher and the material developer can be wiser and carefully in choosing the material. The students given the theme about my pet and asked to write one descriptive text, then their results were analyzed. Based on the result, the four most common errors committed by the participants were tenses, word order, articles and spelling. This study is important for the educators, the teacher and the material developer whose should realize the kind of errors made. They can be wiser in teaching or developing the materials for the students. For the students, they knew their errors and their difficulty in writing.

*Keywords: Error analysis, Descriptive text, writing*

## **Introduction**

English as an international language has an important role for communication in the world. English is the foreign language in Indonesia which is taught in Junior and Senior High Schools. In addition in the recent years, many elementary school students have English classes. When learning the language, it is natural that students face the difficulties caused by lacking of knowledge about vocabulary and grammar. However, they are expected to master the four language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The main goal of learning English language is to use in spoken and written communication.

The writing skill is important because it can prove the students' academic performances but it cannot be learned shortly. According to Allan and Vallete (1977), writing skill requires more capabilities than other language skills and need special preparation such as understand the spelling and punctuation, the sentence structures, the vocabulary, and the paragraph development. On

contrary, Olson, et al (1982: 4) mentioned that writing process is easier than speaking process because people who write something have time to think the idea and find out the right words then expressed it into writing. It means that the students have time to prepare their writing carefully and wisely in choosing the vocabulary, topic or sentences.

Although it is easier than speaking but the facts show that writing is more difficult than speaking since the complicated grammar rules and different vocabularies. Mistakes and errors are unavoidable in the learning process of English as a foreign language for Indonesian learners. One thing that usually inhibits learners to learn a foreign language appropriately and effectively is the difference of the language system of the foreign language learned and their mother tongue. They usually borrow the patterns from their mother tongue or express the meaning using the vocabulary they have already known.

There are many rules in grammar that cannot be ignored, especially for the eight year students of junior high school. They are articles, parts of speech, sentence pattern, tense, etc. Although grammar does not belong to skill in English like reading, speaking, listening and writing, grammar supports those skills. There is no doubt that knowledge, implicit or explicit of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of language.

Through descriptive text, the writer would like to find out the students' learning problems using articles, auxiliary verbs, nouns, and prepositions and to know the students' achievement and difficulties in writing descriptive text. Callaghan (1988: 138) said that "a descriptive writing creates a clear and vivid impression of person, place, or thing." Therefore writing the descriptive text should be clear, vivid, and concrete. If a student has made a mistake in using article, auxiliary verbs, noun and preposition, it means that he/she is not competent yet in making his/her text. It causes the reader confused and difficult to understand what the writer means. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the students' error in writing the descriptive text in order to find out the best teaching material.

## **Literature Review**

## **Error Definition**

Error is defined as an act involving an unintentional deviation from truth or accuracy. It is different from mistake, which defined as to misunderstand the meaning or intention. Error is more unintentional than mistake, which can be made on purpose.

Dullay (1982: 138) defines errors as the flawed side of learner speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that delicate from some selected norm of mature language performance. It means that there is something wrong in norms of language performance; make some errors is so unavoidable in learning process. Besides, making error is one part of learning and no one can learn without make some error.

Meanwhile, Brown (2000: 170) defines errors reflect the interlanguage competence of the learner as a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker. Learner of language has different competences of level in learning English and automatically that has involved different cause of error. It means that errors are very natural and unavoidable in learning process; maybe it is caused by the lack of knowledge about the target language and also reflects learners' interlanguage competence.

Brown (2000: 224) says that the cause of errors can be divided into 2 categories, namely: (a) Inter-lingualtransfer that is error influenced by the learner's mother tongueand (b) Intra-lingualtransfer that are cause of errors influenced by the complicated system of the target language itself.

Richards (1984: 174) says that the intra-lingualtransfer are divided into 4 terms, namely: (a) Over-generalization, (b) Ignorance of rule restriction, (c) Incomplete application of rules, and (d) False Concepts Hypothesized. In this research, the writer only analyze the intra-lingualtransfer because most of errors found made by the students were cause of errors resulting from complicated system of the target language itself.

## **Error Analysis**

ErrorAnalysisinlanguageteachingand learningisthestudyof theunacceptableformsproducedby someonelearninga language, especially a foreign

language. According to James (2001), Error Analysis refers to “the study of linguistic ignorance, the investigation of what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance”. Other research studies, for example, Kutz, Groden, and Zamel (1993); Carson (2001), suggest different reasons why errors occur. First of all, learners may translate from L1, or they may try out what they assume is a legitimate structure of the target language. Secondly, they also tend to over-generalize the rules for stylistic features when acquiring new discourse structures. In addition, learners are often unsure of what they want to express, which would cause them to make mistakes in any language. So, we can conclude that the Error Analysis (EA) is one of the analyses used to identify, describe and explain the errors made by the learners through doing set of procedures.

According to Corder (1967); Ellis, R (2008), error analysis has two objects: one theoretical and another applied. The theoretical object is to understand what and how a learner learns when he studies second language (L2). The applied object is to enable the learner to learn more efficiently by using the knowledge of his dialect for pedagogical purposes. At the same time, the investigation of errors can serve two purposes, diagnostic and prognostic. The researcher is interested in error analysis because it can give many advantages for both students and teachers. It provides information to the teachers on students' errors about what error they commonly made.

According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982); Ellis, R (2008), there are four categories of errors. They are:

a) Omission

Omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well – formed phrases or sentence. Any morpheme or word in a sentence is a potential candidate for omission. However, between content words and function words, the letters are more frequently omitted by language learners.

Examples:

1. He sitting \*) He is sitting.
2. English use as second language \*) English is used as second language.

#### b) Addition

Addition errors are opposite of omission. They are characterized by the presence of an item, which does not appear in a well-formed utterance. Examples:

1. She is eats banana \*) She eats banana.
2. It is on a picture of elephant \*) It is a picture of elephant

#### c) Misformation

Misformation errors are characterized by the use of the wrong form or morpheme of structure. While in omission error, the item is not supplied at all. In the misformation errors the learner supplies something, although it is incorrect.

Examples:

1. Ali eat a pineapple \*) Ali eats a pineapple
2. It is the tiger\*) It is a tiger.

#### d) Misrodering

It is characterized by the incorrect placement of one or more elements in a phrase or sentence. The errors may be made by L1 and L2 learners when they have acquired certain simple patterns.

Examples:

1. Elephant has a nose long\*) Elephant has a long nose.
2. Zebra the colors is black and white\*)

Zebra's color is black and white.

### **Writing Descriptive**

According to Hyland (2004: 7), writing is seen as skill that is essentially learned, not taught, and teacher's role is non-directive, facilitating writing through on encouraging and cooperative environment with minimal interference. Another definition comes from Olshtain in Celce-Murcia (2001: 207) defines writing as an act of communication which takes place between the writer and the reader via the text in an interactive process. It can be concluded that writing is act of forming or combining letter from the spoken form into the written form in communication that essentially learned.

In writing thedescriptivestudents shouldavoidinmaking theerrors. McMurrey(1983)notes thatdescriptionisawaytoenablethereadertovisualize

a person, place, or things with some appropriate senses included. Henry (2008) mentions that through descriptive text, the students can use and explore their sensory details like smell, sound, sight, taste, and texture to create vivid images in the reader's mind. When the students write the descriptive text, they use more specific words regarding the senses.

### **Research Methods**

The method used in this study is descriptive analysis. The study was conducted in SMPN3 Kroya. There are 34 students consist of 20 female and 14 male students who participated in the study. They have learned English language for 3-4 years. The analysis of written essays will be derived from Corder's (1967) method on error analysis. This method has three steps: (1) collection of sample errors, (2) identification of errors and (3) description of errors. In describing the errors, the researcher used the errors categories by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982); Ellis, R. (2008). All of participants were required to write one paragraph consists of 50-100 words in one hour with topic given that is my pet. The students did not realize that their writings are going to be under investigation.

### **Findings and Discussion**

In this section, the researcher presents and discusses the findings of the study. First, the errors made by the students are classified; second, the common errors are identified with illustrative examples; and finally, these errors made by the learners are corrected by examples. The researcher used the errors categories by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) to categorize the error made by the students. Dulay (1982) classified the error into four: (1) omissions, (2) additions, (3) misformations and (4) misorderings. On the other hand, the students also made error in misspelling and word choice. The misspelling means the students made mistakes in spelling some English words in written. While for word choice means the students made mistakes in choosing the words in some sentences, so it has meaningless. Table 1 shows the types, numbers and percentages of errors committed by the participants in their written work.

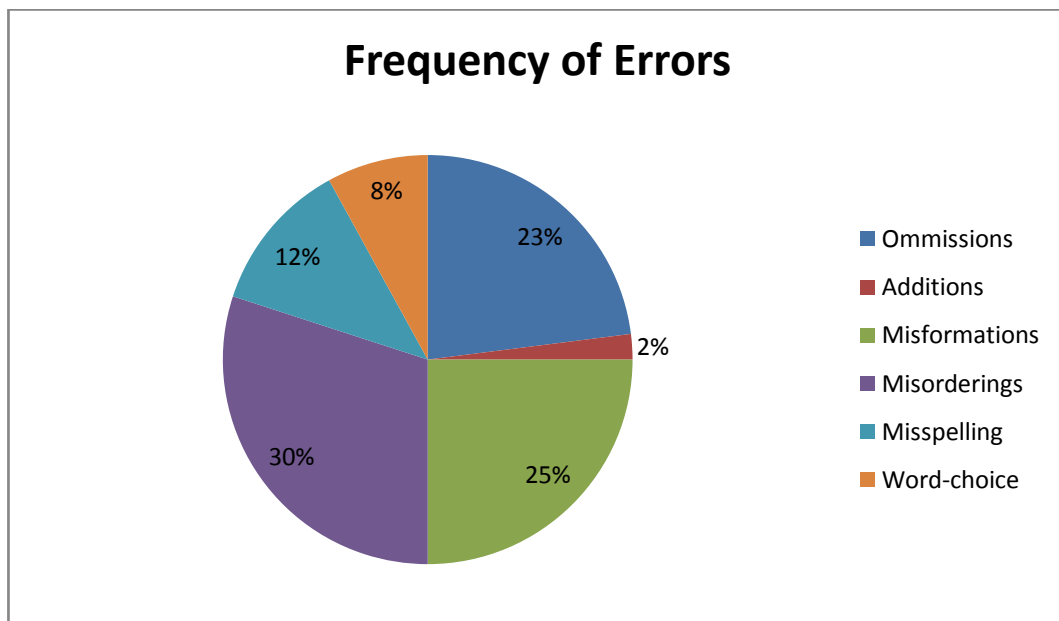


Figure 1.1 Errors Analysis Results of Students in SMPN 3 Kroya

The explanation of each major type of errors and the examples of errors discovered are elaborated as follows:

### 1. Omissions

Dullay et al. (1982) mentioned that omissions are the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. This error is divided into two parts.

Those are omission of content morpheme and omission of grammatical morpheme. The omission of content morpheme is the absence of the morpheme which carries the burden of the meaning, while the omission of grammatical morpheme is the absence of the morpheme which plays a minor role in conveying the meaning of the sentence. Based on the research, it showed that the students omit the content morpheme. Usually the students omit the subject or the verb of the sentence. The students committed 30 errors in omissions or 23% of all of the errors made by the students. The examples of the errors are mentioned as follows.

Example:

No	Omission of the morpheme	Errors
1.	Subject	*has red and yellow skin. *likes to eat fruit. *has very long tail.

2.	Verb	*It very funny and cute. *It so cute. *It blue and red fur.
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a. The subject

The students are usually omitting the subject of the sentence. The students usually did not write the subject (I or it) to represent the main actor of the sentence. The sentence in the examples should be written; it has red and yellow skin; it likes to eat fruit and it has a very long tail.

b. The verb

The students are also usually omitting the verb of the sentence. The students usually omit the verb of the sentence, so it makes the sentence meaningless. The sentence in the examples should be written; it is very funny and cute, it is so cute and it has blue and red fur.

## 2. Additions

Dullay et al (1982) stated that additions are the presence of an item that must not appear in well-formed utterance. The students added the verb to be to a present simple sentence because they probably assumed that the verb to be has to be in all the sentences. As outlined earlier, addition is considered to be the presence of an item that should not appear in a well-formed utterance. This error was unconsciously made, because her learning process has just started and she had been working out how to organize the elements that comprise L2. The students committed 3 errors or 2% of all errors committed by the students in writing the descriptive text. The example of additions errors as follows:

No	Additions	Errors	Correction
1.	Verb	It is very likes honey. It is like eat fish	It likes honey very much. It likes to eat fish.

## 3. Misformations

Dullay et al (1982) said that misformations are the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. The students used incorrect forms in plural form like 'wing' instead of 'wings', 'has' instead of 'have' and 'likes' instead of 'like'. These errors are probably the result of the lack of practicing the plural form of English



vocabulary. On the other hand, we should also remember that misinformation is considered to be the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. The other misinformation is committing by the students in the using of the verb. Instead of sing, the students write singing in their text. It shows that the students need more exposure in practicing the English. The students committed 33 errors in omissions or 25% of all of the errors made by the students. The examples of the errors present as follows.

No	Misinformations	Errors	Correction
1.	Plural and singular	*It has two wing. *It has two eyes. *It likes swimming.	It has a pair of wings. It has two eyes It likes swimming
2	Verb	*The bird always singing in the morning.	The bird always sing in the morning.

#### 4. Misorderings

According to Dullay et al (1982) misorderings are the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. The students make misordering errors in writing the sentence in the text. They written 'It has two wings very beautiful', 'It has body big' and 'it also has a tail very long'. They should write correctly the sentences like in the correction column. The order made by the students showed that it is influenced by the L1 pattern language. However, it also showed that the students need more exposure in learning the language. The students committed 38 errors in omissions or 30% of all of the errors made by the students. The samples of the errors are present as follow.

No	Misorderings	Errors	Correction
1.	Adverb	*It has two wings very beautiful. *It has body big. *It also has a tail very long.	It has two very beautiful wings. It has big body. It also has a very long tail.

## 5. Misspelling

The students were also committed in spelling the words. Based on the research, the errors are committed because of the pronunciation and the spellings are different. They write 'ferry' instead of 'very' and 'swiming' instead of 'swimming'. These errors showed that the students lack of language exposure in writing the words in English since the pronunciation and the spelling in English are different. The students committed 15 errors in omissions or 12% of all of the errors made by the students. The samples are shown as follow.

No	Spelling	Errors	Correction
1.	Adverb	*It is ferry big.	It is very big.
2.	Verb	*It likes swiming.	It likes swimming.

## 6. Word-Choice

In addition, the students commit mistakes in choosing the word taken from the dictionary. These errors are the result of the lack of English vocabulary, and the misinterpretation of the meanings in the dictionary. The students used 'hair' instead of 'fur' for bird and 'scale' instead of the 'tail'. The students should be taught that not every word in the dictionary which has same meanings can be used. The students committed 11 errors in omissions or 8% of all of the errors made by the students. The examples of the errors present as follow.

No	Word choice	Errors	Correction
1.	Noun	*The bird has soft hair. *It has two crest and scale.	The bird has soft fur. It has two fish fins and tail.

Those errors showed that the students need more exposure in learning language and the teacher can understand the difficulties faced by the students.

## Conclusion

This study has given an account of the main errors made by a group of Eighth Grade Students especially in SMPN 3 Kroya in the written work. Based on the discussion of the findings and the examples given, it could be concluded that the students in this study committed six common errors; omissions, additions, misformations, misorderings, misspelling and word choice. While, the most common errors are made by the students is misorderings. It goes without saying

that most of the students' errors can be due to L1 transfer. The results of the study have given insight into what types of errors are made by the students and their frequency of occurrence. However, the results cannot be generalized as errors made by all of the Eighth Grade students in Junior High School.

Although much work remains to be done in the area of error correction in L2 writing, this study is expected to contribute to the Indonesian teachers, learners and material developers to improve the standard of English language proficiency in Indonesian schools. By knowing the errors, the teachers and the material developers are expected to create the materials which is minimize the students' errors. The research suggests there will be further researches on the error analysis in order to identify the reasons of the students in making errors. Another research can be done to identify what the students can do through contrastive analysis to give them a real picture of students' comprehension and skills. The last, but not least further investigation into Interlingua and intralingua errors of writers of other language is strongly recommended.

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