

An analysis of students' error in writing Descriptive text at tenth grade

Endah Luthfiyah¹, Cucu Sutarsyah², Burhanuddin³
English Education Study Program, University of Lampung^{1,2,3}
¹endahluthfiyah99@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out the types of errors made by students in their descriptive text writing, the dominant errors made by the students, and to know students' perception toward their error in writing. Moreover, this study used a descriptive qualitative study. In collecting the data, the researcher used a writing test and a written interview. The result of this study showed that students made 418 errors in writing descriptive text, they are organization 10 errors (2.4%), vocabulary 70 errors (16.7%), grammar 9 errors (2.2%), mechanic 162 errors (38.8%), omission 62 errors (14.8%), addition 74 errors (17.7%), misinformation 23 errors (5.5%), and misordering 8 errors (1.9%). Based on the result, the mechanic was the dominant error that occurred in students' writing. In addition, based on students' written interview result, the errors that students made were caused by their ignorance and lack of knowledge in writing. The purposes of this research were to know the errors made by students in writing then; the students will be motivated to continue learning so as not to make the same errors.

Keywords: *Error analysis, Writing, Descriptive Text, Students' Perception*

I. INTRODUCTION

In learning English, mastering four skills is necessary for the students, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing has a unique position in language teaching because its mastery involves practice and knowledge of three other language skills, such as listening, reading, and speaking (Klimova, 2013). Based on the statement from Klimova, in teaching writing, students must include their abilities in three other skills because when the students write, they must master other skill first in order to encourage their writing skill. Writing skill is more complex than other language skills because it is productive skills. Compared to other skills, writing requires proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and developing an idea. In writing, students must learn to design their writing starting from writing, the purpose of writing, choice of word, the structure of writing, logic, and punctuation.

There are five kinds of writing: expository writing, descriptive writing, persuasive writing, creative writing, and narrative writing. Descriptive writing is one of the materials in the tenth grade syllabus, namely descriptive text. According to Afifuddin (2016), a descriptive text provides a good platform for a writer to express his or her feelings on a subject. Students can describe an object, person, place, or experience. In line with Anderson & Anderson (2003) statement, the descriptive text describes particular person, place, or things. When writing descriptive text, students must use their observations and feelings in describing an object. Compared to other types of writing, descriptive writing relies on students' ability to pay

attention to and describe an object so that students will find it easier to develop existing ideas based on the thing they are concerned.

Writing is a skill that is not easy to be master because it is prone to errors. Many cases of error occur, namely in the writing aspect. According to Jacobs, et al. (1981), there are five aspects of writing: content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanic. The writer makes an error in choosing words, using punctuation, or using grammar. Those kinds of errors can change the meaning and lead to different perspectives between readers. As well as unstructured writing, errors in writing can make it the readers challenging to convey the message on it. Ancker (2000) states that making mistake or error is a natural process of learning and must be consider as part of cognition. Error is a common thing that students do during the learning process. Specifically, in the EFL context, when students commit errors this means learning takes place (Althobaiti, 2014). However, if it happens frequently, we have to find out the causes and solve the problem. Therefore, analyzing an error is very necessary so that it does not occur continuously.

Many previous studies have analyzed students' error in writing. They are Ramli, et al. (2013) who conducted a research about the analysis of students' errors in writing recount text. Syahputri & Masita (2018) also conducted similar research about an analysis of the students' error in writing descriptive text. Based on their research, it is showing that students often make errors in grammar. In writing, students have difficulty in arranging words according to the correct structure. This one type of errors students often make.

There are many cases of writing errors, but they can happen because the students do not realize. A student may repeat the same mistake if he does not know that it was wrong, and a student may know his mistake, but he does not realize that he is making that mistake again. Therefore, the source of the error should be know from the perceptions of students. Johnson, cited in Alnujaidi (2017), proposed that perception is an external factor that focuses on person's point of view, understanding, belief, and reaction to an innovation. Therefore, perception is on a person's opinion based on what they experienced. Everyone can make the same error but definitely for different reasons. It can happen because he does not know the mistake or realizes that he has repeated the error.

The researcher has surveyed at SMA Global Madani to check students' English assignments. Students have difficulty in arranging words according to the correct writing structure. Besides that, there are some sentences that not suitable in English. For example, writing "bay the way", students should write "by the way"; another example is, "It's okay, but try to come early tomorrow" students should write "It is okay, but you should try to come early tomorrow". Apart from these mistakes, the researcher also found errors in writing capital letter at the beginning of sentences and people's names.

The researcher found many errors from the observation before and made the researcher interested in analyzing the types of errors that students make in writing. Moreover, the researcher also wanted to find the dominant errors in students writing because if the researcher could find the types of errors that students often do, it would be easier to find solutions to overcome the errors, besides that it would also become a core teaching material for teachers to focus more on these types in learning to write. In addition, for analyzing errors in students'

writing skills, the researcher would also find out the causes of these errors from the student's point of view.

II. METHODS

The kind of this research was descriptive qualitative. In this study, the researcher aimed to find the types of errors that occur in students' writing, the types of writing errors most students make, and students' point of view about their error in writing. The researcher has analyzed students' errors in writing descriptive text the classification proposed by Corder & Ellis (2001) and Ramli, et al. (2013). They are organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

The population of this research was the students of the first grade at SMA Global Madani Bandar Lampung in the 2020/2021 academic year. There were four classes in the first grade of SMA Global Madani; they are X IPA 1 (16 students), X IPA 2 (17 students), X IPA 3 (17 students), and X IPS (19 students). The total number of first grade students at Global Madani SMAS is 69 students. The sample of this research was 20 students of tenth grade that had been selected using cluster sampling. According to Kothari (2004), cluster sampling involves grouping the population and then selecting the groups or the clusters rather than individual elements for inclusion in the sample.

In conducting this research, the researcher used writing test and written interview as the instruments. The researcher asked students to write descriptive texts to be analyzed the types of errors and looked for the dominant types of errors that often done. Then the researcher conducted written interviews with students to find out their perceptions about writing. The researcher used guided written interviews in order to get deeper information and in accordance with the researcher's purposes. The result of the writing test and the written interview would be collected in the WhatsApp Group.

After the writer collecting the data, it was analyzed by coding wrong word or sentence, identified and categorized the students error based on Corder & Ellis (2001) and Ramli, et al. (2013) classification of error, and calculated the total error into percentage and chart. The types of error did count with the percentage by following the formula below:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

(Ramli, et al., 2013)

P = Percentage

F = Frequency of Error

N = Number of Error

100 = Permanent Number

After calculating the results of each type of error in the form of percent, the researcher would see the dominant error made by the students. Besides, the researcher analyzed the students' errors in writing descriptive text and the written interviews result from each participant. In analyzing the results of the interview, the researcher classified students' perceptions into several types depending on the similarity of answers from each participant.

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative descriptive research method to analyze students' error in writing and seek students' perceptions about writing. Although this research was qualitative research, it must meet several criteria so that the research results could be accepted and in accordance with reality. Setiyadi (2018) stated that trustworthiness in qualitative research is assessing from three main criteria: consistency, credibility, and transferability. Therefore, this study needed to use inter-rater reliability, which is to avoid the researcher's subjectivity. By referring to the inter-raters in this study, it was certain two evaluators have a similar role.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

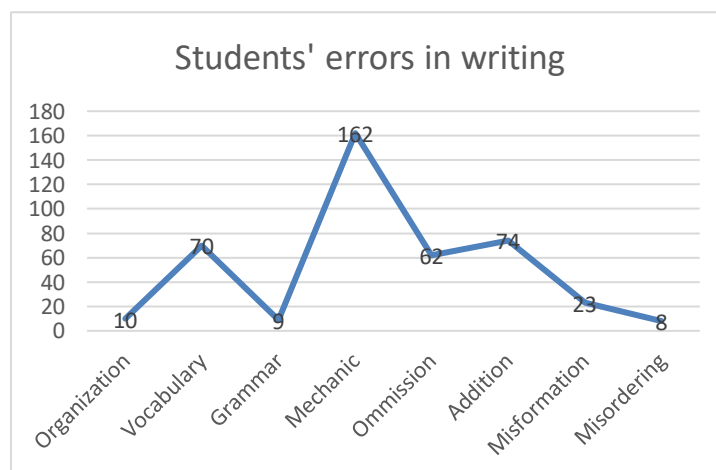
Results

The result showed that the total error made by students in writing the descriptive text was four hundred and eight errors. The students made 2.4% errors in organization, 16.7% errors in vocabulary, 2.2% errors in grammar, 38.8% errors in mechanic, 14.8% errors in omission, 17.7% errors in addition, 5.5% errors in misinformation, and 1.9% errors in misordering. The table below is a recapitulation of the errors made by students in writing descriptive texts:

Table 1. Classification of Errors

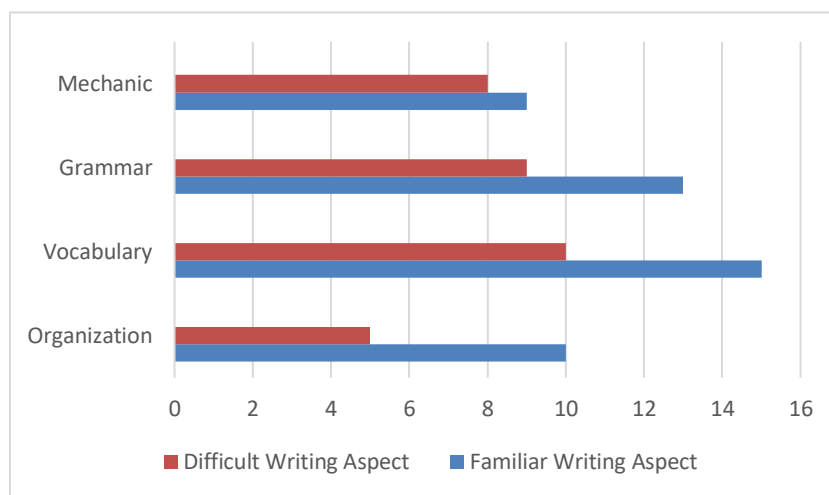
No	Types error	Total error
1.	Organization	10 errors
2.	Vocabulary	70 errors
3.	Grammar	9 errors
4.	Mechanic	162 errors
5.	Omission	62 errors
6.	Addition	74 errors
7.	Misinformation	23 errors
8.	Misordering	8 errors
Total		418 errors

Below was a graph of the number of errors made by students based on the types of errors:



Based on graph above, mechanic was the dominant error made by students in writing descriptive text.

In this section, the researcher describes the results of students written interviews related to students' perceptions of the errors they made on the writing test. There are ten-point questions in the written interview section. The first and second questions are about students' perception of their writing ability. As stated in the written interview section, one student said, "My writing skills are not good enough and still need improvement". Another student argued that, "I think my writing skills still need improvement, and I still have a lot to practice". The third and fourth questions are about the students' knowledge of writing aspects.



Based on the result of the written interview, 15 students familiar with vocabulary as a writing aspect than others. The mechanic would be the minor aspect that known by students. Additionally, students stated that vocabulary was a writing aspect that the most difficult for students to master, while the organization was one aspect that is easy to understand. The fifth and sixth questions are about the students' carefulness in writing. Many students answered the written interview that they often double-check their writing and if there are any mistake, they immediately correct it. The seventh and eighth questions are about students' awareness of the descriptive text they made. Based on the students' written interview, the students felt their writing test was good, and there were no errors. The ninth and tenth questions are about the causes and efforts of students in dealing with the errors they made. All students felt inaccurate when they found out the errors they made. As stated by a student, "I am not precise, and I do not know if it is wrong".

Briefly, the students felt their writing skills still need improvement, the students only know some aspects of writing, they always double-check their writing to make sure there are no mistakes; the students do not realize if they make mistakes in their writing, and they still need a lot knowledge in writing.

Discussions

Types of Errors Made by Students in Their Descriptive Text Writing

In the previous explanation, the data were taking from the results of the students' writing tests. The researcher have classified students' errors in writing descriptive text. Then, the types of errors were organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanic, omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. Corder& Ellis (2001) and Ramli, et al. (2013) categorized them.

The first type of error made by students' in writing the descriptive text was organization. According to Ramli, et al. (2013), organization referred to how arranging sentences in writing. In analyzing organizations on writing tests, the researcher looked at the descriptive text aspects, namely identification and description. Many students make errors in the organization because they did not make paragraph identification in writing descriptive text. Paragraph identification was the beginning paragraph in analyzing an object. Students only made paragraphs of description in their writing test, they have only described they were only described an object and did not identify it. Thus, the descriptive text aspect was not fulfill, so this was a type of organizational error.

The second type of error made by students' in writing descriptive text was vocabulary. Vocabulary is one aspect of writing that must mastered. In writing, students must have the appropriate words to be arranged into a text. It was accurate with Ramli, et al. (2013) statement that error at vocabulary refers to error related to the use of word based on its functions. Many students' made errors in word choice. Choosing words to compose a text would make different meanings for the reader if it were not suitable. If the reader has accepted the different meaning, the message in the text will not be convey. As an example, in a student was writing assignment, he wrote, "Bromo is one of the mountains in java that is known around the world". The use of the word "known" did not match in that context. Then it would be better if the word "known" is replaced by "popular/ famous", this word was more appropriate with the text. Students' errors in vocabulary are caused by the lack of vocabulary that students have, so they need to increase their vocabulary knowledge.

The third type of error made by students' in writing the descriptive text was grammar. This type of grammar error is an error made by students on language structures. One of the errors that students made in grammar was the use of adjectives. For example, "the sunrise which is very beautiful". In this sentence, the student made a grammatical error in using the adjective using the relative pronoun, "which", it would be better if she did not write that word. She should write the appropriate sentence "the very beautiful sunrise". That way the grammar used becomes correct.

The fourth type of error was mechanic. In analyzing mechanics, the researcher focused on writing capital letters, punctuation marks, and misspelling of students in their writing. It was accurate with Ramli, et al. (2013) statement that mechanics means the students error on spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. The mechanic was one aspect of writing that must be consider when writing. In addition, the mechanic was very important because if there were errors, the reader would have different perceptions and even misunderstand the meaning in a text. Many students made errors in punctuation marks; some were wrong in using comma and period, even if some forget to put a punctuation mark at the end of a sentence. In the used of capital letters, students often mistakenly write city names such as "malang" which should be "Malang" and place names such as "mount bromo" which should be "Mount Bromo". Apart from that, several students made errors in spelling, such as "beaut" which should be "beauty" and "witch" which should be "which". Errors made by students in misspelling must be correct immediately because otherwise, the reader will misinterpret the word. Based on Pohan (2018) findings, the most errors made by students are misspelling and capitalization. It was in line with the result of this research.

The fifth type of error made by students in writing the descriptive text was an omission. The omission is a type of error made by students because of a lack in adding a word or article. It was in line with Syahputri & Masita (2018) findings, the mistake of omission came out from wrong written a phoneme omitted. Based on the analysis of the researcher's writing text, many students did not add articles and "s" pluralism. The lack of adding words will make a sentence unclear and not in accordance with grammar in English, so the errors made by students must be correct immediately so that they were not sustainable. An example of students' error is "it is most favorite place in East Java". In that sentence, the students should add the article "the" before the word "most" because in the superlative adjectives if the word "most" is used, it must be included with the article to become "the most".

The sixth type of error made by students' in writing descriptive text was addition. In this error, many students put a word that was unnecessary in the sentence. It was accurate with Affifuddin (2016) findings; most of the students' errors were relate to addition. These errors were identifying when the students put unimportant words in their sentences. If they used that word, it would be inappropriate with the content of the text. Sometimes the words or articles used do not match the word order in English, making it an ungrammatical sentence. For example, in student writing text, namely "Mount Bromo is placed in Java Island and specifically in the Probolinggo, East Java region". The article "the" in this sentence is inappropriate because the article "the" is not necessary to indicate the name of the city. So that the article needs to be removed and becomes "Mount Bromo is placed in Java Island and specifically in Probolinggo, East Java region". In addition, many students made an error in using "s" to denote plural words. In a sentence using the word "tourists" but indicating a singular, the addition of the "s" to the word needs to delet.

The seventh type of error made by students was misformation. Misformation is the error of using a grammatical form to place another grammatical form (Corder & Ellis, 2001). It was an error made by students in placing words so that they became ungrammatical. An example of an error made by students is "They can sunbathe, surfing, play soccer, and play volleyball". From this sentence, the student uses the gerund in the word "surfing" which she should equate with other words. If she used the gerund, all of the words must use present participle. If not then just used verb "surf". This kind of error often occurs to students, because they have not mastered the use of the present participle, past participle, etc. Therefore, that, in compiling text sometimes they use V1 in past sentences, which should be used past. Such as the example of using the word, "sell" which should be "sold".

The last type of error made by students in writing the descriptive text was misordering. Misordering was the fewest errors made by the students. This error occurs when students put words in the wrong order. In line with Syahputri & Masita (2018) findings, there were 19,5% errors made by students' in misordering because of wrong order in the sentence. For example in the student's writing test, "Bromo Mount" which should be written "Mount Bromo". These errors occurred because of the students' inaccuracy and ignorance in composing words.

From the explanation above, the researcher can argue that the types of errors used by the researcher as a guide in classifying students' errors in writing are the types of errors that are usually made by students. It was in line with Ramli, et al. (2013) findings, students made errors in writing, which consist of errors in writing the contents of the text, errors in vocabulary, errors

in grammar, and errors in mechanics. It can be conclude that these types of error can be uses as a guideline for the perfection of student writing.

The Dominant Types of Errors Made by Students in Their Descriptive Text Writing

The dominant error that students made in writing was mechanic with a total of 162 errors out of 20 students. The percentage of students' errors in mechanic was 38.8%. The dominant errors in this type include errors in capitalization, punctuation, and misspelling. It supports Pohan's findings (2018) he stated that the dominant errors which made by students in writing descriptive text is spelling and capitalization. Therefore, it was in line Corder& Ellis (2001); mechanic refers to writing mechanisms, such as punctuation, capitalization, and misspelling. In the capitalization errors, most students did not use capital letters in writing city names such as Lampung, Malang, East Java, and Probolinggo. Besides that, there were those who did not use capital letters at the beginning of the sentence. Punctuation errors occurred because students often mistakenly use comma (,) and period (.) punctuation marks. Many students did not pay attention to their writing, so there was a lot of misspelling, which makes the text imperfect.

Students' Perception toward Their Error in Writing

Based on students' written interview the researcher found students' perception toward their error in writing descriptive text. All of the students said that they did not realize if they had made a mistake in their writing because they always double-checked what they wrote. The students do realize that their writing skills are still lacking and need a lot of improvement but they always try to be careful in writing. When they found out that many of them made mistakes in writing, it was because of their ignorance of those mistakes. So that the mistakes they made can be said to be errors, because they did not realize that mistake and could not fix it by themselves.

In this case, the researcher found that the errors made by students were caused by their ignorance, which means their lack of knowledge in writing because not all of them understand the aspects of writing. Even so, students have the perception that the errors they make are due to carelessness and lack of knowledge, so they need to study harder. This statement was in accordance with Syahputri&Masita (2018), error was usually cause by carelessness and it was occurred when the students did not deliberate to do some mistakes, but the result showed that it was the mistake.

As stated by Johnson in Alnujaidi (2017), perception is an external factor that focuses on person's point of view, understanding, belief, and reaction to an innovation. Students have a perception of the errors they make, that is, they accept that they made errors in writing descriptive text. The students also realized the errors they made were due to their lack of knowledge in writing, so it was only natural that they did not know when the writing they made contained some errors.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

Based on the results of the research, the authors can draw the conclusion that, the total numbers of errors committed by 20 students are 418 items. Moreover, from 418 errors, the proportions (frequency and percentage) of the students' errors in their writing. They were organization 10 errors with a percentage of 2.4%, vocabulary 70 errors with a percentage of 16.7%, grammar 9

errors with a percentage of 2.2%, mechanic 162 errors with a percentage of 38.8%, omission 62 errors with a percentage of 14.8%, addition 74 errors with a percentage of 17.7%, misinformation 23 errors with a percentage of 5.5%, and misordering 8 errors with a percentage of 1.9%. Therefore, the result of the research showed that mechanic errors are the highest errors made by the students in writing. In addition, based on students' written interview result they have a perspective on the errors they make. In this written interview, students were asking to express their opinion on the errors in writing they did. Students' answered that they did not realize what they were doing and they said it was because they did not know what they were doing. Therefore, it can be conclude, the errors that students made were cause by their ignorance and lack of knowledge about writing.

Suggestion

The researcher presents some suggestions, which are expected to provide a better understanding of writing learning, as well as provide new ideas for a better teaching and learning process. The first suggestion was intend for teachers who distribute knowledge in the teaching and learning process, that in evaluating the teaching and learning process can be done by analyzing student errors, especially in writing skills. The second is for English learners who are interested in learning English, that students must know their errors in writing by getting feedback from the teacher. In addition, they realize that they have to learn a lot about the aspects of writing and practice a lot in writing in order to improve their writing skill. Finally, for the next researcher who will conduct research related to this research, that after reading and knowing this research, they might find more phenomena that are new in this research and they can develop their research on this. In addition, the further researcher can use other theories in analyzing students' errors and find solutions or ways to solve the problems related to students' difficulties in writing.

REFERENCES

- Afifuddin. (2016). An analysis of students' errors in writing descriptive texts. *English Education Journal (EEJ)*, 132.
- Alnujaidi, S. (2017). Social network sites effectiveness from EFL students' points of view. *English Language Teaching*, 10 (1).
- Althobaiti, N. (2014). Error correction in EFL writing: The case of Saudi Arabia, Taif University. *Journal of Modern Education Review*, 1039.
- Ancker, W. (2000). *Error and correction feedback: update theory and classroom practice*.
- Anderson, M. & Anderson, K. 2003. *Text types in English 3*. South Yarra: Macmillan.
- Corder, and Ellis. 2001. *The significance of learner's error*. New York. Oxford University Press.
- Jacobs, Holly, L., Stephen, A., Zingkggraf, Deanne, R., Wormuth, V., Faye, H. Jane, B., Hughey. (1981). *Testing ESL composition: A practical approach*. Rowley: Newbury House Publisher, Inc.

- Kothari, C.R. 2004. *Research methodology: method and techniques*. New Delhi: New Age International (P) Limited Publishers.
- Klimova, B. (2012). The importance of writing. *Paripex - Indian Journal of Research*, 9.
- Pohan, A. E. (2018). The students' type errors on writing descriptive text (An analysis study at senior high school). *Anglo-Saxon*, 9 (1).
- Ramli, D., Suhartono, L., Novita, D. (2013). *An analysis on the students' error in writing recount text*. Tanjungpura University, Pontianak
- Setiyadi, Ag. Bambang. 2018. *Metode penelitian untuk pengajaran bahasa asing*. Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu.
- Syahputri, D., and Masita, S. (2018). An analysis of the students' error in writing. *Jurnal EduTech*, 14.