# The students' error analysis in writing descriptive texts

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#### Abstract

This study aimed to find out and analyze students' error analysis at three student's categories in writing descriptive text on paragraph-based writing subject. The analysis involved students' writing ability in developing the ideas, organizing the ideas, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and the elements of descriptive text include generic structure and language features. The design of this study was case study under qualitative approach. There were 9 students from three categories as the subject of this study. The categories were high, medium, and low-level students at the fourth-semester of English Education Department at one of private university in Cirebon, West Java in the academic years of 2019/2020. The data were taken from student's descriptive writing text and interview. The findings showed that the most errors from three students' categories were grammatical errors, and how they arrange the elements of descriptive text. The total numbers of errors committed by students were 50 items, which include grammatical error with 40 items and the percentage 80%, generic structure error with 3 items and the percentage 6%, language features error with 7 items and percentage 14%. The most error made by the students are grammatical error with 40 items and the percentage 80%. It can be concluded that the students made grammatical errors, it is because they lack of vocabulary mastery and lack of grammar rules.

Keywords: students' error analysis; writing; descriptive text

### **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is one important language skills that should be taught from elementary school up to university level, some experts and research have proved that writing is the most difficult skill because in producing writing text students need to find the ideas and think about the way to express and arrange a statement and paragraph that is clear to be understood by the reader. Writing is the most essential skill to acquire by students, especially by EFL students in Indonesia. In fact, many EFL students still face some difficulties to master such skill since there are some differences between Bahasa and English such as structural and grammatical terms as well as styles (Sugesti, et al, 2020: 398). In addition, EFL students also should work hard on transferring the meaning from Bahasa to English context in order to make the result of writing understandable and make sense when it is read by people especially native speakers. When the students write, they involved with the target language and have a chance to go beyond of what they think, believe and know to be written in a paper and finally produce sentences, paragraph and a text. Writing is a complex process that allows the researchers to explore thoughts and

ideas and make them visible and concrete (Tiwari, 2005:120). It is not easy because they have to generate, develop, and organize the ideas, and it becomes a complex activity.

This study is aimed at analyzing the students' errors in writing descriptive text in paragraph-based writing subject. In the subject there is a discussion about genre-based approach. Descriptive text is chosen because it is taught in paragraph-based writing subject. Descriptive text is known as a part of type in writing. According to Knapp and Watkins (2005) Descriptive is a type of text aimed to describe particular person, place, and thing. It can be concluded that descriptive text is a text which presents information about something. It can describe about a person, a place, an object, or an event using appropriate details and by visual experience. It is used to create a visual image of people, place, even of time days or season. It may also be used to describe the outwards appearance people. Details used are usually sensory and selected to describe what the student see, hear, smell, touch and taste (Rass, 2015:50)

This study seeks to find answers of the following two questions: (1) What are the most errors found in the students' descriptive writing text at three students' categories? and (2) What factors motivate the students' errors in writing descriptive text?

### METHOD

This study aimed to find out and analyze the grammatical errors the students produce on descriptive text. Relate to the purpose of the study, the researchers used the case study as the design under qualitative approach. This is because the researchers choose to view it as a methodology, a type of design in qualitative study, an object of study Creswell (2007), and a product of the inquiry. Case study is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes.

To find out percentage categories of students' writing descriptive text, the researchers used the formula:

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

Notice: P= Percentage

F= Frequency of errors

N= Number of cases (Total word)

### **Research Instruments**

The researchers used document analysis as the instrument. The document analysis was students' descriptive writing text. Then, the researchers analyze, classifying errors the students' work based on types of errors and generic structure in descriptive text.

### **Students Writing**

The data in this study obtained from the students' writing product. The writing products are descriptive text written by the fourth-semester students of English Language

Education at one of private University in Cirebon, West Java in the academic year of 2019/2020. The focused on the errors made by the students in writing descriptive text.

### **Interview Guide**

### Interviewing the Lecturer

In this study, the researchers prepared the question before doing an interview, the sources of information obtained from the lecturer. There are three questions for the lecturer. The interview with the lecturer conducted before the study was held on Friday, May 01, 2020. The researchers conducted interview with the lecturer aimed at determines the problems and difficulties of students in descriptive writing text.

### Interviewing the Students

The researchers conducted interview with the students aimed to determine the factors which make the fourth-semester students do the errors in descriptive writing text, in the academic years of 2019/2020. There are ten questions about student's writing descriptive text. The interview conducted on Monday, July 20, 2020.

### Data Collecting Procedure

The researchers used the purposive sampling technique, and it focused on nine students in the fourth-semester students of English Education Department at one of private University in Cirebon, West Java in the academic years of 2019/2020. Regarding the pandemic of COVID-19, the researchers collected students' writing by creating a WhatsApp group and giving essay writing test about descriptive texts by using Zoom Meeting. Therefore, that the students need to make a paragraph based on the picture.

### Participants

The research participants were the fourth-semester students of English Education Department at one of private University in Cirebon, West Java in the academic year of 2019/2020. In this study the researchers took nine students from one class in the fourth-semester students in the academic year of 2019/2020. This study discussed in depth about descriptive text, the researchers took nine students, in the level of three high learners, medium learners, and low learners.

Students	Categories	Initial	Gender	Age
1	High	SH1	Male	20
2	High	SH2	Female	20
3	High	SH3	Male	20
4	Medium	SM1	Female	20
5	Medium	SM2	Female	21
6	Medium	SM3	Male	21
7	Low	SL1	Female	19
8	Low	SL2	Female	20
9	Low	SL3	Female	20

### Table 1. List of Participants

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### Results

### **Grammatical Errors**

This study focused on grammatical errors on writing descriptive text on the fourthsemester students of English Education Department at one of private University in Cirebon, West Java in the academic years of 2019/2020. In this study the researchers take nine students' descriptive writing test, in the level of three high learners, medium learners, and low learners.

In this case, there are five elements typical errors, such as: subject-verb agreement it is about matching in number and person of subject, capitalization is the first letter of a word, usage is about articles, plural-singular form, and proposition, sentence pattern is the basic sentence pattern of English is subject + verb + object/complement, and the last is spelling it is about relatively minor importance as far as reading is concerned.

Table 2. Students Grammatical Erfor in Writing Descriptive Text						
Students						
Categories	Subject- Verb Agreement	Capitaliz ation	Usage	Sentence Pattern	Spelling	Total
SH 1	3	1	-	-	-	4
SH 2	1	-	3	3	-	7
SH 3	6	3	1	-	1	11
SM 1	2	-	2	-	-	4
SM 2	-	-	1	-	-	1
SM 3	-	1	_	1	-	2
SL 1	-	-	3	-	1	4
SL 2	-	-	-	-	1	1
SL 3	1	2	2	-	1	6
Total	13	7	12	4	4	40
Percentage of error	33%	17%	30%	10%	10%	100%

Table 2. Students' Grammatical Error in Writing Descriptive Text

Note Students Categories:

SH: Students High SM: Students Medium

SL: Students Low

Frequency of students' error in writing descriptive text, it can be concluded that from five classification of grammatical errors, those are subject-verb agreement, capitalization, usage, sentence pattern, and spelling. The total numbers of errors committed by students were 40 items. Here are the frequency and percentage of the four types: The first number of subject-verb agreement error with 13 items and the percentage 33%. The second is capitalization error with 7 items and the percentage 17%. The third is usage error with 12 items and percentage 30%. The fourth is sentence pattern error with 4 items and percentage 10%. The last is spelling error with 4 items and percentage 10%. The most grammatical error made by the students is subject-verb agreement error with 13 items and the percentage 33%.

Generic Structure Errors

According to Purwati & Marta (2005), generic structure of descriptive text has two parts: the identification and description. Identification identifies the phenomenon to be described. Description describes parts, qualities, and characteristics of the person, place or thing to be described. Therefore, descriptive text has identification and description as generic structure. The researchers can describe, picture, place, human, or thing the other. Related to this case, there was only simple problem faced by few students in this indicator. The students identify the object (person, thing or place) unclearly. The students were unable to develop ideas or information related to object (person, thing or place) in order to make descriptive text clearly.

Students Categories	Types of in Ger Descrip	Total	
	Introduction	Description	
SH 1	-	-	-
SH 2	-	-	-
SH 3	-	1	1
SM 1	-	1	1
SM 2	-	1	1
SM 3	-	-	-
SL 1	-	-	-
SL 2	-	-	-
SL 3	-	-	-
Total	-	3	3
Percentage of error	0%	100%	100%

Table 3. Students' Error in Generic Structure in Descriptive Text

Students' error in generic structure in descriptive text, it can be concluded that from two classification of generic structure. There were some students who only write one paragraph, while in the descriptive text there were two generic structures. Related to this case, the students have to develop ideas and describe all information which related to an object (person, thing or place) in order to help the reader get a clear picture. The total numbers of errors committed by students were 3 items. Here are the frequency and percentage of description error with 3 items and the percentage 100%.

### Students' Error in Language Features in Descriptive Text

In this case, there were some students difficult in using language features (simple present tense, action verb, and adjective). General, it might be caused by a factor which the students do not know the basic structure of simple present tense itself. So, it makes error structure of sentences which is written by students. In specifically, most of them had omission of be, wrong use of singular and plural be, omission of suffix -s/-es and wrong use of verb. Sometimes the students used plural verb for singular subject.

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Students	Types of in De			
Categories	Simple Present Tense	Action Verb	Adjective	Total
SH 1	1	-	-	1
SH 2	3	-	-	3
SH 3	2	-	-	2
SM 1	1	-	-	1
SM 2	-	-	-	-
SM 3	-	-	-	-
<b>SL 1</b>	-	-	-	-
SL 2	-	-	-	-
<b>SL 3</b>	-	-	-	-
Total	7	-	-	7
Percentage of error	100%	0%	0%	100%

Table 4. Students' Error in Language Features in Descriptive Text

Students' error in generic structure in descriptive text, it can be concluded that from three classification of language features. Here are the frequency and percentage of simple present tense error with 7 items and the percentage 100%. In this case, many students also often make mistakes in using V1 and V1+s/es. They don't use V1s+es for third singular person "she, he". Jack (2003: 31) adds that "in simple present tense, verb is changed to be Verb+s/es for third singular person." It means that if subject of sentence is third singular person/impersonal "she, he, it", V1 is added +s/es. While, if subject is first singular person "I", second singular person "you", first plural person "we", second plural person "you", and third plural person "they", it uses V1 only. Furthermore, many students are in writing. They often put adjective after noun/object. confused to put adjective According to Jack (2003:198), "an adjective is usually followed by "to be"." So, the students should put adjective after to be (before noun) to explain noun of sentence. Those data indicated that using language features in writing descriptive text is difficult for students. Thus, they need to learn it deeply in learning of English writing.

Table 5. Frequency of students Enor in writing Descriptive rext							
Students	Students' E						
Categories	Grammatical error	Generic Structure	Language Features	Total			
SH 1	4	-	1	5			
SH 2	7	-	3	10			
SH 3	11	1	2	14			
SM 1	4	1	1	6			
SM 2	1	1	-	2			

Table 5. Frequency of Students' Error in Writing Descriptive Text

SM 3	2	-	-	2
SL 1	4	-	-	4
SL 2	1	-	-	1
SL 3	6	-	-	6
Total	40	3	7	50
Percentag e of error	<b>80</b> %	6%	14%	100%

Frequency of students' error in writing descriptive text, it can be concluded that from three classification of students' errors, those are grammatical errors, generic structure, and language features. The total numbers of errors committed by students were 50 items. Here are the frequency and percentage of the three types: The first number of grammatical error with 40 items and the percentages 80%. The second is generic structure error with 3 items and the percentage 6%. The last is language features error with 7 items and percentage 14%. The most error made by the students is grammatical error with 40 items and the percentage 80%.

### Students' Obstacles in Composing Descriptive Text

The texts overall are considered to be well enough. However, it still has some grammatical errors, they are for example; subject-verb agreement, capitalization, usage, sentence pattern, and spelling. The researchers found that the most grammatical errors made by the students were subject-verb agreement, the total number of subject-verb agreement are 13 with 33%

### Students' Lack Vocabulary Mastery

According to the result of the interview, it can be inferred that the students lack vocabulary mastery. From the interview, the student still difficulty in vocabulary and tenses. The factor which makes the fourth-semester students still do the errors in descriptive writing text, because they are do not have much vocabulary.

### Students' Lack of Grammar Rules

According to the result of the interview, it can be inferred that the grammar rules affect the students' writing. From the interview, the student still difficulty in grammar rules. The factor which makes the fourth-semester students still do the errors in descriptive writing text, because they are do not know the grammar rules in descriptive text.

### Discussion

No	Students Categories	Types of Error	Incorrect Sentence	Correct Sentence
1.	SH 1	Subject-verb agreement	<ol> <li>Sunyaragi Cave is one part of the <u>palace</u> is now called the palace Kasepuhan Pakungwati.</li> <li>Nowadays, sunyaragi cave <u>become</u> one of the most tourist <u>attraction</u> in cirebon.</li> </ol>	<ol> <li>Sunyaragi Cave is one part of the <u>palaces</u> is now called the palace Kasepuhan Pakungwati.</li> <li>Nowadays, sunyaragi cave <u>becomes</u> one of the most tourist <u>attractions</u> in Cirebon.</li> </ol>

### Table 6. Types of Students' Error in Writing Descriptive Text

			1	Nowadaya	1	Nowadaya approximation
		Capitaliza-	1.	Nowadays, sunyaragi cave becomes one of the	1.	Nowadays, sunyaragi cave becomes one of the most
		tion		most tourist attractions in <u>cirebon</u> .		tourist attractions in <u>Cirebon</u> .
		Simple present Tense	1.	Sunyaragi cave <u>become</u> one of the most tourist attraction in cirebon.	1.	Sunyaragi cave <u>becomes</u> one of the most tourist attractions in Cirebon.
		Subject-verb agreement	1.	Sunyaragi Cave is one of the tourism <u>place</u> was located in Cirebon city.	1.	Sunyaragi Cave is one of the tourism <b>places</b> was located in Cirebon city.
2.	SH 2	Usage	1. 2. 3.	PLN's Sunyaragi, rice <u>fields</u> and settlements.	1. 2. 3.	PLN's Sunyaragi, rice <u>fields</u> , and settlements. Also in the <u>cave</u> , there are many artificial waterfalls to decorate, and garden decoration such as elephants. <u>a female</u> statue of the Virgin Sunti.
		Sentence pattern	1. 2. 3.	In ancient times the cave complex <u>was</u> surrounded by a lake that is Lake Jati. The location where once there <u>was</u> Lake Jati is now dry and has passed by Brigjen Dharsono's pass. The pond in the Taman Sari complex <u>was</u> also poorly maintained and the water dried up.	1. 2. 3.	In ancient times the cave complex <u>is</u> surrounded by a lake that is Lake Jati. The location where once there <u>is</u> Lake Jati is now dry and has passed by Brigjen Dharsono's pass. Sari complex is also poorly maintained and the water dried up. The pond in the Taman Sari complex <u>is</u> also poorly maintained and the water dried up.
		Simple present Tense	1. 2. 3.	In ancient times the cave complex <u>was</u> surrounded by a lake that is Lake Jati. The location where once there <u>was</u> Lake Jati is now dry and has passed by Brigjen Dharsono's pass, the Situngkul river, the location of the Gas Power Plant, PLN's Sunyaragi, The pond in the Taman Sari complex <u>was</u> also poorly maintained and the water dried up.	1. 2. 3.	In ancient times the cave complex <u>is</u> surrounded by a lake that is Lake Jati. The location where once there <u>is</u> Lake Jati is now dry and has passed by Brigjen Dharsono's pass, the Situngkul river, the location of the Gas Power Plant, PLN's Sunyaragi, The pond in the Taman Sari complex <u>is</u> also poorly maintained and the water dried up.
3.	SH 3	Verb Agreement	<ol> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> </ol>	Kasepuhan palace is one of the oldest <u>palace</u> in Cirebon. Kasepuhan palace is a Muslim palace and <u>have</u> a mystery or magical thing about it. <u>Beside</u> the gazebos, kasepuhan palace also <u>have</u> a museum. So many <u>tourist</u> visit kasepuhan <u>palace</u> .	4.	the oldest <b>palaces</b> in Cirebon. Kasepuhan palace is a Muslim palace and <u>has</u> a mystery or magical thing about it. <u>Besides</u> the gazebos, kasepuhan palace also <u>has</u> a museum. So many <u>tourists</u> visit kasepuhan <u>palaces</u> .
		Capitaliza- tion	1.	Kasepuhan palace is one of the oldest palaces in <u>cirebon</u> .	1.	Kasepuhan palace is one of the oldest palaces in <u>Cirebon</u> .

			<u> </u>		
			2. 3.	Kasepuhan palace is a <b><u>muslim</u></b> palace and has a mystery or magical thing about it. Kasepuhan palace is such a beautiful place to visit in <u>cirebon</u> .	<ol> <li>Kasepuhan palace is a <u>Muslim</u> palace and has a mystery or magical thing about it.</li> <li>Kasepuhan palace is such a beautiful place to visit in <u>Cirebon</u>.</li> </ol>
		Usage	1.	Kasepuhan palace is such <u>as</u> a beautiful place to visit in Cirebon.	<ol> <li>Kasepuhan palace is such <u>as</u> a beautiful place to visit in Cirebon.</li> </ol>
		Spelling	1.	It has a <b><u>magnificient</u></b> things in every side or corner.	1. It has a <b><u>magnificent</u></b> things in every side or corner.
		Present Tense	1. 2.	Kasepuhan palace is a Muslim palace and <u>have</u> a mystery or magical thing about it. Beside the gazebos, kasepuhan palace also <u>have</u> a museum.	<ol> <li>Kasepuhan palace is a Muslim palace and <u>has</u> a mystery or magical thing about it.</li> <li>Besides the gazebos, kasepuhan palace also <u>has</u> a museum.</li> </ol>
	CM 1	Subject-Verb Agreement	1. 2. 1.	Sunyaragi Cave is one of the recreation areas in Cirebon that <u>is</u> most visited by visitors. Lawa cave, pawon cave, and many <u>other</u> . Outside the <u>city</u> and	<ol> <li>Sunyaragi Cave is one of the recreation areas in Cirebon that <u>are</u> most visited by visitors.</li> <li>Lawa cave, pawon cave, and many <u>others</u>.</li> <li>Outside the <u>city</u>, and outside</li> </ol>
4.	4. SM 1	Usage	2.	outside the province. Hindu, <u>Chinese</u> and European architectural styles.	the province. 2. Hindu, <u>Chinese,</u> and European architectural styles.
		Present Tense	1.	Sunyaragi Cave is one of the recreation areas in Cirebon that <u>is</u> most visited by visitors.	<ol> <li>Sunyaragi Cave is one of the recreation areas in Cirebon that <u>are</u> most visited by visitors.</li> </ol>
5.	SM 2	Usage	1.	Trusmi is abbreviation of Terus Bersemi.	1. Trusmi is <u>the</u> abbreviation of Terus Bersemi.
6.	SM 3	Capitaliza- tion	1.	In the history of Sunan Gunung Jati is an influential figure in the spread of <u>islam</u> in the archipelago.	1. In the history of Sunan Gunung Jati is an influential figure in the spread of <u>Islam</u> in the archipelago.
		Sentence Pattern	1.	Sunan Gunung Jati Grave is the grave of the wali songo named Syeikh Syarif Hidayatullah or people used to <u>to</u> call it Sunan Gunung Jati.	1. Sunan Gunung Jati Grave is the grave of the wali songo named Syeikh Syarif Hidayatullah or people used <u>to</u> call it Sunan Gunung Jati.
7.	SL 1	Usage	1.	Chinese or ancient Chinese styles, Middle Eastern or Islamic <u>styles</u> and European styles.	<ol> <li>Chinese or ancient Chinese styles, Middle Eastern or Islamic <u>styles</u>, and European styles.</li> <li>The sign can be seen in the form of a window on the Kaputren building, the shape of a rotating staircase in the Arga Jumut <u>cave</u>, and the form of the Pesanggrahan building.</li> <li>This old building is still crowded by <u>people(-)</u> because</li> </ol>

			<ul> <li>This old building is still crowded by people, because it is located right on the edge of the main road.</li> <li>The construction and 1. The construction and</li> </ul>
		Spelling	composition of this sitecomposition of this site-building is a water park.building is a water park.
8.	SL 2	Spelling	1. Thisbangunan1. Thisbuildingresembles aresembles a cave whosepurpose it is built is acave whose purpose it is builtis a place of meditation for theplace of meditation for theSultan of Cirebon'sSultan of Cirebon's
9	SL 3	Subject-Verb Agreement	<ol> <li>Popular with the biggest place market batik in Cirebon with many motif or kind of batik especially batik Mega mendung.</li> <li>Popular with the biggest place market batik in Cirebon with many motifs or kind of batik especially batik Mega mendung.</li> </ol>
		Capitaliza- tion	<ol> <li>Popular with the biggest place market batik in <u>cirebon</u> with many motifs or kind of batik especially batik Mega mendung.</li> <li>Apart from the batik cloth here you can also shop for many other traditional <u>cirebon</u> products.</li> <li>Popular with the biggest place market batik in <u>Cirebon</u> with many motifs or kind of batik especially batik Mega mendung.</li> <li>Apart from the batik cloth here you can also shop for many other traditional <u>Cirebon</u> products.</li> </ol>
		Usage	<ol> <li>Apart from the batik cloth <u>here</u> you can also shop for many other traditional Cirebon products.</li> <li>There will also be premium class batik for those of you wanting to get high class or collect</li> <li>Apart from the batik cloth <u>here,</u> you can also shop for many other traditional Cirebon products.</li> <li>There will also be premium class batik for those of you wanting to get high class or collect</li> <li>Apart from the batik cloth <u>here,</u> you can also shop for many other traditional Cirebon products.</li> <li>There will also be premium class batik for those of you wanting to get <u>a</u> high class or collect batik.</li> </ol>
		Spelling	1.The scale of batik trusmi1.The scale of batik trusmi is like a large gift shop, so it is easy to find a number of <b>favourite</b> items.1.The scale of batik trusmi is like a large gift shop, so it is easy to find a number of <b>favorite</b> items.
		Simple Present Tense	Popular with the biggest placePopular with the biggest placemarket batik in Cirebon withmarket batik in Cirebon with manymany motifor kind of batikespeciallybatikbatikMegamendung.understand

From the result, the researcher found that students' error in writing descriptive text, it can be concluded that from three classification of students' errors, those are grammatical errors, generic structure, and language features. The total numbers of errors committed by students were 50 items. Here are the frequency and percentage of the three types: The first number of grammatical error with 40 items and the percentages 80%. The second is generic structure error with 3 items and the percentage 6%. The last is language features error with 7 items and

percentage 14%. The most error made by the students is grammatical error with 40 items and the percentage 80%.

### CONCLUSION

According to the results above, it is concluded that the subject committed five types of grammatical error made by students in writing descriptive text based, they were subject-verb agreement, capitalization, usage, sentence pattern, and spelling. The total numbers of errors committed by students were 40 items. Here are the frequency and percentage of the four types: The first number of subject-verb agreement error with 13 items and the percentage 33%. The second is capitalization error with 7 items and the percentage 17%. The third is usage error with 12 items and percentage 30%. The fourth is sentence pattern error with 4 items and percentage 10%. The last is spelling error with 4 items and percentage 10%. The most grammatical error made by the students are subject-verb agreement error with 13 items and the percentage 33%.

In this case, it can be concluded that the most errors from three classifications of students' errors, those are grammatical errors, generic structure, and language features. The total numbers of errors committed by students were 50 items. Here are the frequency and percentage of the three types: The first number of grammatical error with 40 items and the percentage 80%. The second is generic structure error with 3 items and the percentage 6%. The last is language features error with 7 items and percentage 14%. The most error made by the students is grammatical error with 40 items and the percentage 80%.

According to the result of the interview, it can be inferred the students made grammatical errors, it is because they lack of vocabulary mastery and lack of grammar rules, because they are do not have much vocabulary and they do not know grammar rules in descriptive text.

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