



A CORPUS-BASED STUDY ON ERRORS IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT COMMITTED BY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN A MODELLED-SCHOOL CONTEXT WITHIN SIKKA REGENCY, EAST NUSA TENGGARA PROVINCE

*Vinsensia Yosefa De Rosari*¹, *Stefanus Igolois Grenga Uran*², *Lusiana Mariyeta Balik*³

¹Nusa Nipa University, sefaderosari@gmail.com

²Nusa Nipa University, uranolouis@gmail.com

³Nusa Nipa University, lusianabalik@gmail.com

Abstract: This case study aims to identify the types and causes of errors often made by students in writing descriptive texts and to provide solutions to reduce errors in writing. This study employs the five stages of error analysis proposed by Ellis and Barkhuzein. Data were collected through observation, written tests, and interviews and were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative approaches. The corpus under inquiry consisted of 50 students' descriptive writing texts from two classes. The most identified error was the linguistic errors in writing related to second language usage errors. A lack of vocabulary mastery and L1 interference generally cause errors in writing made by students. After the error evaluation stage, the authors recommend the implementation of Continuous Writing Activities and Process Writing Strategies to help students improve their ability to write in English and reduce the errors they make.

Key Terms: *errors analysis, continuous writing activities, process writing strategies, writing descriptive text*

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INTRODUCTION

English is widely recognized as one of the most commonly used foreign languages across multiple countries. There are approximately 380 million individuals who are native speakers of English, with an estimated 300 million utilizing it as a second language and the remaining using it as a foreign language. Regarding English as an international language, many people are interested in learning the language. Nowadays people learn English not only to be able to communicate with others but also to be able to get the latest information and technology which is generally presented in English.

There are other important uses of English and mastering its skills. As stated by Kasihani (2001, p. 43), English is considered to be the primary foreign language for accessing information, understanding and advancing in science, technology, and cultural arts, and building relationships with other nations. Due to the importance of English as an international

language, English has been included as one of the subjects to study by students in Indonesia from kindergarten to college level. In fact, English is still studied by Indonesians after graduating from college for work purposes. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the four most crucial, basic skills to master when studying English. In addition to speaking, writing is a key productive skill that must be learned to communicate effectively.

Writing, in particular, is an essential skill for students to develop as it serves as a means of communication. White (1986) states that writing is the process of expressing ideas, information, knowledge, or experience and understanding the writing to acquire the knowledge or some information to share and learn. In Indonesia, students have been learning text-writing aptitudes since elementary school. However, in-depth text writing typically begins in junior high school and progresses to senior high. There are various forms of texts used in writing, including recounts, narratives, reports, and descriptives (Hutauruk et al., 2022).

Descriptive text is a text that describes an object, situation, or feeling in detail. Wardiman (as cited in (Fitriyanti, 2014)) stated that descriptive text is a kind of text that describes a particular thing, person, or other in detail. According to Gerot and Wignell, the social function of descriptive text is to describe certain people, places, or things (Ashera & Saun, 2013). A descriptive text is composed of two parts, namely identification and description (Wardani & Waris, 2014). In the identification part, students provide a general description of the object and in the description part, learners begin to describe the object in more detail. To create descriptive text, students must master the tense or linguistic elements of the text. According to Priyatni, the linguistic elements or tenses contained in descriptive text consist of simple present tense, adjectives, nouns, and verbs (Arifin, 2018). Creating descriptive text is quite challenging because students are asked to describe an object based on its characteristics of the object. In creating descriptive text, students must understand the linguistic elements of the text and the chosen object to create good and correct descriptive text about the chosen object.

Although English has been taught from kindergarten, it is not simple to understand English classes in secondary school because English is not Indonesia's mother tongue. Writing is one of the most challenging abilities for Indonesian language learners to master out of the four fundamental English skills. According to the researchers' experience teaching in a senior high school, pupils often struggle with the process of writing a text (particularly when producing descriptive text) and make several errors in writing. Concerning this, Sa'adah (2020) points out that mastering the skill of writing can be challenging as it requires particular attention and adherence to certain rules throughout the process. These rules encompass word choice, coherence, correlation, and grammar, and must be considered at every step of the writing process. The difficulty in mastering writing skills makes learners often make mistakes when writing texts. To reduce the errors that are often made by learners in writing texts, the researchers will try to find and classify the types of errors made by conducting an Error Analysis (EA).

Error Analysis (EA) is a study conducted by second and foreign language learners to determine a person's ability to learn a language and to find information about the difficulties experienced in learning a language. In this case, error analysis is also often carried out to examine errors made by second language learners (Richards, 1974). The results of error analysis activities are very useful in helping the second language learning process, especially in the preparation of teaching materials.

Studies on error analysis in descriptive texts by senior school students have been conducted by other researchers. Based on research conducted by Zailani et al. (2021), it was found that there are still many students who make mistakes in writing descriptive text. Senior high school students in another particular context also commonly make many syntactical errors in writing descriptive texts (Hardiany & Budiati, 2022). In addition, the results of other studies also show that students often make morphological errors in writing descriptive texts, such as errors in using capital letters, punctuation, capital letters and punctuation (Luthfiyah et al., 2021), tense (Muis, 2019), and personal pronouns (Harahap, 2023). In connection with the error in the learning process, Dulay and Burt (as cited in Richards (1974, pp. 95–123)) say that "you can't learn without making errors." It means that errors become common things that learners do during the learning process.

Based on the statement above, the authors as also the researcher team intend to analyze the students' errors in writing a descriptive text under the title "A Corpus-based Study on Errors in Writing Descriptive Text Committed by Senior High School Students in a Modelled-school Context within Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province". The researchers try to identify and analyze the type and source of errors because many students still struggle to understand the descriptive text. The researchers hope that this study can help teachers overcome the problem of errors in writing and the student's lack of writing skills.

METHOD

The study utilized case studies and employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. According to Gomm et al. (2000), case study refers to research that investigates a few cases in considerable depth. In this case, the researchers conducted case studies to investigate the problem of writing errors carried out by students in depth. The qualitative approach was utilized to identify the types of errors present in the written text, while the quantitative approach was utilized to present numerical data related to the frequency and number of writing errors contained in the data collected.

The subject in this research was the tenth-grade students at St. John Paul II Senior High School Maumere. The researchers took two classes to conduct the research using a purposive sampling technique. There are seven classes in the tenth grade of St. John Paul II Senior High School Maumere. Based on observations during the learning activities in the classroom, the researchers chose classes X2 and X3 as the subject of the study. The total number of X2 and X3 students involved in this study was 50 consisting of 13 boys and 37 girls.

The process of implementing a case study in this research consists of five steps as already proposed by Lui (2013): designing research, selecting cases, collecting data, analyzing data, and writing a report. In designing the research, the researchers start preparing everything in need, such as research questions and objectives, research instruments, and teaching modules. Then the researchers select the case to be studied and then start collecting data. After collecting the data, the researchers analyze those data, in this case, analyze the errors in writing that are often made by the students, then write reports to display the results of the research.

Interviews, written assessments, and observations were used to gather research data. The researchers observed the students' writing abilities as they learned in the first phase. Students are then given a writing test by one researcher in the second phase. In the third step, two researchers interviewed teachers and students to learn the reasons behind errors that

children frequently make and attempted to identify remedies, following the administration of the writing tests and analysis of the common errors.

The researchers collected data through a written test to analyze the errors that students often make in writing descriptive texts. The research was conducted in classes X2 and X3, involving fifty learners, consisting of thirteen boys and thirty-seven girls. Previously, the researchers explained descriptive texts first, after which the writing test was conducted on the learners. In the writing test, the researchers asked the learners to write a descriptive text about their family, consisting of 100 to 200 words or at least two paragraphs.

In the data analysis, the researchers use the five steps of error analysis proposed by Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005): collecting samples, identifying errors, describing errors, explaining errors, and error evaluation. The researchers collected data samples by conducting a written test on the participants for 90 minutes, and after that, the researchers identified the errors that many of the participants made. After that, researchers described the errors, gave an explanation of the factors causing the error, and performed an evaluation of errors by offering solutions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Classification of Writing Errors

The errors found in this study are classified based on linguistic description and the content and organization of the writing. In this study, the authors use the classification of errors proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, which is then classified in general by Jichun (2015). The classification of errors put forward by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen consists of (1) Linguistic Category Taxonomy, (2) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, (3) Comparative Taxonomy, and (4) Communicative Effect Taxonomy. Jichun (2015) elaborated the four classifications of errors proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen into three general levels consisting of linguistic errors, discourse errors, and pragmatic errors. In addition, in this study, one more level is added, namely "Indolish" (Indonesian English), which is considered as Language 1 (L1) interference.

1. Linguistic Errors

Linguistic errors are errors in the use of language in the context of a second language, in this case, errors in the use of English. A linguistic error is a grammatical error. Errors at this level are divided into the following sub-categories: morphological error, lexical error, syntactical error, and cohesion and consistency error.

- Morphological Errors

Morphological errors are errors or inaccuracies in the use of morphological forms, such as the addition of prefixes or suffixes, incorrect plural forms, third-person singular form exclusions, capitalization and punctuation errors, and morphological structures in language.

- Lexical Errors

Lexical errors are errors in the use of vocabulary in language that happen when speakers or authors use words that are incorrect or mispronounced. In this study, lexical errors are defined as semantic or conceptual vocabulary errors, specifically malformations, coinage, and collocation errors.

- Syntactical Errors

Syntactical errors refer to errors in the grammar of a sentence that occur when speakers or authors make errors in the ordering and insertion of words in a sentence. Syntactical errors commonly found consist of errors in the use of articles, prepositions, conjunctions, helping verbs, and pronouns, as well as errors in sentence structure, tense, tone, and mood.

- Cohesive and Coherent Errors

Cohesion and coherence errors are errors that occur due to improper word usage that makes the text not well organized and difficult to understand. According to Halliday and Hasan, cohesion refers to a "cohesion relationship" that involves content such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical coherence. In connection with this research, cohesion and coherent errors usually occur because of inaccuracies in the use of conjunctions, unrelated ideas, and words that do not match the topic of the text.

2. Discourse Errors

Unlike easily identifiable linguistic errors, discourse errors are less obvious and often reflect issues with idea production and writing organization. Discourse error occurs when there is an error in organizing and organizing information in a text or discourse. It is related to errors in the structure of sentences, the use of paragraphs, and the relationship between sentences.

3. L1 Interference

In this type of error, the English sentence generally made is still very much affected by the everyday language style which must result in deviation from the standard English language. This is because the students are not fully able to use the second language and are still affected by the mother tongue. (Indonesian language, especially the local language in East Nusa Tenggara).

The Proportion (Frequency and Percentage) of Students' Error

After categorizing all the errors in the data that had been collected, the researchers began to calculate the number and percentage of errors found. The results of calculating the number and percentage of errors in the sample will be a quantitative result that is certainly important and needs to be known.

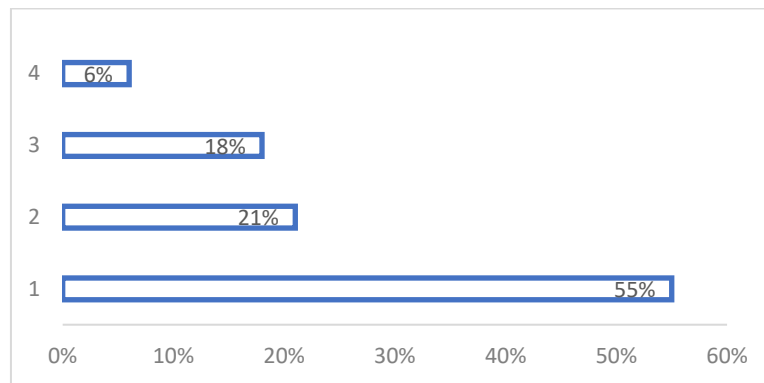
As shown in Figure 1, a total of 817 writing errors were collected from the whole sample. Of all the errors found, linguistic errors are the most frequent writing errors committed by students, with a total of 668, about 83% of the total errors. The next type of error is L1 interference with a total of 88, which account for 11% of the total errors. The last type of error is discourse errors with 61, about 6% of the total errors.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of errors within the largest subcategory, linguistic errors. In addition, Figure 2 shows the distribution of errors in the most significant subcategories of linguistic errors.

Table 1. Types of writing errors

Types of Errors	Linguistic Errors	L1 Interference	Discourse Errors	Total
Number of Errors	668	88	61	817
Proportions	83%	11%	6%	100%

Figure 1. Subcategories of linguistic errors



1: Morphological errors; 2: Syntactical errors; 3: Lexical errors; 4: Cohesive and coherent errors

Discussions

Types of Errors Commonly Made by Students

After analyzing the data that has been collected, the researchers found that students commonly make 3 types of errors, namely linguistic errors, discourse errors, and L1 Interference. Based on the three types of errors, the most frequent errors made by students in writing descriptive texts are linguistic errors, followed by L1 Interference and discourse errors.

1. Linguistic Errors

Linguistic errors are errors in the use of language in a second language context (in this case, errors in the use of English). Linguistic errors are errors in the use of grammar. Errors at this level are divided into several sub-categories, namely morphological errors, syntactic errors, lexical errors, and cohesion and coherence errors.

In the morphology sub-category, learners often make mistakes in writing words or composing a sentence. Morphological errors made by learners consist of spelling errors, errors in writing plurals (suffix -s/es) and third person singular, as well as errors in using punctuation, capital letters, and affixes. One example of an error in the morphological sub-category is "*My brother Chandara is **interested** in art and good at drawing.*". The example belongs to word spelling errors and this type of error is quite common among learners. In the lexical sub-category, learners often make misformation and errors in collocation. Then, for the syntactical sub-category, learners often make mistakes in constructing sentence structures and using articles. Syntax errors made by learners consist of errors in using articles, tenses, prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, and auxiliary verbs. One example of an error in the syntactical sub-category is "*I am a student **in** St. John Paul II Senior High School Maumere*". The example includes errors in the use of prepositions, and this type of error is quite common among learners. Next are cohesion and coherence errors related to the unity of form and meaning of the sentences that make up the text.

2. L1 Interference

An error commonly found among learners when writing descriptive text is the error caused by the use of the first language. This occurs when Indonesian learners apply the rules and colloquial style of their mother tongue to their English writing. Utilizing first-language rules or styles in this context leads to flawed English that deviates from standard English. Here is an example of L1 interference created by learners:

“..., *the characteristics of my father are tall, **white, and hair water.***” (st11, line 8).

”..., *the characteristics of my father are tall, **fair-skinned, and straight-haired.***”
(standard English)

In the error examples above, the application of colloquial style in English sentences makes the sentences deviate from standard English. The learners who became participants in this study generally live in Maumere City, East Nusa Tenggara Province, and use Indonesian in their daily communication. Even so, Indonesian use has been influenced by the culture or language style of the daily language of the Maumere people. The examples of errors listed above occur because learners translate Indonesian sentences that have been influenced by daily styles into English.

3. Discourse Errors

In addition to linguistic errors and L1 interference, students also often make discourse errors. Discourse errors made by students in writing descriptive texts include problems with idea generation and writing structure. Discourse errors often stem from problems with the coherence of ideas and the organization of information in the text. One of the errors that occurs is the lack of unity between sentences. This can be caused by the inappropriate use of conjunctions or the absence of connections between ideas in the text. In addition, errors in the development of ideas or the order of information can also lead to discourse errors. For example, if the order of presenting information about family members is disorganized or there are chronological errors, it can be uncomfortable to read and difficult for readers to understand.

Cause of Errors That Students Make

Based on the results of observations, writing tests, and interviews, as well as the opinions of experts, the researchers found several factors causing errors in writing performed by students. First, lack of vocabulary mastery. Learners generally have limited vocabulary, making it difficult for them to compose sentences to create descriptive texts. According to Nation, vocabulary is the most important element that needs to be mastered in language lessons. Vocabulary limitations can be an obstacle to writing, which later causes word usage errors and eventually makes the text less clear.

Second, there is a lack of tenses and grammar understanding. Lack of understanding of tenses and grammar becomes one of the causes of written errors committed by students. English speakers such as David Crystal state that one common cause of writing errors is a lack of understanding about tenses or grammar. In this case, placement of words that do not match the class of words causes a text to become less clear and difficult to understand.

Third, there is a lack of writing practice and motivation. Learners who became participants in this study generally lack writing practice. From the results of the interviews, it is known that generally students rarely practice writing independently, writing practice is only done when given a task by the teacher. The learners' unfamiliarity with writing is the cause of their frequent errors in writing descriptive texts. Besides the lack of writing practice, the errors that occur are also caused by the low motivation of students to write descriptive texts in English. Based on interviews with students, students' motivation to write is generally only to fulfill assignments and get scores.

Sixth, first language interference. The interference of the first language in the understanding and use of the second language can affect writing skills. This is reinforced by the teacher's opinion, which said "*The first language that learners use to communicate every day will greatly affect the language style in their writing.*" The first language mastered and used by learners affects the way they arrange sentences to create text. The difference in sentence structure between the mother tongue and the second language often makes students confused, eventually causes syntactical errors, and affects writing style.

Fifth, self-confidence and writing anxiety. Based on the interview results, 5 out of 8 interviewed participants felt less confident and hesitant when asked to create a descriptive text. According to them, writing descriptive text is longer and more complicated compared to writing to answer ordinary questions. In addition, when writing descriptive text, they have to follow the structure and pay attention to the ideas in each paragraph to be related to each other, which they think is very complicated. From these events, it can be concluded that the majority of students dislike writing descriptive text because they find it difficult and lack confidence. Students with low self-efficacy or confidence tend to give up more quickly when faced with text-writing challenges (Erkan & Saban, 2011).

Seventh, time pressure and stress. Stress and pressure due to limited time can have a negative impact on writing skills. During the interview, some learners said that panic due to the short time could make them make errors in writing. "*I feel panic when I know that the time will be over. At that time I will try to finish my writing as best I can without paying attention to whether the writing is correct or there are still mistakes, the important thing is I can submit the writing immediately.*" (St 7). Someone who feels pressured may make errors due to a lack of attention to detail in their writing.

Eighth, creating text using Google Translate. Another factor that causes errors and difficulties in writing is the habit of creating texts instantly using Google Translate without rereading or studying them again. "*When asked to create or translate text, I often use Google Translate rather than a dictionary.*" (St 5). Another student's opinion is "*I will copy the text or sentence that I want to translate, after which I will directly copy or write down the translation from Google Translate.*" (St 8). This habit makes it difficult for learners when asked to write texts and presents many errors because robot translation is different from human translation.

Pedagogical Implication

Based on the results of writing tests and interviews, it has been found that students often struggle with writing descriptive texts, making errors, and facing difficulties. The researchers have suggested some learning methods and techniques that can be useful in overcoming these difficulties and reducing errors in writing for students.

1. Process Writing Approach

The researcher proposes the use of the Process Writing Approach which can be useful to overcome the difficulties that can later reduce the writing errors faced by X2 and X3 students at St. John Paul II Catholic High School in Maumere. The writing process approach is a method of learning English that allows learners to write down their ideas or experiences by doing the process without worrying about making mistakes. In this approach, writing becomes a process of producing work so that learners can get or give feedback from and to classmates during the writing process which can later help them revise their writing. According to Peregoy & Boyle

(2005), the writing process approach is a potential method that can train students to apply proper grammar rules in writing and be able to communicate their ideas and experiences well in writing. The writing process approach carried out by students consists of 5 stages, namely pre-writing, writing, revising, editing, and publishing (Hale, in Zainuddin & Winata (2020)). In the pre-writing stage, students will plan the writing to be made, brainstorm, and collect the data needed. After that, students will start writing by making a draft of the writing first. After that, students will enter the revision stage, where at this stage students will get feedback from classmates regarding their writing and then students will enter the editing stage, namely writing changes or additions to the text made to make it better. After doing the editing stage, students can publish the writing that has been made. Through the application of the writing process approach, students can practice their writing skills and communicate their ideas. In addition, this approach can also help students master the use of English grammar and minimize errors in writing through feedback given by classmates at the revision stage.

2. Continuous Writing Activities

Continuous writing activities are essential for learners to do under teacher guidance. In this case, teachers can guide learners to write long-term, either independently or in groups. Independent continuous writing activities can be done by learners by keeping a daily journal under teacher guidance. Group writing activities can be carried out by learners by creating an English writing group accompanied by the teacher to create a monthly wall magazine using English. Implementing sustainable writing activities is expected to make learners accustomed to writing English texts so that they can increase their vocabulary, improve their writing skills, and reduce the errors that are often made. Through group writing activities, learners can get corrections from teachers and peers. Corrections obtained from teachers and peers can help learners know where the mistakes are made and can make their writing better in the future.

CONCLUSION

The researchers conducted case study research to investigate more deeply the types and causes of errors that are often made by students in grades X2 and X3 at St. John Paul II Catholic Senior High School in Maumere while writing description texts, as well as to find solutions to the problem. Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that students often make linguistic errors, with a total of 668 errors or a percentage of 83%.

Linguistic errors consist of 4 subcategories, and the most frequent error made by students is morphological errors related to word or sentence forms. The morphological errors that are often made consist of the addition of prefixes and suffixes, sentence structure errors, punctuation and capital letters, reduction of the third-person singular form, and plural form errors. Many factors cause errors in writing made by students. These factors include the influence of the use of the native language and a lack of mastery of vocabulary, tenses, and grammar. In addition, the lack of writing practice and motivation, pressure due to time and stress, and unwise use of Google Translate are also factors that cause errors in writing.

After conducting the research, the researcher suggests using a Process Writing Approach and conducting continuous writing activities to familiarize learners with writing English texts and minimize the mistakes made. Through this approach and activity, learners can develop their abilities and get used to writing English texts.

The study suggests some recommendations for both teachers and students. To improve English writing skills, teachers should prioritize text-writing exercises and provide

comprehensive explanations of prepositions, plural markers ("s" or "es"), and the use of articles (a, an, and the) in descriptive writing. Teachers need to provide examples of well-structured sentences with proper grammar to help students avoid mistakes in their writing. Additionally, teachers should offer feedback to students on their writing, allowing them to identify and correct any errors. Students are encouraged to practice writing both in and out of the classroom, paying close attention to their language and focusing on learning English, particularly in writing. Getting students used to writing English texts can be done by the teacher by asking students to do continuous writing activities independently or in groups.

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