Error Analysis in the Descriptive Text Writing of Vocational High School Students

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Abstract

English is one of the subjects that has been studied at the elementary to secondary level for many years in Indonesia. One area that must be studied is technical writing skills in English. In the technical writing process in English, there are still many mistakes made by students in Indonesia. So it is very necessary to recognize some common mistakes made by students, to help them improve their teaching and learning strategies in English and improve their learning outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to investigate errors in English technical writing of students at secondary vocational level and the factors that cause these errors. This study focused on errors made by the eleventh grade students of State 10 Vocational High School Jakarta, in their written descriptive text. A total of 30 students were the subjects of this study and they were asked to write descriptive texts. Data is analyzed based on Procedure Analysis This descriptive qualitative study explains and investigates student errors in writing the technique and the causative factors. Research shows that the typical mistakes students make in their writing: the highest place is capitalization with 60 errors (14.67%) and the lowest place is sentence 3 error (0.73%). According to a typical error, the author found the source of the error. The highest place is transfer between languages with 172 errors (42.05%) and the lowest place is a communication strategy with 49 errors (11.98%).

Keywords: descriptive text writing, error analysis, vocational high school students

A. Introduction

English has been considered as the first foreign language in Indonesia. According to Crystal (1992), "English is now the language most widely taught as a foreign language – in over 100 countries," It is understandable that in Indonesia, English is taught as the first foreign language in schools, it is taught from kindergarten until university.

In studying English, all students in all levels learn the productive and receptive language skills. The productive skills include writing and speaking, whereas the receptive skills consist of listening and reading. Harmer argues that: speaking and writing involve language production and are therefore often referred to as productive skills. Listening and reading, on the other hand, involve receiving messages and are therefore often referred to as receptive skills.

Linse (2005), also agrees with Harmer's statement. She argues, "Listening and reading are receptive skills because the focus is on receiving information from an outside source. Speaking and writing, on the other hand, are productive skills because the focus is on producing information." Harmer's and Linse's statements imply that all language learners need to learn listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. It is important for students to have these four language skills. Generally these four skills cannot be separated. They are interconnected. However, in terms of language learning and teaching methodology, it is necessary to emphasize on one of the skills as the focus of every learning and teaching activity. In terms of the teaching of writing, the teacher needs to keep in mind the purpose of writing. Ur points out, "The purpose of the writing in principle, is the expression of the ideas, the conveying of a message to the reader; so the ideas themselves should arguably be seen as the most important aspects of writing." To make sure that this purpose is accomplished, the teacher has to make sure that the students can express their ideas in correct sentences. This is, of course, not always easy to do.

Most of students in the 10 State Vocational High School Jakarta, did not realize the mistakes which they made in their writing and they did not always know the choice of words that suited their sentence writing. They continuously made such mistakes and errors and this seemed to become their habit in writing. There are many ways to make good English writing. Errors in writing text in English are also done by some students at the previous research site conducted by Hendri et al (2018), who found that firstly, the types of morphological errors occur in the omission, addition, and misformation which includes the derivation, inflection, preposition, article, copula be, personal pronoun, auxiliary, and determiner. Secondly, syntactical errors occur in the omission, addition, misformation, and disordering which include the passive voice, tense, noun phrase, auxiliary, subject-verb agreement, and determiner. The two major sources of errors are the interlingual (first language interference) and intralingual factors. Hogue (2008) suggests: good writing is more than just sitting down and "talking" on a piece of paper. Good writing involves thinking, planning, writing and revising. You become a good writer by always using these four steps: 1. Prewrite to get ideas and organize them, 2. Write the first draft, 3. Edit: Check and revise your work, 4. Write the final copy. That it can conclude that the ways to make good English writing are: firstly, the students need to prepare what

topic they want to write. Secondly, they make an outline. Thirdly, they write as much they can about the topic until run out of ideas. Finally, they reread and check their writing. This is, of course not always easy to do.

In the previous research, with the title Integration of Inquiry-Based Learning and Ongoing Assessment to Develop English Essay Writing in Upper Intermediate Level, Nabhan (2017), finding that integrating Inquiry-Based Learning Approach (IBLA), ongoing assessment, and blogging to solve the problems students face when they write essays for varied purposes.

There are some reasons why the students often make mistakes in their writing. They assume that they cannot make good writing, because it gives them more "thinking time". They do not want to write, because it is boring. They believe they have 'nothing to say'. They are not able to express their thought and feelings from one's head onto the page. They do not have the ideas to write. Another reason why students experience difficulties in writing English language skills was also revealed by Belkhir & Benyelles (2017), who found the results of his research that the causes were due partly that students meet difficulties in both coherence and cohesion due to the lack of reading, first language transfer and low writing practice. Langan (2008), comments that people often fear they are the only ones for whom writing is unbearably difficult. They believe that everyone else finds writing easy or least tolerable. Such people typically say, "I'm not any good at writing," or "English was not one of my good subjects." They imply that they simply do not have a talent for writing, while others do. Often, the result of this attitude is that people try to avoid writing and when they do write, they don't try their best. Their attitude becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: their writing fails chiefly because they have brainwashed themselves into thinking they don't have the "natural talent" needed to write.

From the quotation above, it can be summarized that writing is difficult for some people who do not have ability in writing, even though they want to write something, they cannot manage to write it right. They make a lot of mistakes and errors, likewise the students who are learning to write. Therefore, it is important for the teacher to give some remedial programs focusing on the points that cause students who are learning to write still make mistakes and errors. In order to give a proper remedial, teacher needs to recognize and identify the students' errors and their causes and sources.

B. Literature Review

There are some linguists who tell the understanding of descriptive writing. Langan (2008) highlights when you describe someone or something, you give your readers a picture in words. Descriptive is text that tells in detail about all things of something clearly. Descriptive writing is a kind of text which explains in verbal description. According to Wishon and Burks (1980), "Description reproduces the way things look, smile, taste, feel, or sound; it may also evoke moods, such as happiness, loneliness, or fear. It is used to create visual image of people, places even of unit of time-days, times of days or reasons." Meanwhile, Oshima and Hogue (2007) argue, "Descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks feels, smells, tastes and/or sounds. A good description is a word picture; the reader can imagine the object, place, or person in his or

her mind." Descriptive writing has its own format and generic structures. According to Dolon & Todoli (2008), the generic structures of this text is composed of an identification stage (paragraph 1), followed by one or more stages of feature descriptions (paragraph 2-3), and closing stage (paragraph 4) with judgment of what is described.

When the students write in English, they can make a lot of errors. Harmer (2001) points out that, "Errors are part of the students' interlanguage, that is the version of the language which a learner has at any one stage of development, and which is continually reshaped as he or she aims towards full mastery." From this statement, the writer interprets that the errors are part of process of language learning that the learners have done constantly. Dulay et.al (1982) also point out, "Errors are flawed side of learner speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norm of mature language performance." The summarizes that errors are imperfect side of the learners' dialogue and writing that depart from standard has chosen of language learning. Harmer also comments about it, but in different book, "Errors are mistakes which they can't correct themselves – and which, therefore need explanation."

Wishon & Burks (1980), there are types of error: "Nouns, possessive form of nouns, numerals, articles and their use, adjectives and adverbs, connectors, prepositions, verbs with irregular forms, phrasal verbs, punctuation, and capitalization." It can be seen that there are many types of error in writing and the errors are almost the same or similar. Richards (2009) give the definition type of errors are sometimes classified according to vocabulary (lexical error), pronunciation (phonological error), grammar (syntax error), misunderstanding of a speaker's intention or meaning (interpretive error), production of the wrong communication effect, e.g. through the faulty use of a speech act or one of the Rules of speaking (pragmatic error). It can be seen that errors have some classifications not only in writing, but also in vocabulary (lexical error), pronunciation (phonological error), grammar (syntax error), translation error (interpretive error), and conversation error.

Basically, errors occur for many sources. In this case, Brown (2000), determines there are four sources of error, they are Interlingual Transfer, Intralingual Transfer, Context of Learning and Communication Strategies. The first is Interlingual Transfer, Interlingual transfer is a significance source of error for all learners. The beginning stages of learning a second language are especially vulnerable to interlingual transfer from the native language, or interference. For example, students often use the form of phrasal pattern on their mother tongue in speaking or writing a target language. The second is Intralingual Transfer, one of major contributions of learner language research has been its recognition of sources of error that extend beyond interlingual errors in learning a second language. It is now clear that intralingual transfer (within the target language itself) is a major factor in second language learning. Intralingual transfer is error which caused by failing of understanding the rules of target language. According to Littlewood (1994), "The majority of intralingual errors are instance of the same process of overgeneralisation that has been observed in first language acquisition." The third is Context of Learning, "Context" refers, for example, to the classroom with its teacher and its materials in the case of school learning or the social situation in the case of untutored second language

learning. In fact, the students often make errors because of misleading explanation from the teacher, faulty presentation of structure or word in a text book, or even because of pattern that was memorized in a drill but improperly contextualized. The fourth Communication Strategies Communication strategies were defined and related to learning styles. Learners obviously use production strategies in order to enhance getting their messages across, but at times these techniques can make themselves become a source of error.

C. Research Methodology

This research make was a descriptive qualitative method. According to Creswell, (2009), the qualitative research allows the researcher to make an interpretation of what the researcher sees, hears, and understands. Meanwhile, textual analysis was used in this study to gather the data. It refers to a methodology which is used to gather data. The general purpose of textual analysis according to Berg (2001) is to find out something about how the texts are structured. This study was focused on analysing the types of error and the sources of error in the students' descriptive text writings that had been collected from 30 students of XI 2 Accounting class of SMKN 10 Jakarta. The data tabulation of sample to have the data was for the analysis. Each type of identified error in the sample is counted as an error. The total errors by summing up the errors which the eleventh grade students of SMKN Jakarta had made. The result the total errors would be transformed into percentage.

Three research instruments used in this research namely: researcher, tabulation table, and interview guide. Then, the procedure of the data collection was started from the objectives of the study, then the types and the sources of error in the students' writings were noted according to the types and sources of error. There are five steps in analysing students' errors, according Cohen (2007), namely: collecting a sample of learner language, identification of errors, description of errors, explanation of errors, and error evaluation. The research procedures are as follows: 1) Collecting the data, 2) Recognizing the errors, 3) Categorizing the errors, 4) Analyzing the errors, and 5) Giving remediation.

D. Findings

In this error analysis, the research used a writing task to get the data. The focus of the writing is to find out most typical errors and the causes of the errors the students made in their writing. The writer classified students' errors based on grammatical error classification using Azar (1992) scheme of grammatical errors covering: singular-plural, word form, word choice, verb tense, add a word, omit a word, word order, incomplete sentence, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, article, meaning not clear, and run on sentence. The areas of possible causes are interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning, and communication strategy.

Table 1: The distribution of the Sources of the Students' Writing Errors

No	The Sources of the Errors	f	Percentage
1.	Intralingual transfer	118	28,85%
2.	Interlingual transfer	172	42,05%
3.	Context of learning	70	17,11%
4.	Communication strategies	49	11,98%
		409	100%

From the tables above, can see that the recapitulation of the sources of the students' writing errors students because of Interlingual Transfer, the highest result: 42,05%; the second result is Intralingual Transfer : 28,85%, the third is Context of Learning: 17,11%, the lowest result is Communication Strategies: 11,98%.

Table 2: The distribution of the types of errors of the Students' Writing Errors

No	The Types of Error	f	Percentage
1.	Singular – plural	33	8,07%
2.	Word form	38	9,29%
3.	Word choice	45	11,00%
4.	Verb tense	39	9,54%
5.	Add a word	56	13,69%
6.	Omit a word	53	12,96%
7.	Word order	24	5,87%
8.	Incomplete sentence	12	2,93%
9.	Spelling	16	3,91%
10.	Punctuation	14	3,42%
11.	Capitalization	60	14,67%
12.	Article	6	1,47%
13.	Meaning not clear	10	2,44%
14.	Run on sentence	3	0,73%
	Total	409	100%

From the tables above, can see that errors of capitalization with 60 errors (14,67%) takes the first place, followed by add a word with 56 errors (13,69%) as the second place, the third is omit a word 53 errors (12,96%), the forth is word choice with 45 errors (11,00%), the fifth is verb tense 39 errors (9,54%), the sixth is word form with 38 errors (9,29%), the seventh is singular-plural with 33 errors (8,07%), the eighth is word order

with 24 errors (5,87%), the ninth is spelling with 16 errors (3,91%), the tenth is punctuation with 14 errors (3,42%), the eleventh is incomplete sentence with 12 errors (2,93%), the twelfth is meaning not clear with 10 errors (2,44%), the thirteenth is article with 6 errors (1,46%), and the last position is run-on sentence with 3 errors (0,73%). The finding each error as follow:

1. Capitalization is about 14,67% and total capitalization are 60 errors. The source of capitalization is context of learning. The students often made the name of person or after full stop by using small letter. If the teacher let them do it, the possible effect is become their habit in writing.

2. Add a word is about 13,69% with total 56 errors. The source of add a word is interlingual transfer. Many students are still confused in add a word or arranging word by word. This might cause is they are not able how to express their meaning in English writing because it is different from their mother tongue or *Bahasa Indonesia.*

3. Omit a word is about 12,96% with total 53 errors. The source of omit a word is interlingual transfer. If the teacher do not tell the errors to the students, their writings are difficult to read by the readers.

4. Word choice is about 11,00% with total 45 errors. The source of word choice is intralingual transfer. It is caused by the lack comprehension of words or vocabulary. The teacher needs to give them more instruction in choosing words.

5. Verb tense is about 9,54% with total 39 errors. The source of this error is intralingual transfer. It is likely that the students do not understand grammar well.

6. Word form is about 9,29% with total 38 errors. The source of word form is interlingual transfer. It is caused by the lack or differentiates form of vocabulary.

7. Singular-plural is about 8,07% with total 33 errors. The source of this error is intralingual transfer. It is caused by many students often add –s or –es to singular nouns and omit –s or –es the plural nouns. If the students still do it many times, the teacher needs to give good instruction.

8. Word order is about 5,87% with total 24 errors. The source of word order is communication strategies. The students still make sentences from their mother language.

9. Spelling is about 3,91% with total 16 errors. The source of this error is interlingual transfer. It seems that the students are not careful when they write.

10. Punctuation is about 3,42% with total 14 errors. The source of punctuation is context of learning. The students often make some errors in using *apostrophe* ('), *comma* (,) and *full stop* (.).

11. Incomplete sentence is about 2,93% with total 12 errors. The source of incomplete sentence is communication strategies.

12. Meaning not clear is about 2,44% with total 10 errors. The source of meaning not clear is communication strategies.

13. Article is about 1,46% with total 6 errors. The source of this error is interlingual transfer. The students are unable in using articles such as *the, a, an* in each sentence.
14. Run-on sentence is about 0,73% with total 3 errors. The source of run-on sentence is communication strategies. The students do not have any idea how to combine two sentences in the right order and how to put the punctuation in the right place to connect those sentences.

Based on the explanation above, it can be interpreted that the eleventh grade students of SMKN 10 Jakarta commit errors mostly in *Capitalization.* Therefore, they need to give more input and practice to develop their knowledge about how to use the words in the appropriate place in order to increase their writing abilities.

E. Discussion

Writing is the most difficult skill in English, so most students tend to make mistakes in writing. In helping students to succeed in obtaining writing skills, analysis of errors and understanding of the sources they need. This study tries to explore the source of the main errors that occur in writing descriptive texts of students at the vocational high school level. It also investigates the types of errors and linguistic levels that present the most errors in their writing. From the respondents in this study, narrative essays were collected and analyzed. A total of 30 students were the subjects of this study and they were asked to write descriptive texts. Data is analyzed based on Procedure Analysis. This descriptive qualitative study explains and investigates student errors in writing the technique and the causative factors. Research shows that the typical mistakes students make in their writing: the highest place is capitalization with 60 errors (14.67%) and the lowest place is sentence 3 error (0.73%). According to a typical error, the author found the source of the error. The highest place is transfer between languages with 172 errors (42.05%) and the lowest place is a communication strategy with 49 errors (11.98%).

Ariyanti (2016) research results also state that writing is one of the most important aspects of mastering English and teaching students to write in English has its own challenges, because there are several steps and requirements that teachers must prepare to do in class. It was stated in his research that the biggest challenge came from differences in cultural background between students' mother tongue and English, so it was possible to know that the production of their writing was not 'heard' either in the appropriate English culture. Some problems also occur when the teacher has a large class to teach and the results of teaching writing to students can be defeated. In addition to this, the researcher stated that time is also a big challenge for teachers to improve students' writing skills because to achieve a good composition in English, complex steps are needed such as brainstorming, prewriting, drafting, and editing. However, new and interesting techniques, methods and ways of teaching students to write in English are needed to develop better student writing results in English.

The biggest mistake made by students in this study is the transfer between languages, this is in accordance with the results of previous studies conducted by Normah

et. al (2015), which examined 40 narrative essays compiled by Thai students collected and analyzed. The results show that the types of errors are most often translated words from Thailand, choice of words, verbs, prepositions, and commas. Errors come from two sources: interlingual and intralingual. Interlingual or original language disorders are found to be the dominant source of error. This study provides pedagogical implications for EFL instructors. In his research recommending that instructors should pay attention to the influence of the original language of students. The results of other studies state that in addition to writing, in speaking students often make mistakes by pronouncing English, Saad's findings, (2014), in the title of his research on Error analysis in role-play presentations among less proficient L2 Malaysian learners, on the results of his research showed that negligence contributed to the majority of errors identified and this was followed by misinformation, additions, and mismanagement. In addition, linguistic descriptions of errors identified form verbs and word forms are the types of errors that are most often performed by speakers. So that assistance is needed which can reduce errors made by students who study English.

It is commonly known that EFL learners need to be skillful enough at the four language skills namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing to have a good command in the target language. Typically, teaching/learning how to write in a foreign language is not an easy task for EFL teachers and learners alike. Though countless research and efforts have been done by researchers and teachers to develop the writing skill among these learners, many EFL students still face a number of serious difficulties that prohibit them from constructing satisfactory essay writing. From the results of this study, the highest number of errors in writing descriptive texts conducted by vocational high school students is language transfer, this is consistent with the findings of Belkhir & Benyelles (2017) research, which found that students meet difficulties in both coherence and cohesion due to the lack of reading, first language transfer and low writing practice. So, in hope to decrease students" essay writing difficulties, attention to these sources is required. In the process of writing descriptive text, students should have much attention to content, audience, grammar, vocabulary, and final results, so there are not many found errors in descriptive technology such as those conducted by Jakarta 10 vocational high school students, as in Alinsunod's findings, (2014), in the research title A study of common writing errors of engineering students: a basis for curriculum development. Which results of his research state that students have more attention to that the content, audience, grammar, vocabulary, and the final output. While the results of research conducted by Ciesielkiewicz & Marquez (2015), to establish the most common types of errors that Spanish students of 1st and 2nd year of Bachillerato make in ESL compositions, as well as to identify those that are produced due to the interference from Spanish into English. The results of this study show that the Spanish students of Bachillerato produced the following mistakes most frequently: (1) spelling, (2) the incorrect use of commas, (3) the use of prepositions, (4) the incorrect use of words according to their lexical meaning, (5) the articles in English, (6) the number of nouns, (7) subject-verb agreement, (8) the use of adverbs, (9) word order and (10) the use of verb tenses. So, this paper can help teachers to be more aware of the most typical errors made by Spanish-speaking students in order

offer activities that could assist them to master concepts in English that they find most difficult and problematic.

English has been studied for many years in Indonesia, it is important to recognize some common mistakes made by students to help them improve their teaching and learning strategies for English, especially in writing lessons. Therefore, this study aims to investigate errors that occur in writing descriptive English texts at the level of vocational high schools in Indonesia. The results of similar studies conducted on students in Indonesia conducted by Hendri, et. al (2018), shows that, first, the types of errors occur in negligence, addition, and misinformation which include derivation, inflection, prepositions, articles, person pronouns, auxiliary words, and determinants. Second, syntactic errors occur in negligence, addition, misformation, and disturbance which include noun phrases, auxiliary words, subject-verbs, and determinants. The two main sources of error are interlingual (first language disorder) and intralingual factors. So that in the process of learning English, especially in writing, the first language disorder must be one of the important factors such as the findings in the author's research.

Writing is considered a productive skill and a useful tool for the learning process. This is the most widely used skill in evaluating student performance at almost all levels of education. In Bangladesh, tertiary level students still face enormous writing problems in English. The research conducted by Afrin (2016), entitled: Non-English Problems Writing Major Undergraduate Students in Bangladesh: An Observation, aims to explore the issue of writing non-English major undergraduate students at a private university in Bangladesh. The study was conducted on 89 non-English undergraduate students from various departments studying at Stamford University Bangladesh. The results show that in writing most respondents still experience difficulties, especially in mastering vocabulary in English, grammar and tenses that have not been mastered by many students, so this is also in accordance with the results of research findings that have been conveyed on the results of the research authors above , so that this can help teachers solve problems and find strategies to improve students' writing skills in English.

The difficulty of writing texts in English is also experienced by most secondary schools in France, especially when they approach the entrance examination of a British university. In reality there are very few students who succeed in obtaining the necessary writing skills in a timely manner. The research conducted by Nabhan (2017), aims to explore the impact of integrating the Inquiry Based Learning Approach (IBLA), continuous assessment, and blogging to solve problems faced by students when they write essays for various purposes. The research was conducted in two French private secondary schools. In each school, the participants were divided into two groups: one experiment and one control. Both groups are taught the same genre of essays. However, the experimental group in both schools was taught by integrating the Inquiry Based Learning Approach and continuous assessment. On the other hand, the control group continued to use conventional techniques. At the end of the instruction, a summative test is performed. The results are analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results analysis showed that integrating continuous assessment and IBLA produced better scores with the experimental group.

Research that is relevant in improving learning outcomes for improving student writing skills in English is also done by Styati (2016), the results of his research show that there are significant differences between students who write paragraphs using YouTube videos and by using images as authentic materials. Students who are treated using YouTube videos have lower writing performance than students who are treated using images. The average student who writes paragraphs after being treated using YouTube videos as authentic material is lower than those who are treated using images. This means that using images in writing is better than using YouTube videos to help students improve the ability to write in English.

F. Conclusion

The research found that the eleventh grade students' of SMKN 10 Jakarta did the highest errors in capitalization with 60 errors (14,67%) and the lowest typical error was run-on sentence (0,73%). The highest typical error happened because the students did not have great concern in using capitalization in the correct usage of writing English text. The teacher needs to give good instruction to use capitalization in learning and teaching process. As the result, the research concluded that the students made the errors because of context of interlingual transfer which means that error was happened because interference of a mother tongue to a target language and then because of their language or intralingual transfer.

From the result this research, can be suggest that the teachers need to know the weakness and problems of the students in writing lesson. In teaching writing the teacher may carry out error analysis as a guide to remedial lesson. Before starting the lesson, the teacher needs to give a good explanation simply and clearly to avoid the same errors of the students in the future. Teacher always makes an evaluation to know the progress of the students' work. It can help the teacher to learn the students' problem in lesson and also to measure the success of the remedial lesson itself. After having the evaluation, the teacher can focus on the points that cause the students' errors. In this case, the writer tries to reduce the students' error especially for capitalization, add a word, omit a word, word choice, and verb tense. It is necessary for the students to do more exercises in English writing in order to improve students' English proficiency.

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