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4. Cultural issues in language studies
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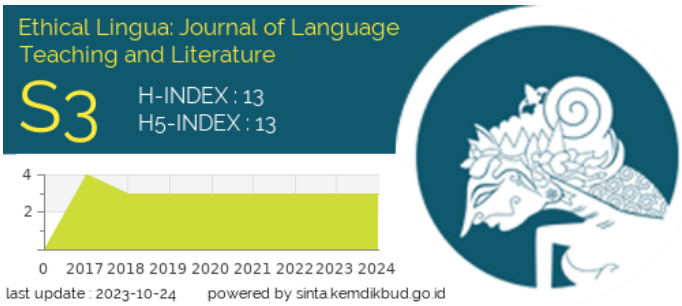

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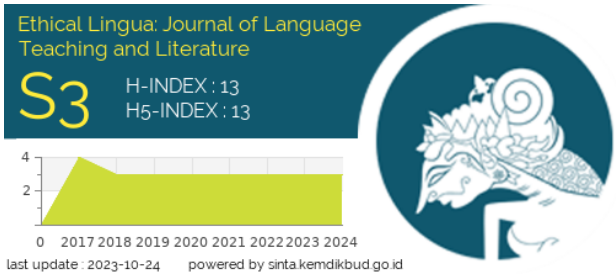

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A Closer Look At The EFL Students' Grammatical Errors In Writing Descriptive Text

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Abstract

EFL students found some difficulties in writing descriptive texts because they have to observe the language features, and generic structure of such genre carefully to produce a good paragraph. Students made some errors in their writing and experienced difficulties dealing with the grammatical rules. The objectives of the present research are to identify the errors types that students might encounter in writing descriptive text and to describe what errors are dominantly made. Therefore, a descriptive qualitative research design was applied to describe students' type of errors as proposed by Dulay et al. (1982) and to figure out errors that dominantly occur in students' writing, the present study used Ellis's theory (1999), namely error collection, error identification, error description, and error explanation. The respondents were 30 students (5 males and 25 females) in English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta. The research data was taken from students' works and analyzed qualitatively. The findings revealed that students made four types of errors, ranging from the highest to lowest, namely omission, misformation, addition, and misordering. Of 174 errors, 60 errors dominantly occurred in the omission part, and 51 errors were in the misformation part. Meanwhile, 47 errors occurred in the addition part, and 16 errors occurred in the misordering part.

Keywords

Descriptive Text
EFL Students
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A Closer Look At The EFL Students' Grammatical Errors In Writing Descriptive Text

Introduction

Students can develop their writing creativity and will progress in using the correct grammatical rules over some time. Writing is an activity of puting ideas into sentences and paragraphs (Erlangga et al., 2019; Husna, 2017; Perlin et al., 2020; Ratnaningsih & Azizah, 2019; Wardah, 2018). Richards & Renandya (2002), confirm that for language learners, find some difficulties in writing skills. They went on to say that writing activities not only generate and organize ideas from one's mind but also translate ideas into texts that can be read by everyone. According to Hariyadi *et al*. (2018), students students find some difficulties in writing because they have to possess the knowledge of how to write effectively.

On one hand, EFL students at the tertiary level are encouraged to write in several genres and produce correct sentences in a paragraph. But on the other hand, students find some difficulties in producing correct sentences following grammatical rules. Indeed, in daily practice, teachers often find out some errors made by their students in the writing class. According to Mayekti *et al*. (2022), writing makes it possible for students to enhance their thinking skills and develop language skills. Meanwhile, Nainggolan (2021) confirm that writing is essential because it can assist students to write a good sentence.

Error analysis is a procedure used to reveal errors encountered in writing and speaking. According to Hsu (2013), grammar errors are a form of a learner's deviation in using certain language rules such as wrong forms, semantic meanings, and the use of foreign languages because of the lack of knowledge of the learner about foreign grammar rules. Errors are unavoidable because the learner is actively advancing the target language while using their transient principles in the previous language (Wardah, 2018). Errors are deviations made by students because they do not know the rules of language and they will make them repeatedly if there is no justification.

Dulay *et al*. (1982) describes the types of errors into four types, namely: omissions, additions, misformation, and misordering. These categories are 1) Additional: the presence of unwanted or unnecessary words in the sentence; 2) Omission: the absence of certain words that should be contained in a sentence or other words, words that should be included in a sentence are missed or forgotten to include them; 3) Misformation: the use of inaccurate words or incorrect structure, such as subject, plural or singular nouns, prepositions, and verbs; 4) Missordering: an error so that is signed by the placement of words or morphemes that are not quite right, such as the word order in a sentence.

Analysis of errors provides a deep view of comprehending the stages of language learning carried out by students (Erlangga *et al*., 2019; Jabeen *et al*., 2015). Error analysis can help teachers to find difficulties in language learning and also help them and students find useful improvements to solve language errors (Erlangga *et al*., 2019; Khan & Khan, 2004).

The descriptive text describes person, place, or things (Anderson and Anderson, 2003; Aneba, 2021). When writing descriptive text, students must pay attention to the generic structure of the descriptive text, they are identification, and description. Identification is where students can determine a topic to be discussed and must be specific. The description of a place sometimes contains a description of an object or people that are related to the place, so that the text will be an interesting piece of information. Wardiman *et al*. (2008) confirms that descriptive text is a text that tells the character of a particular person, thing, or place. This statement is quite related to Winch in Siregar & Dongoran (2020) who states that the essence of this form of text is an object's description, animal, people, or others.

Observing works of students is necessary for teachers to examine their writing quality, especially writing descriptive text. It is important to figure out students' learning outcomes and progress of their learning, as well as problems they are facing in learning the target language. Errors are a sign that students are automatically exploring new structures. Our preliminary observation showed that students of the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) at Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta found some difficulties in writing descriptive texts because first, they have limited knowledge of vocabulary and grammar in English, second, they experienced first language interference, and third, they lack practice in English writing. Therefore, we are interested in exploring further the students' works, figuring out their grammatical errors made and other difficulties in writing descriptive text.

The present study may contribute positive insight to students, teachers, and researchers. For students, it is expected that they can gain direct experience in writing descriptive texts properly and correctly, as well as increase their knowledge of descriptive texts which in turn develops students' writing skills. Therefore, it is worth conducting this study to figure out the error types that are dominantly made by students in writing English text. Teachers can improve their teaching methods and find the best way to teach the descriptive text and help students write sentences in English properly and correctly. Furthermore, this research may be the reference for further studies related to analysis errors in writing descriptive texts. Thus, research questions are: 1) what are the types of errors that the fourth-semester students might encounter in writing the descriptive text? 2) what errors do the fourth-semester students dominantly make in writing descriptive texts.

Several studies into the issue of students' errors in writing descriptive text have been conducted by researchers in the field, e.g, Wardah (2018); Hayrunnisa (2019); Siregar and Dongoran (2020); Ratnaningsih and Azizah (2019); Wardani (2018); Hasanah (2017); Solihah (2017); Aneba (2021); Erlangga (2019); and Muis (2019). For instance, Wardah (2018) investigated errors in grammatical made by Junior High School students in writing descriptive text. The objectives are to find out the types of grammatical errors and the dominant errors made by students in writing descriptive text. The findings revealed that tstudents made several types of errors, such as; addition, omission, misordering, and misformation. Meanwhile, the errors dominantly occurred in the omission.

Hayrunnisa (2019) conducted a study to figure out the grammatical errors types made by JHS students in using the simple present tense in the analytical exposition text. The results revealed that there were four errors types in writing analytical exposition texts based on linguistic category taxonomy, namely, verb sentence error, verb arrangement, word order, and some transformation errors. Another study was conducted by Siregar & Dongoran (2020) to explore the ability of students to write

the descriptive text. They examined the ability of Junior High School students to write descriptive text. The findings revealed that 78.5 of students could master descriptive text, it implies that the students' writing was good.

Wardani (2018), conducted a study to explore the ability and difficulties of Vocational High School students in writing descriptive text using a qualitative research method. Observation and interviews were used to collect the data needed. The findings showed that the ability of student in writing the descriptive text was good. Moreover, students found it hard to spell vocabulary and put the right sentence together. Another study was conducted by Aneba (2021), who examined Junior High School students' grammatical errors in writing descriptive text. The results revealed that there were 98 errors made by students in their documents. Meanwhile, the highest errors were in the misanalysis part.

There have been several studies into students' errors in writing descriptive text from previous researchers at the secondary level of education. A study on students' errors at the tertiary level of education is still a few to the best of researchers' knowledge. Therefore, the present study is carried out to fill in the gaps in the methodology and variables that were not addressed by the aforementioned previous researchers.

Method

A descriptive qualitative research design was utilized in this study to describe the fourth-semester students' errors and errors dominantly made in writing descriptive texts. The data were obtained from students' works in the form of sentences in a descriptive text. The procedure of research is the stage for collecting and analyzing data in research Cohen *et al*., (2007). This type of research method is called descriptive qualitative research, and it entails steps that result in descriptive information from the subject which were documented in written form. Several research procedures are as follows: 1) provided a google form to be used by thr respondents to write descriptive text; 2) asked the respondents to complete the first column by writing their name and student number; 3) asked the respondents to write a descriptive text about a place or an object in the column provided in reading the google form; 4) informed students to sent the results of their responses and then the researcher collected the results of their responses, then analyzed them; and 5) analyzed the grammatical errors, and provided the conclusions from the results of the study.

This research was carried out at the ELESP of Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta. Thirty students from the fourth semester were involved in the data gathering process. They have been selected because they learned the genre of descriptive text in their writing class in the previous semester. To gather the data needed, the researchers utilized Google Forms to get students' works (documentation) in the form of sentences and paragraphs. Furthermore, the respondents were requested to write descriptive text by observing the generic structure and language features of descriptive text and collected the students' works.

After obtaining the data needed on the students' writing, then the researchers read and analyzed the students' documents. In analyzing the error types, the researchers used Dulay's theory of errors classifications (1982) namely omissions, additions, misformation, and misordering. Meanwhile, to figure out errors dominantly made by students in writing descriptive text, the researchers used Ellis's theory (1999), namely error collection, error identification, error description, and error explanation.

The detailed steps of data analysis are as follows: 1) Error collection: the researchers collected the results of students' works by google form and then checks and collects the grammatical errors types in writing descriptive text, using the simple present tense; 2) Error identification: researchers identified students' works whether or not the documents are following the language feature (simple present tense); 3) Error description: this step is to describe the errors made after the previous stage, namely the identification of errors. Moreover, the description of student errors involves classifying the error types made by students in their writing; 4) Error explanation: in this step, researchers explained how the errors could occur and are dominantly made by the students in writing descriptive text.

Results

The objectives of the present study are to figure out the types of errors, and the errors dominantly made by the fourth-semester students of ELESP in writing descriptive texts. The followings are the findings of the present study.

Types of Errors that Students Made in Writing Descriptive Text

In analyzing the error types made by the students, the researchers used Dulay's theory of errors classifications (1982) namely omissions, additions, misformation, and misordering. Thirty students wrote the descriptive text, and the errors made varied among them. Of 30 documents, 6 students' documents are presented as samples of students' works, showing the various error types from the least types of errors to the highest ones as seen in Table 3.1 as follows:

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Table 1. Types of Errors Students Made in Descriptive Text

No	Respondent's initial	Types of Errors			
		Addition	Omission	Misformation	Misordering
1	AAM			I have an idol named Patrick Nattawat Finkler or often called Patrick or Paipai or his Chinese name is Yin Haoyu.	
2	DF		The Jengkiling bridge is a bridge in the southeast of Rawamangun village, approximately 7 km from the city of Temanggung.		

3	NK		The pink color of its beach is a mixture of white sand beach colors mixed with crushed coral, shells, calcium carbonate from very small marine invertebrates, and also Foraminifera, (a) microscopic amoeba that has a red body shell.		
4	SA		Perry started his career on (a) television show in 1979.	The jokes that he tells on the show is hilarious and always remembered by the fans.	
5	MS		She has an interesting life experience. In my place, my mom (is) very famous here.	At this pandemic situation, she does her work from home.	
6	ADP	Shihlin is a food from Taiwan with the main ingredients being chicken breast fillet wrapped in crisp and crunchy flour, and the taste is delicious, making Shihlin very popular with Indonesian tongues.	Operational hours there are from 10.00 a.m – 09.00 p.m on (the) weekend.	Sometimes there are people who play there until the night because, the feels at night in Dufan is very fun.	Sometimes there are people who play there until the night because, the feels at night in Dufan is very fun.

Table 1 shows six respondents' works as a sample of descriptive text documents. The words were highlighted in four colors to differentiate the types of errors made, namely red color refers to an error in addition; yellow refers to an error in omission; green refers to an error in misformation, and blue color refers to an error in misordering. The first respondent who initially named AAM made errors in the

misformation part, the second respondent who initially named DF made errors in the omission part, and the third respondent who initially named NK made errors in the omission part. Meanwhile, a respondent who initially named SA made errors in the omission and misformation part, a respondent who initially named MS made errors in the omission and misformation part, and a respondent who initially named ADP made errors in all types of errors namely addition, omission, misformation, and misordering.

Errors that Dominantly made by Students in Writing Descriptive Text

In this part, the researchers present the findings of the second research question "what errors do the fourth-semester students dominantly make in writing descriptive texts? The findings can be seen in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2. The Frequency of Students' Errors

No	Types of Error	Number of Error
1	Omission	60
2	Misformation	51
3	Addition	47
4	Misordering	16
	Total	**174**

Table 2 shows the frequency of errors that occurred in the students' writing descriptive text. As we can see, of 174 total errors made by thirty respondents, the Omission part was the highest rank dominantly occurring with a total of 60 errors within the thirty students' works. The second rank of error was in the misformation part with a total of 51 errors, the third error occurred in the addition part with a total of 47 errors, and the last one was misordering with a total of 16 errors.

Discussion

The present study revealed that the first respondent who initially named AAM made errors in the misformation part. As seen in her works, "I have an idol named Patrick Nattawat Finkler or often called Patrick or Paipai or his Chinese name is Yin Haoyu". In this sentence the conjunction used is incorrect, so it should be "I have an idol named Patrick Nattawat Finkler or often called Patrick or Paipai and his Chinese name is Yin Haoyu".

The second respondent who initially named DF made one type of error in his document; that is the omission, for instance, "The Jengkiling bridge is a bridge in southeast of Rawamangun village, approximately 7 km from city of Temanggung." It seems that the sentence omits the article "the", so it should be "The Jengkiling bridge is a bridge in the southeast of Rawamangun village, approximately 7 km from the city of Temanggung.

The third respondent who was initially named NK made one type of error in her document, namely omission, for instance, "The pink color of its beach is a mixture of white sand beach colors mixed with crushed coral, shells, calcium carbonate from marine invertebrates that are very small, and also Foraminifera, microscopic amoeba that has a red body shell." It seems that the sentence omits an article, so it should

be "The pink color of its beach is a mixture of white sand beach colors mixed with crushed coral, shells, calcium carbonate from marine invertebrates that are very small, and also Foraminifera, a microscopic amoeba that has a red body shell."

The fourth respondent who was initially named SA made two types of errors in her document: omission and miformation. The first is omission, for example, "Perry started his career on (a)television show in 1979." this sentence omitted the article "a" which should exist, so it should be "Perry started his career on a television show in 1979." The second type of error is misformation, for example, "The jokes that he tells on the show is hilarious and always remembered by the fans. It seems that the verb "is" does not agree with the subject, so it should be "The jokes that he tells on the show are hilarious and always remembered by the fans."

The fifth respondent who was initially named MS made two types of errors in her document, namely omission and miformation. The first is omission, for example, "There is a person that look like an angel, she is my mother." The plural verb "look" does not appear to agree with the singular subject "a person" so it should be "There is a person that looks like an angel, she is my mother. Then "In my place, my mom (is)very famous here." It seems that the sentence is omit a verb "is" The second error is misformation, for example, "At this pandemic situation, she does her work from home." The preposition in this sentence is incorrect, so it should be "During this pandemic situation, she does her work from home."

The sixth respondent who was initially named ADP made four types of errors in her document namely addition, omission, misformation, and misordering. The first example of an error is in the addition part, for instance, "Shihlin is a food from Taiwan with the main ingredients being chicken breast fillet wrapped in crisp and crunchy flour, and the taste is delicious, making Shihlin very popular with Indonesian tongues." There is an unnecessary article, it should be "Shihlin is food from Taiwan with the main ingredients being chicken breast fillet wrapped in crisp and crunchy flour, and the taste is delicious, making Shihlin very popular with Indonesian tongues"

The second error is in the omission part, for instance, "Operational hours there are from 10.00 a.m – 09.00 p.m on weekend." The sentence omit an article, it should be "Operational hours there are from 10.00 a.m – 09.00 p.m on the weekend." Then, "For enjoy dufan view from top, you can take kereta gantung and bianglala for it." The sentence omit an article, it should be "For enjoy dufan view from the top, you can take kereta gantung and bianglala for it." Then, "After you satisfied and tired, you can relax or eat while enjoy the beautiful view of ancol beach."

The third error is in the misformation part, for instance, "Sometimes there are people who play there until the night because, the feels at night in Dufan is very fun." That word does not seems to fit this context, it should be "Sometimes there are people who play there until the night because, the feeling at night in Dufan is very fun". Furthermore, the fourth error is in the misordering part, for instance, "Sometimes there are people who play there until the night because, the feels at night in Dufan is very fun." There is incorrect structure, it should be "Sometimes some people play there until the night because, the feels at night in Dufan is very fun."

The present study supports the finding of Hasanah (2017), who found four types of errors, namely addition, omission, misformation, and misordering. Moreover, the highest number of errors made by the respondent is in the omission part. However,

the current findings are opposite to the research findings conducted by Solihah (2017), who explains that the most errors made by the respondents are in the misformation part with a frequency of 45 errors, then omission 44 errors, misordering 7 errors, and addition 11 errors.

The results revealed that omission is found to be the most dominant type of error among the other three, namely addition, misformation, and misordering. This might happen because students are influenced by their first language (first language interference), using the sentence structure of the mother tongue in their foreign language. These results support the previous findings of Al-Khresheh (2016) who confirm that foreign language learners will be influenced by their first language (L1).

Conclusion

There are two main points to be highlighted, they are as follows: 1) students' errors are varied among them and there are four types of errors made in writing descriptive text, namely addition, omission, misformation, and misordering. Moreover, students of the fourth semester from ELESP found it difficult to produce correct sentences due to the first language interferences, and lack of practicing English language writing. Besides, the English language writing system is different from the Indonesian language writing system, for instance, the use of verbs, prepositions, conjunction, and other grammatical rules; 2) Of 174 total errors made by thirty respondents, the Omission part is the highest rank dominantly occurred with a total of 60 errors within the thirty students' works. The second rank of error is in the misformation part with a total of 51 errors, meanwhile, the third error occurred in the addition part with a total of 47 errors, and the last one was misordering with a total of 16 errors.

Concerning the findings of the present study, several recommendations are addressed to English teachers, EFL students, and future researchers in the field. First, teachers may introduce a variety of genres in English language class as earlier as possible, including the language features and generic structure of descriptive text, so that students can produce sentences correctly. Second, students need to explore more about the genres of writing and have regular English writing practices in the hope that they would be familiar with the English writing system. Third, it is recommended that the next researchers conduct similar studies with different variables, genres, and a large number of respondents, for instance, to acknowledge the students' achievement in writing narrative text.

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