

STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS AT SMK MUHAMMADIYAH KARANGANYAR PEKALONGAN

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Abstract

Writing is one of the four language skills which need to be mastered by students. However, writing in English is not simple since the students have to be able to write correct sentences in English. Generally speaking, even after learning English for several years, students still make grammatical errors in writing. This makes the writers interested in conducting a quantitative study in the form of error-analysis to analyze students' grammatical errors in writing English texts. More specifically, this error-analysis-study aims to analyze the types of grammatical errors commonly made by students at SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar Pekalongan in writing descriptive texts along with the causes of those errors. To get the data, the writers collected the descriptive texts written by the first grade students at SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar and analyzed them. The findings show that the students at SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar made various grammatical errors like omission, addition, misinformation and misordering. With the occurrence of these errors the writers offer suggestions for minimizing these errors.

Keywords – error analysis, writing, descriptive texts

Introduction

In Indonesia, foreign languages including English are taught to students. Since they are in elementary school, students have been acquiring knowledge of English. The four language skills that students need to master are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Writing and speaking are productive abilities, while listening and reading belong to receptive abilities. In the process of teaching and studying English, all skills must be improved. Writing abilities are important in the English language classrooms but it is quite challenging for students at all educational levels to acquire them.

In high schools, students are taught to write in five different sorts of texts throughout their first year. Those texts are recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, and news item. Generally, students are more familiar with descriptive texts. This is so as descriptive text is taught in junior high schools, senior high schools as well as universities. A descriptive text itself needs to be written by using correct grammar.

Using correct grammar may not always be easy for students. Many students still make

mistakes although they have learnt English for several years. Debata (2013:482) highlights that “one of the most crucial aspects of learning a new language is mastering grammar”. Similarly in English learning, grammar is regarded as one of the components which need to be mastered by the students.

By learning grammar, it is expected that the learners can write better but students continue making mistakes and errors in their compositions. Even when they write a descriptive text, a text which is simpler than the other types of texts being learnt, students make many errors. With this situation, the writers were interested to study the types of errors made by the students at one of the vocational high schools in Pekalongan Central Java Indonesia. Two research questions were proposed here: 1) *What are the most common types of grammatical errors made by SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar students in writing descriptive texts?* and 2) *What are the factors that can cause the grammatical errors made by SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar students in writing descriptive texts?* The writers

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believed that finding out the students' grammatical errors in writing is important so that the students can be helped to minimize those errors and indirectly improve the quality of their writings.

With the interests above, this study focused on students' error analysis. Error analysis was shown to be important by Richards et al. (1996). According to them, error analysis can be used to reveal the methods students employed to learn the language and the reasons behind the mistakes made by the students. There were two aims in this study, namely finding out the types of grammatical errors commonly made by students at SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar Pekalongan in writing descriptive texts and finding out the main factors that caused the grammatical errors made by SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar students when writing descriptive texts.

Several research relevant to the writers' present study are presented here to compare and contrast the previous studies and to minimize plagiarism in the present study. The first research was done by Emmaryana (2010) focusing on the grammatical errors made by state senior high school students when they were writing. The purpose of this research was to find, identify, and analyze grammatical errors made by students in their written texts and to discover the reasons why the students make mistakes in their writing. The similarity between the previous research and the current research is on the purpose of the research. However, the subjects of the study were different. The previous study focused on State Senior High School students while the current study focused on the vocational high school students.

The second research was done by Haryanto (2007) which tried to study students' grammatical errors when they wrote recount texts. To collect data, the previous research applied classroom observations since previous research tried

to analyze student errors and focused on finding out errors in grammar that students made when writing recount texts. The difference between Haryanto's research and this present research was on the types of the text used in the study. Haryanto's research used recount text while this present research focused on descriptive text.

The third research was done by Leman in 2015 entitled "common grammatical errors in students writing at MAN 1 Parepare". Even this research also aimed to find out the most common types of errors made by students, but the setting was different as it was done in the high school under the ministry of religious affairs.

The next research was done by Qamariah et.al (2020) which focused on revealing students' grammatical errors in writing English text in the second grades students of SMK-SMTI Banda Aceh. In this study, some stages were done to describe the errors that were discovered in the writing of the students: identifying the errors, classifying or categorizing the error types, and calculating the errors that the students had committed. The similarity between the previous research and the current research is on the objective, that is finding out students' grammatical errors while the difference is on the students' grade.

The other research was done by Fithriani (2020) which focused on researching students' grammatical errors in writing narrative texts. This study was conducted in the Madrasah Aliyah Laboratorium of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra Medan (MAL UIN SU). This research specifically focused on errors in narrative text writing, while the current research focused on errors in descriptive text writing.

Methodology

This research used quantitative approach as the research method. To be more specific, this study employed an error analysis design to answers the research

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questions stated in the introduction. According to Sekaran (2003) quantitative methods involve the use of statistical methods in the collecting and analysis of data. As this research focused on analyzing student' errors and calculating the most commonly made errors then quantitative approach was appropriate to use.

In this study, the writers took the data at SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar Pekalongan Central Java. This school belongs to vocational secondary education level of formal education in Indonesia. This school offers easy access for students, teachers and parents as it is located in the middle of the regency. As there are many majors in this school, the writers focused on students majoring in pharmaceutical technology. The data of this study was taken from 36 first-grade students in that particular major.

The sample in this study was selected with the aim of obtaining representative information about a larger population, as suggested by Sugiyono (2008) and Creswell (2014). In this research, the writers took the sample from the first-grade pharmaceutical technology 1 with a total of 36 students, consisting of 6 males and 30 females as subjects.

To collect the data, the writers used the writing tests as the instrument. However, before giving the tests, the explanation about descriptive texts was presented to the students so that they understood what they were going to write. After the students clear about the tests, they were given random titles of descriptive texts that they had to develop into a text. Then the students worked on it and submitted their writings to the writers. Following that, the writers analyzed those texts.

To analyze the data, the writers had to read the students' descriptive texts. Then the writers determined the grammatical errors made by students. After that, the writers classified the students' grammatical errors by using Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) along with Ellis' (1994) theory to

determine the most common errors that students made and the causes of them. Finally, the researchers draw the conclusion.

Findings and Discussion

1. The types of students' errors
To know the description of the grammar errors in the students' writings, the writers identified the grammar errors and classify into 4 types namely Omission, Addition, Misinformation, and Misordering.

Here is the table that shows the results of the analysis of errors from the most frequently made to the least frequently made by students in writing descriptive texts.

Table 1.

Errors Percentage

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percent age
Omission	24	32%
Addition	12	16%
Misinformation	32	42.67%
Misordering	7	9.33%

From the table above we can conclude that the most frequently made errors were misinformation with the total errors amounted to 42.67 % and the least frequently made errors were misordering which covered 9.33%.

More specifically, each of the error is described in the following section.

Table 2

Grammar Errors Type 1: Omission

Students	Error that students' made
S2	<u>Giraffe</u> main characteristics is very long neck and legs
S10	He likes <u>eat</u> meat
S14	<u>Budhhis</u> temple <u>located</u> in Borobudur magelang, central java Indonesia

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S15	my sister and I often <u>sped</u> time together
S17	tail <u>look</u> like my cup of Milo
S29	rabbits have long ears and <u>small</u> tail.

From the table 2, it is clear that students 2, 10, 14, 15, 17 and 29 made errors as they omitted important elements in the sentences. For example, Student 2 made a grammatical error by omitting the apostrophe 's' on the word "giraffe" which should be "giraffe's". Student 10 made a grammatical error because the students omitted the word "to" in the sentence "he likes eat meat". The correct sentence should be "he likes to eat meat". Student 14 made grammatical errors on the word "buddhis" which should be "Buddhist". Another error was caused by the omission of "was" before the word located. Student 15 made grammatical error on the word "sped" which actually should be written "spend". Student 17 made a grammatical error on the word "look" because the student omitted the important element "s" which should be attached on the word "look". Student 29 made a grammatical error on the phrase "small tail" because the student omitted the article "a" in front of that phrase. The correct form should be "a small tail".

Table 3
Grammar Errors Type 2: Addition

Students	Errors that Students made
S3	<u>My mother she</u> is
S5	This 132m high <u>monuments</u>
S6	My Father <u>he</u> is a brave man in our family
S8	I have <u>an</u> cat
S8	<u>Alpin he</u> is angora cat
S16	<u>My Brother he's</u> one he is named Fikri
S28	<u>She</u> <u>favorites</u> food is <u>eggs</u>

From the table 3 above students 3, 5, 6, 8, 16 and student 28 made errors because they added unimportant elements to the sentences.

For example, Student 3 made grammatical error on the sentence "my mother she is" since the student added pronoun "she" after the word "mother". The sentence actually should be "my mother is". Student 5 made a grammatical error on the word "monuments" because the students added the element "s" on the word "monument" which should be just "monument". Student 6 made grammatical error in the sentence "My father he is" as the student 6 added the word "he" after the word "father", which showed a double subject in the sentence. The correct sentence should be "My father is". Student 8 made a grammatical error on the word "an" which should have been "a". In addition, the second error was on the sentence "Alpin he is angora cat" because the student 8 added the word "he" after the word "Alpin". The correct sentence should be "Alpin is angora cat". Student 16 made a grammatical error on the sentence "My Brother he's one he is named Fikri" because student 16 added the word "he's one he" after the word "brother". The correct sentence should be "My brother's name is Fikri". Student 28 made a grammatical error on the sentence "she favorites food is eggs". The student 28 made error because s/he added element "s" on the word "favorite" which should have been "favorite". Additional "s" was also found on the word "eggs", which should be written "egg".

Table 4
Grammar Errors Type 3: Misinformation

Students	Error that Students made
S3	figure in my <u>live</u>
S9	he <u>have</u> black and white fur,

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S13	Is a collection place that has an variety of batik cloth
S15	My sister name is Febi, <u>He</u> was born <u>in</u> February 3 <u>He</u> is always a cheerful person

Table 4 shows that students 3, 9, 13, and 15, made errors because they used incorrect or inappropriate grammatical elements in sentences. For instance, Student 3 made a grammatical error on the word "live" which should be written as "life". Student 9 made a grammatical error on the word "have" which should have been written as "has". Student 13 made a grammatical error on word "is" that should be written as "it's". Student 15 made a grammatical error on the sentences "My sister name is Febi. He was born in February 3" because the student 15 used the wrong pronoun. In that sentence, Febi is a girl however the student 15 used the word "he" to refer to Febi. The correct sentence should be "My sister's name is Febi. She was born on February 3". The next sentence also contained error as the student 15 used the word "he" to refer to Febi. The student wrote "He is always a cheerful person" which should be "she is always a cheerful person"

Table 5. Grammar Errors Type4: Misordering

Students	Errors that students made
S3	..who tries do to ..
S4	Monas or Monument National
S6	He is willing be to ..
S7	Rabbit is a small mammal with ears long
S8	Alpin have tails long

From the table 5, it is clear that students 3,4,6,7, and student 8 made errors because

the words in the sentences were placed in the wrong order. Student 3 made a grammatical error in the word "do to" which should be "to do". Student 4 made a grammatical error in the word "monument national" which should be "national monument". Student 6 made a grammatical error in the word "be to" which should be "to be". Student 7 made a grammatical error in the word "ears long" which should be "long ears". Student 8 made a grammatical error in the word "tails long" which should be "long tails". From these examples, it is clear that student placed some words in the incorrect orders.

2. Factors causing the grammatical errors

Referring to the data on the students' errors in SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar Pekalongan, the writers found out that students were still making grammatical errors in writing descriptive texts. The most frequently made error was misinformation with the total percentage of 42.67%. This error was followed by Omission with the percentage of 32%. Next, addition came as the third most frequently made error amounted to 16%. The least frequently made error was Misordering which covered 9.33% of the total error.

Here are some explanations about the factors causing those errors.

a. Omission :

Omissions occurred when students omitted required elements in a sentence (Corder, 1997). For instance, the students omitted auxiliary verbs, articles, or conjunctions which caused the sentence to be incomplete or unclear. Based on the current research data, the omission happened as the students omitted apostrophe 's', the word "to", auxiliary "was", the element 's' and article "a".

b. Addition:

The addition errors were made by the

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first-grade students at SMK Muhammadiyah Karangayar. According to Corder (1973) these errors occurred when unnecessary or incorrect elements were added to a sentence. Based on the data in this study, the writers found that the students made additions errors because they used double subjects, added unnecessary element like “s” and “n” in the words which should not have those elements.

c. Misinformation

This error is the most common errors made by students. The errors covered 42.67% of the total errors made by students.

Misinformation occurs due to the use of the incorrect form of the morpheme or structure (Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 1994). In this present study, the students made misinformation errors as they used the wrong forms for nouns, pronouns, and also verbs. For example, instead of using the words “ my life”, the student used “ my live”. Another example can be found when the students wrote “he have” instead of “he has”. The other example can be seen from the use of wrong pronouns especially when the student wanted to refer to female character but the students used pronoun for male characters.

d. Misordering

The least frequently made errors at SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar were misordering. According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) and Ellis (1994) misordering occurred due to the wrong placement of morpheme or a group of morphemes in a sentence.

In this present study, some examples of misordering errors happened as students wrote some morphemes or words in the wrong order. Instead of writing “to do” the students wrote “do to” and instead of writing “national monument” student wrote “monument national”.

Based on the findings of the research, the writers may then consider the sources of

errors by referring to theory of Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982), and Ellis (1994) in which some errors may result from various sources like transfer, intralingual and unique sources of errors. Similarly, Erdogan (2005) categorizes the sources of errors into two namely interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer.

Referring to what Erdogan mentioned, interlingual errors take place due to the influence of the students’ first language and this source of errors is perceived as a significant error sources. Intralingual transfer, on the other hand, happen due to the “faulty or partial learning of the target language” (Erdogan, 2005 p. 266) as the students still have very limited experience with the target language.

The findings of this study confirm the two sources of students’ grammatical errors in writing descriptive texts. In omission and misordering, the sources of errors seem to be the interlingual transfer. In Indonesian language or *Bahasa Indonesia* there is no additional “s” for showing the plural form. Besides, in Bahasa Indonesia, there adjectives come after the nouns and this influenced the way students learnt English as the students still used Indonesian grammar in writing English phrases or sentences. This can be seen from the errors made by students in Table 1 and Table 5.

Other sources of errors seem to be intralingual transfer. For instance, as the students still tried to learn the correct concept of English they used double subjects, like “*My father he...*”. This happened in Addition errors made by students. Another example came from the Misinformation errors made by the students in which the students use the word “*have*” for all subjects like “*he have*”. The writers perceived that the partial ability from the partial learning may have caused those errors. Even so the writers also perceived that other factors may also contributed to the students’ errors in writing descriptive texts in SMK Karanganyar Pekalongan, which up to the

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writing of this article, the writers have not been able to study further. This is part of the limitation of the study as the writers only refer to the most relevant and obvious sources of errors within the period of data analysis.

Conclusion

Based on research findings and discussion, this study concludes that students at SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar Pekalongan still made errors in writing descriptive texts even after learning English for several years both in their elementary schools and in junior high schools. This findings strengthen the arguments presented by Erdogan (2005) in which he highlighted that all students of target language commit errors.

Based on the data analysis, the most frequently made errors was misinformation and the least frequently made errors was misordering. In terms of the sources of errors, the writers discussed both interlingual and intralingual transfer and linked those sources of errors to the errors made by the students. Even so, the writers anticipated some other factors causing the students' grammatical errors in writing descriptive texts in SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar Pekalongan Central Java.

Further, the writers would like to present some suggestions for students and teachers who are dealing with the teaching and learning of descriptive texts.

First, for the English teachers in SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar Pekalongan and English teachers at different schools who have similar problems of finding students' errors like omission, addition, misinformation and misordering, the writers offered some suggestions to minimize the students' errors such as:

1. It is advisable to give explanation about the linguistic features used in writing descriptive texts. Repeating the explanation until the students feel clear about it can be helpful.

2. Giving feedback to students' grammatical errors both to the whole class members and to individual students is advisable

3. It is necessary for the teachers to use cooperative learning methods or group work so that students can learn from one another, share knowledge, and collaborate in writing descriptive texts. Collaboration can be done through discussions, group projects, presentations, or team assignments.

4. Once the students are able to complete a descriptive text in their group, they can be assigned an individual text in composing a similar text.

5. Teachers as a facilitator may also need to provide guidance, resources, and directions as well as various examples to students in writing descriptive texts

Next, for the students, the writers present the following suggestions:

1. Students may need to practice writing descriptive texts and seek suggestions and feedback from their peers or teachers.

2. It is also suggested that the students learn about descriptive texts independently from the internet.

3. To minimize the errors, they need to learn the linguistic features of descriptive texts and pay attention to the use of simple present tense.

4. It is also necessary to ask for help from the teachers or friends when writing seems to get hard.

For further researchers who have the interest in researching students' grammatical errors and the causes, the writers would like to suggest the use of larger sample so that greater data can be obtained and more findings can be obtained. Using various different grades of students may also be beneficial for comparing the errors made by students from different educational level.

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