

## **Error analysis on students' writing of descriptive text of the tenth-grade students at MA DDI Tosale**

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### **Abstract**

*English language learners often make mistakes in terms of linguistic features when writing descriptive paragraphs. In this study, the researcher focuses on the examination of grammar usage. The primary objective of this study was to identify the writing errors made by students when composing descriptive texts and determine the most prevalent error category according to the surface strategy taxonomy. The researcher employed a quantitative descriptive approach for this investigation. The study's target population comprised tenth-grade students at MA DDI Tosale. The research sample was selected using a complete sampling technique and included 30 students from both the tenth-grade IPA and IPS classes. The data analysis revealed that students made various types of errors, including omissions, additions, misordering, and misformations, as classified under the surface strategy taxonomy. Data collection was carried out through a descriptive text writing test. The most frequent error category identified was misformation, with a total of 131 instances, while the least frequent error category was misordering, with only 48 occurrences. In summary, based on the study's findings, it can be deduced that misformation errors were the most common, while misordering errors were the least common among the students' writing errors in descriptive texts.*

**Keywords:** *Error analysis, writing, descriptive text*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is one of the important skills that must be learned because it is used to communicate. Students must be able to communicate not only orally but also in writing. Writing expresses who we are, even after our lifetime. It makes our knowledge, aspirations, and work for the future visible to others. According to Ramli (2013), writing is a way to express feelings, ideas, arguments, willingness, and thoughts in the form of words in a sentence. It means that students should be able to express their ideas in writing as a result of their comprehension of the text they read. Writing is an important skill to teach students. There are several types of writing texts that should be mastered. One of them is descriptive text. Descriptive text is a kind of text that is easy enough to comprehend for the students because they have learned descriptive text from junior high school to senior high school. In general, descriptive text is a kind of text in which a writer



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tries to picture what a particular object looks like. Siahaan & Shinoda (2008) stated that description is written English text in which the writer describes an object. In this text, the object can be concrete or abstract. It can be a person, an animal, a tree, a house, or camping. It can be about any topic.

Moreover, students in high school are expected to be able to write in any form based on the curriculum 2013, especially descriptive paragraphs. MA DDI Tosale is one of the schools that applies the 2013 curriculum. Based on the researcher's observation in that school, some students at MA DDI Tosale often make errors in terms of linguistic features when writing descriptive text. The results of interviews with English teacher showed that most students in grades ten of MA DDI Tosale have difficulty writing. They face this difficulty because they rarely write English texts and do not know vocabulary and grammar. The purpose of learning English is to use it orally and in writing, so they have to master language skills such as reading, speaking, listening, and writing. However, many students face writing problems. They are confused to use correct grammar. When they write in English, they often ignore incorrect grammar. They often make mistakes in English texts, especially in descriptive texts. Writing English for Indonesian learners is challenging since it is different from Indonesian structure. As a result, learning English is different from learning Indonesian. Therefore, students in learning English may make several errors in their writing. Some students get confused about how to write well, for instance, when they write a sentence black shirt they frequently write Black shirt. This error happens because the students translate the Indonesian language to English directly. In other words, the students are influenced by Indonesian language. Spelling is another example of an error. For example, when the students write the word discuss, they frequently write wrong which is discus. These are some examples of students' writing errors in learning English. That is why most students prefer to learn speaking rather than writing. Based on the pre-observation in MA DDI Tosale, the researcher asked the students and got the answer writing is rather difficult than speaking, reading, and listening. Some problems that happen in students' English writing are caused by differences in English and Indonesian structure, also they do not understand how to write well. The researcher conducted this research by analyzing the students' errors in writing a descriptive text of MA DDI Tosale. This research was conducted to find out the students' errors, the most frequent errors, and the sources of errors in writing descriptive text made by the students.

### **Error analysis**

Error analysis is a process that identifies, classifies, interprets, or describes errors made by a person while speaking or writing to obtain information on common problems experienced by him or her while speaking or writing English sentences. Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the process of identifying, and describing the learners' errors in target language learning (Ristiyani, 2011). The classification of error applies surface strategy taxonomy, including omission, addition, misformation, and misordering (Dulay, 1982). Research results indicate that there are many students find it challenging to write descriptive text (Choironi, 2016; Afifuddin, 2016; Syahputri, 2018;). Choironi (2016) revealed that students made errors in writing descriptive text misformation which consists of misformation, misordering, addition, and omission. They do not have enough practice and exposure from their teachers in writing English texts, and they do not have enough knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, which leads to these mistakes. Afifuddin (2016) revealed that all error types investigated contain some errors. They are verb tense, verb form, subject-verb agreement, plural, possessive inflection, definite article, indefinite article, word order, run-on, and fragment. Syahputri (2018) revealed that the result of the test showed

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that there were four types of errors in writing. They were omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The sources of errors found in students' writing text, were intralingual interference, interlingual interference, and carelessness. By analyzing the errors, the students will get the correct one and can master English well. Error analysis provides benefits for teachers as well as students. Error analysis is essential for students so that they can identify which areas of grammar are most challenging for them, become aware of the errors they have made, discover the root cause of the mistakes, and learn from them to avoid repeating them in the future and to perfect their language skills. Errors can be used as markers for teachers to track their student's progress toward the goal. Sattayatham & Ratanapinyowong (2008), say that errors can be accepted as a kind of learning activity the learner takes. Mostly, the students made errors because they did not know what was correct. According to Brown (2007), there are four sources of error: interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, the context of learning, and communication strategies. The four sources of error come from students and teachers. Sources of error made the researcher analyze students' errors. Most of the sources came from students themselves like negative mother tongue and incorrect generalization target languages. Still, the teacher also has an important role for students in learning a second language in content and communication learning strategies. The procedure of error analysis is a step to analyze whether the error will be clear and correct. Ellis (1999) stated that there are four steps in the procedure of error analysis. These are collecting a learner language sample, and identifying, explaining, and evaluating errors. There is a strategy used to describe the errors. That is surface strategy taxonomy. It is used to show the ways surface structures are altered. As cited in Pohan (2018), Azar explains the types of errors into thirteen kinds which are singular-plural word form, word choice, verb tense, add or omit a word, word order, incomplete sentence, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, article, meaning not clear, and run-on sentence.

### **Types of writing texts**

Writing is the most difficult skill to master. Harmer (2004:86) stated that writing is a process in which what we write is often heavily influenced by the constraints of genres, and then these elements have to be present in the teaching and learning process. It means that writing is a process that influences writing genres, so students must pay attention to learning the writing process. Writing is a skill to communicate by transferring ideas, knowledge, and information into written form. Through writing, students can generate, organize, and translate their ideas and also pay attention to the rules of writing that can influence their writing genres. In writing, we have to produce words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs at the same time when we write based on our ideas, experiences, and observations and when we read some books. Text is one of the communicative acts carried out by the sender in writing. According to Isnaini (2014:1), text types are classes of text that share certain structural and functional elements and have developed established patterns with widespread usage. Anderson (2003) stated that factual texts educate the reader about a specific subject. They concentrate on facts and provide helpful information. Descriptive text is a kind of factual text. Furthermore, the researcher chose descriptive text because it is close to students' daily activities and about the personal experiences of the students. A descriptive text describes the characteristics of a person or thing. Brian (2012) stated that description is painting a picture with the word. When using the word, it can paint more than what it sees, but also what it feels, hears, smells, and tastes. The idea of writing is to make the particular things described seem real to readers' imagination. It means descriptive writing describing particular things like painting a picture by the idea that makes the word.

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Meanwhile, Cavanagh (1998) stated that description focuses attention on the characteristic features of a particular thing. She also stated that a description of a particular thing can occur as stand-alone text which is often part of longer text such as the description of a character or setting in a story. It seems that descriptive focuses on the attention characteristics and things that will occur as stand-alone text while describing the character or even setting in a story. Siahaan & Shinoda (2008) stated that description is written English text in which the writer describes an object. In this text, the object can be concrete or abstract. It can be a person, an animal, a tree, a house, or camping. It can be about any topic. It means the writers describe some object like a concrete object or abstract object, depending on the topic. According to Rinastuty (2014), descriptive text is a text that describes a person, thing, place, and certain condition in particular. This research was conducted to determine the errors that the students committed while writing descriptive text, which errors were the most frequently committed by students, and why the students committed the errors. The structure of a descriptive text cannot be separated from the generic structure and language features. In a generic structure, there are the identification and description. Identification is identifying the introduction subject or object that is described in the opening paragraph and the description is describing more detail about the subject or object. The language feature is the identifying and describing process to explain the subject or object in a supporting paragraph by using a noun, figurative language, adjective, linking verb, action verb, and the use of simple present tense.

## **METHOD**

### **Design of the study**

This research applied a descriptive quantitative design. Sugiyono (2012) stated that the quantitative descriptive research method seeks to describe phenomena, occurrences, symptoms, or events in a factual, methodical, and correct manner. Total sampling was applied in this research. Total sampling is the technique of taking a sample without concern for the level subject, but with a particular purpose in view (Arikunto, 2010). The study's target population comprised tenth-grade students at MA DDI Tosale. The research sample was selected using a total sampling technique and included 30 students from both the tenth-grade IPA and IPS classes.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The researcher used the writing test and analyzed the data from this research by using the surface strategy taxonomy techniques based on Dulay's theory to learn more about all kinds of errors that students make when writing descriptive texts. There are errors in omissions, additions, misformation, and misordering. The researcher used a questionnaire to identify the sources of students' writing errors. In addition, the researcher also used closed-ended questions in a questionnaire. Closed-ended questions have the advantage of being simple to handle, simple to answer, quick to analyze, and generally inexpensive to evaluate. This implies that the response may not give a completely developed database with rich detail, as is common in quantitative descriptive research. The researcher used descriptive quantitative research methods that were delivered in the form of analysis to interpret quantitative data results. Furthermore, the data was calculated and arranged to find what are the errors and the most frequent errors made by the students in a percentage table.

## Results and Discussion

MA DDI Tosale students in grade ten made four types of errors in writing descriptive text. Dulay's theory of Surface Strategies Taxonomy with the four types of errors. Misformation, misordering, addition, and omission are the types of errors that occurred. Figure 1 shows the consequences of the errors made.

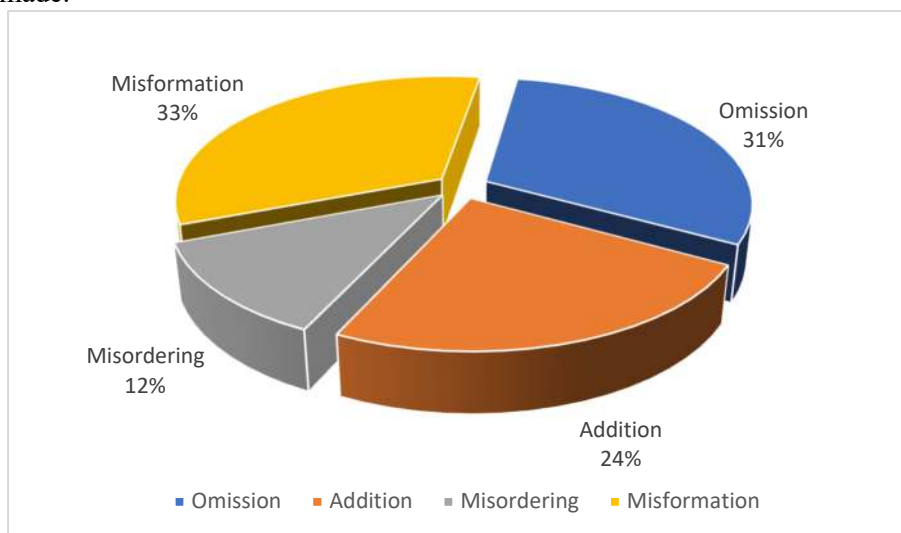


Figure 1. Total of Errors

The data analysis results, shown in Figure 4.1, reveal that there are 33% errors in misformation, 31% errors in omission, 12% errors in misordering, and 24% errors in addition. Misformation errors are the most common type of error made by students. The following are descriptions of the errors made by students when writing descriptive text in each category.

### Types of errors

Errors of misformation are related to the unnecessary use of the relative pronoun, verb, participle adjective, and subject-verb agreement. The students tend to make misformation errors when writing descriptive text. There 30 students had errors in misformation, resulting in a total error of 131 or 33.33%. It happened because students could have difficulty choosing and forming adjectives and nouns into proper sentences. First, students frequently used inappropriate adjectives to modify a noun. For example, *very low cost of entry into Pusat Laut*. The word *low* is improper in modifying an admission fee in a sentence. It should be *very cheap cost of entry into Pusat Laut*. Moreover, the students tended to select the wrong word such as *the zoo is quite great*. It should be *the zoo is big enough*. Lestari (2020), showed the most students errors in misformation. The students apply the wrong morpheme or structure. For example, *His skin are white*. The finding in the researcher's research is similar to this word-choice error. The students did not choose the word correctly in the sentences. For example, *Sometimes his good at chemistry*. The correct sentence is *He is good at chemistry sometimes*. Another study conducted by Altameny (2019), showed that the students made many sentence and paragraph errors in writing English paragraphs. The most errors students were punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.



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The results of the data analysis revealed the students commit errors in omission. In this case, students miss some required elements. They omitted items that should appear in the sentence. First, the omission of nouns, the students omitted the necessary nouns in a sentence such as *Pusat Laut condition itself can be quiet and gromed*. It should be put noun that is modified by an adjective, and in the word *gromed*, that omitted the consonant /o/. That sentence should be like *Pusat Laut condition itself can be quite clean and groomed*. Moreover, the student also made the error in omission of spelling, for instance, *many gots in front of my yard*. They omitted the consonant /a/ for the word goats in this case. Those sentences should be like *many goats in front of my yard*. The error of omission was caused by carelessness. The error was made of wrong written phoneme omitted or mistyping. Following them is Royani & Sadiyah (2019). Most students made errors in verb agreement. The students made an error in the correlation between subject and verb. The students are still confused about plural or singular subject related to the verb. The students also used Indonesian language rules while writing English sentences.

The addition is a type of error that is characterized by the presence of an item that must not appear in a well-formed utterance. Errors committed in addition are related to adjectives and present tense. Cavanagh (1998) stated that adjectives and present tense are the language features of descriptive text. In this research, many students made errors in adding and selecting the wrong adjective in writing descriptive text. For example, *He is long*. They construct the wrong adjective *long* to describe their object. This adjective makes their sentence incorrect. It should be *He is tall*. In another sentence, *He is so very handsome* they add double adjectives in their sentence and make their text become e. It should be written *He is very handsome*. It is similar to Umar (2015) who found that the students made errors in addition, almost the appearance of addition error is the outcome of all faithful use of specific rules. Dulay in Yusuf (2015) stated that it is a phenomenon in which a certain aspect of language rules is added into a correct order in order words some elements are presented that should not presented. In a study conducted by Herawati (2019). The writer categorized some errors in addition, they are addition of to be, preposition, and article.

The least error in this research is misordering, which consists of 48 errors or 12.21%. It is because students were careless when writing the text. Thus, they made an error. For instance, *She has shoes white* the word *white* should not appear in the last sentence, it should appear after the word *has*. The sentence should be written *She has white shoes*. Dulay in Yusuf (2015) stated that misordering happens when there is a word or sentence in which order is incorrect place, the sentence can be right in presented elements but wrongly sequenced. The finding of this research is different from Yusuf (2015) who found that errors of misordering categories had a percentage of 24.6% errors made by the students.

While writing English texts, students can be affected by first-language interference in interlanguage transfer. Students remain affected by the first language when writing texts, according to Mohammed and Abdalhussein (2015). As a result, they make errors. Most of the errors in this study are closely related to students' negative transfer from their mother tongue to their target language. For instance, *He has hair brown*. This error was influenced by the use of the L1 structure. The correct sentence should be written *He has brown hair*. Furthermore, the students made errors because they copied the grammar from their mother tongue. Teachers should pay more attention to English structure because students make many errors, as well as explain the different types of errors in more extensive detail. Students should be paying attention to the negative transfer of their first language. Students should also exercise caution when completing assignments because carelessness might lead to errors, even if they comprehend the content of the passage.

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