



Error Patterns in Eleventh-Grade Students' Descriptive Texts Using Surface Strategy Taxonomy

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026 - 06- 01 Revised: 2026 06-18 Accepted: 2026 06-30	<i>This study aimed to identify the types of errors found in eleventh-grade students' descriptive texts at SMK Muhammadiyah Purworejo by applying the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). This study employed a descriptive qualitative method involving 27 students as the participants. The data were collected through a writing task and analyzed by classifying the errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering categories. The findings revealed that a total of 369 errors were identified, consisting of 243 misformation errors, 69 omission errors, 42 addition errors, and 15 misordering errors. Misformation was identified as the most dominant error type, indicating that students continued to experience difficulties in applying correct grammatical forms, particularly in subject-verb agreement and verb usage. This dominance also suggests that students had partially understood sentence structures but lacked grammatical accuracy in constructing descriptive texts. The study concludes that vocational high school students still experience significant challenges in producing grammatically accurate descriptive writing. Therefore, more focused grammar instruction and guided writing practice are needed to improve students' writing skills.</i>
Keywords: Descriptive Text; Error Analysis; Surface Strategy Taxonomy; Vocational High School Students; Writing Errors.	
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1. Introduction

Language plays a fundamental role as a medium of communication that enables individuals to express ideas, exchange information, and engage in social interaction. In the context of globalization, English has become the dominant international language used in academic, professional, and intercultural communication. As the most widely learned foreign language in the world, English plays an essential role in supporting students' academic achievement and future career readiness, particularly for vocational high school students who are prepared to enter professional workplaces. In vocational education, English learning is commonly associated with English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which is designed to equip learners with language skills relevant to specific occupational and academic contexts (Mahbub, 2018). Therefore, English proficiency is considered an important component of vocational students' professional competence and workplace communication skills.

Among the four language skills, writing is widely recognized as one of the most complex skills to master because it requires learners to organize ideas coherently while applying appropriate grammatical structures and vocabulary. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, students frequently experience difficulties related to grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and sentence organization (Fareed et al., 2016). Previous studies have also revealed that grammatical difficulties often become a major source of writing anxiety, causing students to struggle in producing cohesive and coherent texts. In descriptive writing specifically, students commonly encounter problems related to subject-verb agreement, verb forms, sentence construction, and mechanics (Ismayanti & Kholiq, 2020). These recurring difficulties often lead to various grammatical errors that affect the clarity and accuracy of students' writing.

Several previous studies have investigated error patterns in students' descriptive writing across different educational levels in Indonesia. Muhsin (2016), for example, found that misformation errors were the most dominant type, particularly in the use of simple present tense structures. Similarly, Fitriani (2023) and Isma et al. (2023) identified frequent errors in noun phrases, verb forms, and tense usage. Other studies also reported that students experienced difficulties in organizing ideas, applying grammatical rules, and maintaining accuracy in descriptive texts (Husna, 2017; Jayanti, 2019). These findings indicate that grammatical difficulties remain a persistent problem in EFL writing, including in descriptive text production.

Despite the growing number of studies on writing errors, research focusing specifically on vocational high school students remains relatively limited. Most previous studies have examined students in general English contexts, while vocational students learn English within the framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which emphasizes practical and profession-oriented communication. Preliminary observations conducted at SMK Muhammadiyah

Purworejo also revealed that eleventh-grade students still experienced recurring difficulties in subject-verb agreement, vocabulary selection, and sentence construction when writing descriptive texts. These conditions indicate the need for further investigation into the specific error patterns produced by vocational students in descriptive writing.

Based on this gap, this study aims to identify and analyze the types of errors found in eleventh-grade students' descriptive texts at SMK Muhammadiyah Purworejo by using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). In particular, this study seeks to answer two research questions: (1) what types of errors are found in students' descriptive texts, and (2) which error type is the most dominant. The findings of this study are expected to provide useful insights for improving grammar instruction and writing practices in vocational education contexts.

3. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design within the framework of error analysis. The qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed not only to quantify students' errors but also to describe and interpret the linguistic characteristics of the errors found in students' descriptive writing. The study applied the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), which classifies errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering categories.

The participants of this study were 27 eleventh-grade students of SMK Muhammadiyah Purworejo. The participants were selected using purposive sampling because they had learned descriptive text as part of their English curriculum. Therefore, they were considered capable of producing descriptive texts that reflected their understanding of the linguistic features of the genre. The participants came from the vocational high school level, where English is taught within the context of vocational and practical communication.

The data were collected through a controlled writing task conducted during a regular English class session. Students were instructed to write a descriptive paragraph about a person, place, or object within the allocated classroom time. The writing task was designed to elicit students' use of descriptive text structures and grammatical features, particularly the simple present tense and subject-verb agreement. The collected texts were then documented as the primary data source of the study.

The data analysis followed the procedures of error analysis proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). First, the researcher carefully read all students' texts to identify linguistic errors. Second, the identified errors were classified into four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. For example, omission errors involved the absence of necessary grammatical elements, while misformation errors referred to the incorrect use of grammatical forms or

structures. Third, the frequency of each error type was calculated to determine the dominant error category. To ensure the credibility of the findings, peer checking and theoretical validation were conducted to maintain consistency in the error classification process.

3. Result

The findings of this study revealed that students produced various grammatical errors in their descriptive writing. Based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), the errors were classified into four categories: addition, omission, misformation, and misordering. The distribution of students' errors is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Recapitulation of Students' Errors

Student's Number	Types of Errors				Total Errors
	Addition	Omission	Misformation	Misordering	
S1	0	5	12	0	17
S2	2	4	4	1	10
S3	2	3	36	0	41
S4	0	7	4	1	12
S5	0	3	9	0	12
S6	5	4	7	0	16
S7	0	1	2	0	3
S8	6	4	10	0	20
S9	5	1	7	1	14
S10	1	1	13	0	15
S11	0	2	0	0	2
S12	1	0	6	0	7
S13	0	1	5	6	12
S14	1	1	2	0	4
S15	12	0	15	0	27
S16	0	1	1	0	2
S17	0	0	36	0	36
S18	4	3	12	2	21
S19	0	0	9	0	9
S20	2	1	2	1	6
S21	0	9	11	0	20
S22	0	1	1	0	2
S23	1	5	9	1	16
S24	0	2	6	0	8
S25	0	1	6	0	7
S26	0	0	9	0	9
S27	0	7	18	2	27
Total	42	69	243	15	369

Based on Table 1, a total of 369 errors were identified in students' descriptive texts. Among the four categories, misinformation errors were found to be the most dominant type, with 243 errors recorded. This was followed by omission errors with 69 occurrences, addition errors with 42 occurrences, and misordering errors with 15 occurrences.

6. Discussion

This study aimed to identify the types of grammatical errors found in students' descriptive writing and determine the most dominant error category based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). The findings revealed that all four error categories—omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering—were present in students' writing. Among these categories, misinformation errors appeared most frequently, indicating that students experienced greater difficulty in applying correct grammatical forms than in organizing sentence structures.

The dominance of misinformation errors suggests that students had partially developed an understanding of English sentence patterns but still lacked grammatical accuracy. Most errors were related to verb forms, subject-verb agreement, and lexical selection. For example, sentences such as "She go to school every day" demonstrate that students recognized the need for verbs in sentence construction but were unable to apply the correct grammatical inflections. This finding supports the concept of interlanguage, in which learners construct a developing linguistic system that reflects partial mastery of the target language.

Omission errors, which ranked as the second most frequent category, further indicate that students still experienced difficulties in recognizing obligatory grammatical elements in English sentence construction. Errors such as "He very tall" show that learners often omitted auxiliary or copular verbs that are required in English grammar. This pattern may also reflect cross-linguistic influence, as certain grammatical elements in English are absent or optional in students' first language structures.

In contrast, addition errors reflected students' tendency to overgeneralize grammatical rules. Sentences such as "She is goes to market" illustrate how learners combined multiple grammatical forms simultaneously in an attempt to construct correct sentences. Meanwhile, the relatively small number of misordering errors suggests that students generally possessed a basic understanding of English word order despite occasional inaccuracies in phrase construction and adjective sequencing.

Overall, the findings indicate that grammatical accuracy remains a major challenge for vocational high school students in descriptive writing. Although students were generally able to construct sentence frameworks, they still struggled to apply appropriate grammatical forms consistently. This finding aligns with previous studies which reported that EFL learners frequently encounter

difficulties related to verb usage, agreement systems, and tense application in descriptive texts.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings highlight the importance of form-focused instruction in vocational English classrooms. Teachers should provide more guided writing practice, focused corrective feedback, and repeated exposure to accurate grammatical structures, particularly related to verb morphology and subject-verb agreement. Such instructional support is necessary to help students gradually internalize grammatical rules and improve the accuracy of their written communication in both academic and professional contexts.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated the types of grammatical errors found in eleventh-grade students' descriptive texts at SMK Muhammadiyah Purworejo by applying the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982). The findings revealed that students produced four categories of errors: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Among these categories, misformation was identified as the most dominant error type, indicating that students still experienced considerable difficulties in applying appropriate grammatical forms, particularly in subject-verb agreement, verb inflection, and lexical selection.

The findings further suggest that although students generally understood the basic structure of descriptive texts, they still lacked grammatical accuracy in written production. This condition reflects the ongoing development of learners' interlanguage system and demonstrates that grammatical competence remains a significant challenge for vocational high school students in EFL writing contexts.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study highlights the importance of providing more focused grammar instruction, guided writing practice, and corrective feedback to improve students' writing accuracy. Particular attention should be given to simple present tense usage, subject-verb agreement, and sentence construction in descriptive writing activities.

Nevertheless, this study was limited to one class of eleventh-grade students at a single vocational high school and focused only on descriptive texts using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy framework. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve broader participant groups, examine different text genres, or combine error analysis with other linguistic approaches to obtain more comprehensive insights into students' writing development.

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